

# **TWENTIETH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

## **FEAST OF ST. BERNARD**

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Sun.      **The Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
Aug. 19   **GIVING YOURSELF ENTIRELY TO GOD**  
            A reflection by Sr. Elizabeth of the Trinity

Mon.      **Solemnity of Our Holy Father Bernard**  
20        **OUR LONGING FOR GOD**  
            A reflection from “A sermon on the Canticle” by St. Bernard

Tues.     **The Memorial of St. Pope Pius X**  
21        **BEING A BLESSING FOR OTHERS**  
            A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Pope John XXIII

Wed.      **Day of Remembrance for the Dead**  
22        **THE DEAD AND THE LIVING UNITED IN LOVE**  
            A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Thurs.    **The Memorial of St. Rose of Lima**  
23        **LOVE ACCEPTS ALL TRIALS GLADLY**  
            A reflection taken from a vision by St. Rose of Lima

Fri.       **The Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle**  
24        **GOD’S CALL TO GUILILESSNESS**  
            A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Sat.       **Memorial of Our Lady**  
25        **MAKE MARY’S TWO LOVES YOUR OWN**  
            A reflection from a sermon by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

# **GIVING ONESELF ENTIRELY TO GOD**

**A reflection by Sr. Elizabeth of the Trinity**

***Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.*** A premier sign of Jesus' love is the gift of his flesh to eat and his blood to drink but this language disturbed those to whom Jesus spoke during his life on earth. Yet the property of true love is always giving and receiving. The love of Christ is generous and all that he is and has is given us. He wants to receive all we have and are. We may think that He is asking for more than we are capable of giving. But he has an immense hunger to give love and receive it. Sometimes it seems He wants to devour us absolutely. Does that language disturb you? In fact, love for the Trinity is unlimited giving and receiving and we are to share in that.

Through Jesus God enters into the very marrow of our bones and the more lovingly we open ourselves to Him the more fully we savor His gift of self. Jesus knows how poor we are but pays no attention to this. Think of the fact that in us He becomes his own bread and that from within He burns up all our vices and sins and faults. When He sees we are pure he seems to come after us like a vulture to devour everything. But he only wants to turn our old life into his own life. We need only renounce our selves.

Even if our eyes were good enough to see what he wants and how he hungers for our salvation, no effort of ours could keep us from giving all to Him and, so to speak, disappearing into Him. This sounds absurd but those who know divine love understand. When we receive Christ with full self-giving devotion his blood flows into our veins and a fire is enkindled in our depths. We receive the likeness of His virtues and He lives in us and we in Him. He gives us his own fullness of grace and it is by this that we persevere in love and praise of the Heavenly Father. Love draws the beloved into itself; we draw Jesus into ourselves and Jesus draws us into Himself. That is how we go to meet God. We encounter God's Spirit, which is God's love, and this love burns us and consumes us and draws us into unity where beatitude awaits us. This is what Jesus meant when he said: **With great longing I have desired to eat this Pasch with you. With Him let us greatly long for it.**

## **OUR LONGING FOR GOD**

**A reflection from a “Sermon on the Canticle” by St. Bernard**

***“By night on my bed I sought Him, whom my soul loves.”* We seek the Word but because we had already been sought by that very Word. If this were not the case, then when we were cast out of the presence of the Word, that Word would never more return to us. So, it would not be possible for us to even glimpse the good things we lost by our wandering from Him. Everything depends on the Word’s seeking us. If abandoned to ourselves we go to and fro and never find what we seek.**

**Listen to a fugitive and wandering soul and note its complaint. “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant!” Do you want to return, then? But if it depended on your own will you wouldn’t need to seek help. Why would you ask another for what you yourself already had? It is clear, then, that we can’t get what we long for by ourselves. But one who longs to return to the Lord, and longs to be sought after, isn’t entirely exposed and left to self.**

**What is the source of willingness to find the Lord in the one who seeks Him? Where does this willingness come from? It comes from the fact that we are already being sought, and so visited, by the Word. And this visit isn’t fruitless! The longing has worked in us in such a way that we have good will. Without it a return would be impossible.**

**But it isn’t enough to be brought back just once. Our inner laziness is so great that it makes every return difficult. It is the very will of the wanderer that has to be made to want return. What if the will to return is present? But it can’t unless it is gifted with an effective longing to do what will bring it back to the Lord. St. Paul tells us that “to will is present in me but to perform what I will is not in me”.**

**So, what does the psalmist seek in the passage quoted? He seeks only to be sought. One wouldn’t seek this if one hadn’t been loved already. So, what the psalmist entreats is the grace not only of seeking the Lord but of being sought by Him. “Seek your servant!” That is the prayer we must all pray day and night. And this is the grace that has been granted to us. God grant we may perfectly attain the fulfillment of our longing. May it be God’s good pleasure! Amen!**

## **BEING A BLESSING TO OTHERS**

### **A reflection from a sermon by St. Pope John XXIII**

**More than fifty years have passed since the day of my own ordination to the priesthood. I remember vividly the day of my first Mass and how St. Pope Pius X laid his hand upon my head as I knelt before him in the Vatican. I have always treasured that memory in my heart, that gesture of care and the gentle words of kindness and good wishes and blessing which went with it. What has happened in the years since that day? Pope Pius has become a citizen of heaven and the young man he blessed has followed in his footsteps, first to the Chair of St. Mark in Venice and then to the Chair of Peter.**

