

NINETEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Aug.12 **HOW CHRIST'S REAL PRESENCE TRANSFORMS US**
A reflection from God's Way to be Human by Fr. G. Preston
- Mon. **Monday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time**
13 **OUR REAL COMMUNION WITH OUR GOD**
A reflection from The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy by
Denis the Areopagite
- Tues. **The Memorial of St. Maximillian Kolbe**
14 **THE MISSIONARY POWER OF CHARITY**
A reflection by St. Maximillian Kolbe
- Wed. **THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**
15 **MARY'S ASSUMPTION FULFILLS GOD'S PROMISE**
A reflection from The Seat of Wisdom by Fr. Louis Bouyer
- Thurs. **Thursday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time**
16 **MEDITATING WITHOUT CEASE ON GOD'S WORKS**
A reflection from The Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary by
Modestus of Jerusalem
- Fri. **Friday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time**
17 **SEEKING GOD WITHOUT CEASING**
A reflection from a Letter by St. Bernard
- Sat. **Saturday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time**
18 **THE CALL TO BE GOD'S CHOSEN ONES**
A reflection from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

HOW CHRIST'S REAL PRESENCE TRANSFORMS US

A reflection from God's Way to be Human by Fr. G. Preston, OP

Christ offers himself in the Eucharist as food and drink. When we eat at this table we declare we are ready to feed on him in all the ways he offers himself. The Imitation of Christ talks about the table of the word as well as the table of the sacrament. Ignatius of Antioch tells us that faith itself is the substance of the Christian life: "Believe and you have fed", says St. Augustine. We "eat" the flesh of the Son of Man sacramentally in the Eucharist, at the table of the Word, and by caring for his suffering members.

Now this can't be done one time and that's enough. The Eucharist, for instance, feeds desire and longing; we have to keep eating at all these tables continually. We are longing for the Kingdom of God. What we do when we eat and drink Christ is deeply linked to that coming. Whenever we eat and drink Christ we, as it were, hold up a placard proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes. Christ is food for our journey and Christ is the end of the journey. As we pray for his coming He does come, in signs. But the signs realize Christ's real presence. The signs are transformed into Him really. We go on telling our God we are waiting for the final coming of Jesus Christ and as we do this we are made aware that He is with us now. We go on doing this until the end becomes "now".

Now we eat together. We eat the banquet God has prepared for us and we wish peace for one another in ways that realize not only peace but unity. These are proper to the Kingdom of God where Jesus and we live forever. What we do now is a prophetic sign by which we act out his real presence now even as we wait for its fullest real presence. That brings us into a situation where what unites us is the Word of God, one loaf and a common cup and one service and a shared love. All this finds its significance from the death of Jesus to the world and his living for God. Jesus is thus God's way of being human. The loaf and the cup are the way to a new and true humanity embodied in our world and this is what makes us one.

The Kingdom of God is the unity of mankind in Christ. That unity will be Christ. He is the lamb of the Book of Revelation with the marks of slaughter still upon him, the one hanged bearing wounds that were never healed but glorified. Here and now we are invited to let ourselves be taken into that unity and live as though we were already transformed in Him. In doing this we fix our destiny more and more fervently. We already feel ourselves at home in what is still to be and more and more disposed to live like Jesus in what still has to be accomplished. This is the realization of the sacrament of peace and unity. It may feel like a game of pretend but like the games of childhood it prepares us for the adulthood in which we put on the full humanity of Christ.

OUR REAL COMMUNION WITH OUR GOD

A reflection from The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy by Denis the Areopagite

In goodness and love for mankind, Jesus, the divine word in its fullness, one and simply and hidden, assumed human nature. Though unchanged in his own nature, He assumed our nature, both composite and visible. In graciousness, Jesus reveals to us the unifying communion which joins us with Him and so with God. He joined our lowliness to his sublime divinity and places on this but one condition—that we should cling to Him like members of a human body and do this by living a pure and godly life. Ours would thereby become a life like his.

If we aspire to communion with Jesus we mustn't give reign to ruinous and death-dealing passions. They make us incapable of oneness with the other members of his body, if the other members are completely healthy and divine. So we need to fix our eyes on the most holy life Jesus lived and follow the example of his divine innocence. We will thus become pure and godlike. In a way that suits us he will give us a true resemblance to himself.

In another way a bishop manifests these truths in the sacred rites, especially in the Eucharist. He publicly unveils the hidden realities, divides them into portions and distributes them to those who receive so as to make the perfect union which is in the sacraments a new union within those who receive them. He admits all who receive into communion with Christ and with one another. In this way of presenting Jesus Christ to us he shows us the very life of our understanding. He does all this in a way perceptible to our senses and one we can picture.

Here we see Christ come for from divine concealment to take on a human form out of love for humanity. He becomes completely human without any loss of his own identity. While he remains unchanged he descends from his natural unity to the level of our divisibility. Through the beneficent deeds flowing from his love for us, he calls our race to communion with himself and to a share in his blessings.

What we have to do is unite ourselves to his divine life by imitating it to the best of our ability. As we do this we enter into real communion with God and with the Divine Mysteries. He shows us how to do this by showing us the incarnate life he leads in Jesus. Don't think of your weakness and imperfection but of his divine power working wonders of love in and through you. That is the fruit and proof of our communion with our God.

THE MISSIONARY POWER OF CHARITY

A reflection by St. Maximilian Kolbe

To stimulate our activity for the good of souls God permits various crosses. This goodness of God is an immense reality, containing numberless sources of grace; we must take advantage of them. Among others, we may mention the irritation others provoke. With what a blessed hope we can repeat the words of the Our Father: *“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”*. In this way our complete pardon of others’ offenses against us obtains for us the right to be pardoned for all the faults we commit against God. What a pity it would be for us to have nothing to pardon others for! Think how necessary offenses are in purifying our souls and so how welcome that purification is! How powerfully these acts contribute to bringing us closer to God.

What is more, the reciprocal love we are graced with doesn’t mean that nobody will ever cause us displeasure or distress. It means that we will try not to distress others and try to accustom ourselves to forgiving immediately and fully everything that offends us. True fraternal charity consists in this mutual bearing with one another.

St Teresa wrote this: *“I gradually understood how imperfect was my love for my sisters. Jesus did not love them that way. Now I understand that genuine love consists in bearing with the defects and faults of our neighbors, in not being surprised at their imperfections, but in being edified by every least act of virtue. Above all I understood that love must not remain locked up in our hearts, because no one lights a lamp to place it under a bushel basket; rather one places it on a lampstand so that it may shed its light to all who enter the house.”*

Dear Mother Mary, it seems to me that this lamp in the Gospel represents love, which should illuminate and make joyful not only those who are dearest to us but all those who are in the house.

Besides, St. Therese continues: *“My dear Jesus, I know that you don’t command anything impossible. You know my weakness and imperfection better than I do. You know I shall never succeed in loving my sisters as you love them, unless you love them in me and through me. And since you wish to give me this grace you have taught me your new commandment.”*

The message is that the deeper this love becomes in us, the more effective our activities as missionaries will be. It is a love one can live always and in every sort of circumstance, whether pleasant or painful. Trust in God and God will act in and through you and so will bring closer the full coming of the Kingdom.

MARY'S ASSUMPTION: GOD'S PROMISE TO US FULFILLED

A reflection from The Seat of Wisdom by Fr. Louis Bouyer

How should we approach Mary's Assumption? It is a living fulfillment of Christ's promise to all his disciples: He has gone to the Heavenly Father to prepare a place for us, because it is his will that where he is there we too shall be. With Him the glory that the Heavenly Father gave him will be ours too, and all that follows from it. So it goes, almost without saying, that Mary's Assumption into Heaven is a fulfillment of the promise made to all of us. Take Jesus literally.

Mary conceived and gave birth to her Son by a divine promise fulfilled in her. By opening herself to this grace she, in effect, opened all of us to grace. She was the first saved as God intends to save all of us. She was saved perfectly, freed from the consequences of our first parents' sin she was freed to be fully open to grace and to show us the marvelous effects of this saving and forgiving grace. We see in her what we are to grow to be under the power and driving force of God's grace. This is what we become by answering God's call. It is the grace of entering the nuptial chamber and becoming one with Christ and God.

Mary's assumption is the pledge of the glory Christ gives to all who are his spouse. He has already shared that glory with his mother. He now asks us to share it too. As St. John says: "*It has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, because we will see him as he is*". For Mary this has already been fulfilled. He faith passed into sight. In her we are given the pledge of our God's seriousness in promising this to all who believe. We shall see God as God is, with Mary, like her already fully like Christ.

St. Paul tells us: "*We shall be taken up together to meet Christ and so we shall always be with the Lord*". Have you ever tried to imagine what that state of "glory", as we call it, will be like? We know that it is already realized for Mary and for endless other saints in her train. We also know that Christ's ascension didn't mean that he had left us to our own devices in our present condition. He has gone only to prepare a place for us with him. Where he is we are soon to be. Yet his going didn't, and doesn't, separate us from Christ! Now apply this to Mary. She has been taken to Heaven and is with Christ but as Christ is with us still so is Mary. She can't be absent from wherever he is because he has promised we will be with Him always. The same is true for us.

If we want to imagine what it is like to be with Christ we have to begin from the fact that it means we won't be absent from any of those who are still on earth—after all Christ is with them and we will always be with Him. Mary's blessedness has been made perfect and it doesn't separate her from us any more than does Christ's. The same will be true for us. But Christ always stands interceding for us before the Heavenly Father. So does Mary, and so shall we. Everyone, in the bliss of an eternal Eucharist, shall be one of innumerable many bearers of blessing. With her we will ever be united with her Son and our Savior, interceding and bringing blessings upon all. That is God's will for us, fulfilled already in her. Don't be afraid! Christ is with us always!

GOD'S GRACE NEVER SLEEPS

From The Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary by Modestus of Jerusalem

How much should we meditate on God's grace given through Mary? Should we ever cease to declare the goodness of our God? Never! Mary lived as a beautiful ship sailing through life toward the port where God would receive her and constantly meditating on God's goodness. When she had completed her voyage, she reached the haven of perfect peace and lived in the perfect presence of the helmsman of our world. He had by her grace-inspired help saved the human race from a flood of godlessness and sin and given it new life. So the One who gave a law on Sinai now issued another degree that the ark which had rested among his holy people should now come to Him. "Go up, Lord, to your resting place, you and the ark which you have sanctified." This prayer of David speaks of Mary rather than of the earth Ark of the Covenant.

This new ark wasn't drawn to God by oxen, like the ark of old, but it was guided and guarded by a heavenly army of holy angels. It wasn't an ark made by human hands and plated with gold. It was a living ark created by God and completely radiant with the all-holy light and life-giving Spirit who had caused her to conceive. Within her was no container of manna or the stone tablets of the covenant but the bestower of manna and of a blessed promise of eternity. She contained the Lord of the old and new covenants who had come into the world as a child and freed all who would believe in Him and follow him. This ark didn't go before the Hebrew people but followed God who had come on earth in human form and in a body received from her.

What does she say to us? "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior!" She fell asleep in the body but was taken by God to himself and to full wakefulness. She was taken up so as to proclaim the greatness of her Lord and God, and ours, unsleepingly and forever. Aren't we called to do the same? Aren't we called to wake up and praise the Lord so that all the earth can know God's glory and God's love for all human kind? What God called Mary to do was to bring Christ into the world for the world's salvation. What God calls us to do is receive Christ and to show him to all the world. To see Christ in truth is to seek the God who reveals himself through Christ. That is salvation. To show salvation to the world is our vocation as it was that of Mary.

In order to shine out brightly, the light-bearing spiritual dawn come to rest in a human body. Now He comes to rest in our bodies and so give light to all creation throughout all the ages of the world. In mercy and compassion God stirs up in believers the longing to imitate Mary as far as the grace given them allows. Christ our God clothes himself in not just a single human body. Mary is a human tent which receives the King of Glory. That is also, in another way, our vocation. Her physical tent has been taken away and re-erected in Heaven. She doesn't cease to pray and praise and seek to bring a blessing to all those God has made her children in His Providence. Our task is to seek out and find the ways in which we can praise him and pray for others and make the light of God's love shine upon the world. We are a lamp for love to shine forth. Meditation and prayer let that light shine forth.

SEEKING GOD WITHOUT CEASING

A reflection from a Letter by St. Bernard

It is a great good to seek God always. I think there is no greater blessing than this among all the blessings a person can receive. It is the first of God's gifts and the final degree in one's progress toward God. It isn't preceded by any virtue and it gives way to no other. The psalmist exhorts us: Seek his face ever more. When one has found God, I don't think one will ever stop seeking him further.

One seeks God by the heart's desiring. When one finds God then the desire is only increased. The consummation of this desire doesn't extinguish it, rather it is like oil poured on a fire; it doesn't put the fire out but feeds it. Think of it as a continuing desire without any anxiety or trouble of mind. God's presence excludes the first and the abundance of grace excludes the second.

Everyone who is seeking God should reflect that the desire was anticipated by God and that one is sought by God before one can begin to seek God. One mustn't treat God's gifts as though they weren't gifts. No matter how great the grace one receives one has to give back to God the praise and thankfulness of a receiver because that is all that we are.

By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves. That is what the bride in the Canticle says. The soul seeks the Word like this because it was previously sought by the Word. If abandoned to ourselves we wander here and there like lost sheep. We want to return but that doesn't come merely from self. It is clear that the desire to return is itself a gift. But this shows that even one who wanders away isn't simply abandoned but is continually given grace.

What is it that we seek when we seek God? Clearly, we seek the realization that we are sought. We want to be loved and to know we are loved. That is precisely what we are given when we receive the gift of wanting God. Rejoice in this gift and this knowledge and give great thanks that your God so loves you as to give it to you.

THE CALL TO BE GOD'S CHOSEN ONES

A reflection from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Come, my Chosen One, and I will set up my throne in you! We tremble because we hear that many are called in this way but few are chosen. But what have we to tremble about if we listen to our Lord calling us to open our hearts and lives so that he may come and dwell with us? Isn't the Lord's promise more powerful than any sin of ours? In a psalm we hear that those are blessed who have been chosen to live in God's courts, in his temple. But you are called to let God make of you a temple, and one in which God will dwell always and from which the light of grace will shine.

Mary is supremely blessed because God lived in her for nine months, and then lived with her for thirty years and now lives with her in heaven always. Through this indwelling Mary's cup of joy overflows. When she opened herself to Him she never needed to fear being desolate or abandoned. Nor do you so long as you open yourself again and again to our God's love. Look at the difference between Mary and Eve. Think of what Eve had to suffer because she turned to self and away from God. We must not make the choice Eve made but that which Mary made. Did her choice bring her trials and sorrows? Yes, it did. But it then brought unspeakable joy and gladness. Which was the better choice? If we know this how can we but choose with Mary?

By God's mysterious choice Mary is the mother of all Christians. You have been blessed by being called to bear the name of Christian and by dedicating your entire life freely to the service of God and Christ. Mary shows herself a true mother by care and loving attention. Her heart is never hardened against those in need. The womb of her merciful love never ceases to bring forth the fruits of a motherly compassion. She remains ever fruitful. We too can by God's grace be ever fruitful of compassion and caring concern. Within the locked garden of her chastity there is a never-failing well-spring of charity. It is channeled to the entire world and its waters are there for us even in courtyards and streets. Charity delights to bestow its gifts even on enemies. It seeks to help everyone as Christ is formed in them. How much more of us who have given our lives to proclaiming the glory of God and shouting out God's word to all who will listen?

It is to us too that God speaks: "Come, my chosen ones", he says, "and I will set up my throne in you". Jesus himself has said to his disciples, "In the new world, where the Son of Man shall sit on his glorious throne, you also will sit on thrones". Again, he says, "To the one who conquers I will grant to sit with me on my throne as I sit on my Father's throne". But it is far beyond this to call us to be thrones for him. That is what he has done for Mary. As her children he promises us the same. Let us join her in rejoicing in the Lord, Our God and Savior.