**Pius X always strove to be faithful and clear in teaching the truth of the Gospel. He always strove to shine with virtues like Christ's. He also sought to be an example to others of what we become when we seek Christ continually—in good times and bad—and are transformed until we have put on the full maturity of Christ.**

**I trusted much in Pius X as Pope. I was not afraid of labor nor did I fear to die in the cause of Christ. The love that is Christ's doesn't let one cease to work for the Gospel or to learn from others how to do that. I first learned from St. Pius X. And when the Lord called him to the Kingdom I turned to him even more in prayer. I was praying that all which might remain for me to do would be done in a way that would build up the Church, and all the Christians my life touched. It has been a blessing and a joy to do this. It has been sweet to live with and to live for so many others who wanted with me to love God more and more. It has been an even greater joy to know in difficult times that I was sacrificing myself in an outpouring of loving-kindness and pastoral care like that of Christ, and like that of St. Pius X.**

**Jesus came to this world to save all, and spent most of his life doing only the tasks of any working person and manual laborer. The world has priests, contemplatives, apostles, great writers and many who are primarily concerned with material things needed by their families. All work done for God and out of love like that of Jesus is a wonderful thing. It transforms all it touches. Jesus shares his gifts with us though the blessed hands of others in simplicity and by life-giving gestures of service and care.**

## **THE DEAD AND THE LIVING UNITED IN LOVE**

**A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini**

***“It is in regard to death that the human condition is most shrouded in doubt”.*** These are words of the Second Vatican Council. They are grave and serious words. They don't call us to think of the dead-in-general but of the people we have known and cared for, and who have known and cared for us. Some are saints, whether we know it or not, and some are still working through God's process of purification and of preparation for the work of blessing many others which comes from being one with God and letting our love be transformed into God's love. We speak of “eternal rest” but that means we no longer worry about what we shall accomplish and whether it will be enough—because all we do will be God's deed even more than ours, and God never fails.

Those who have gone before us into God's presence have left us memories which show us what living the Word of God can mean in our time and place, and by people who led a life like we do. Their way of life brought them to God, no matter how many times they fell and had to turn to God's grace in order to get up again and continue to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus is our supreme example but our dead give us many precious examples of the multitude of ways in which one can imitate Jesus. After all, what we have to do is imitate Jesus' love. How many ways are there to love others? There are endlessly many. No two of those we remember today lived love in exactly the same way or with the same deeds or words.

We don't remember our departed ones only in sadness because of their separation from us. Actually, when we strive to imitate Jesus we strive to do exactly what they do always. We are not separated because we continue to work together to build up others and draw them toward the resurrection and life's uttermost fullness. In Jesus we, and our dead, have everlasting life and everlasting loving service and care and joy. We begin now in praying for one another. Our dead speak to us of Jesus' love and we speak to them of that same love. That is the language of prayer. It brings us together in mutual care, now and always.

## **LOVE BEARS ALL TRIALS GLADLY**

A reflection from a vision narrative by St. Rose of Lima

I was praying and Our Lord and Savior seemed to raise his voice and say with incomparable majesty: *“Let everyone know that grace comes after tribulation. Let all know that without the burden of affliction it is impossible to reach the height of divine grace. Let all know that the gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase. Let all take care not to be deceived: This is the only stairway to paradise. Without the cross no one can find the road which climbs to heaven!”*

When I heard these words something powerful seemed to come over me and I imagined I was in the middle of a road and was saying in a loud voice to people of every age, sex and status:

*“Listen, people; hear me, nations! I am advising you of the commandment of Christ in words that came from his own lips. We can’t obtain grace unless we suffer afflictions. We must pile up trouble upon trouble to attain a deep participation in the divine nature and in the glory of the children of God, and so perfect happiness”.*

Merely to love is to be an apostle of Christ. The power I had felt when I heard the words I have repeated was the power of saving love. That power was in me by God’s grace, and it seemed to urge me strongly to proclaim the beauty of divine grace and love. This awareness was like a great weight that seemed to press down on me so that my breath came slowly and I broke out in a sweat and began to pant. I felt as if my soul could no longer stay in my body but had burst out of its narrowness and was passing through the entire wide world loudly proclaiming the following message:

*“If you would only learn how great a thing it is to possess divine grace, how beautiful and noble and precious it is! If only all knew how many riches it hides within itself and how many joys and delights! If they knew this without doubt they would dedicate themselves and all their cares and concerns to winning for themselves the gifts of pain and affliction! All, throughout the entire world, we would seek trouble, infirmities and torments instead of good fortune. If they would do this they would attain the unfathomable treasure that is grace.”*

Why do we fear and flee the Cross? Think of what we have been told about heaven. If we only trust God’s love for us we will be able to believe that whatever happens to us brings us opportunities to be heralds of God’s love and help people be at peace no matter what befalls them. We can’t proclaim this until we can live it ourselves.

*“This is the final reward of patience. No one should complain about the cross or about troubles that may befall them. If you came to know the comparative value of things, and the love with which they are portioned out to us, you would only rejoice! May we know the love of Christ, which surpasses all knowledge!”*

## **GOD'S CALL TO BE GUILLELESS**

**A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman**

When our Lord was introduced to Bartholomew (also called Nathaniel) he praised him in a special way: "*Behold, an Israelite indeed, in him there is no guile*" (Jn.2:47). How often have you heard people say, when they hear about a young person determined to be strictly honest and observe a purity in using language, "it will wear off in time"? Many are ashamed to be innocent, but not to be mean, jealous, suspicious, censorious, cunning, insincere and selfish. But one of the psalms presents matters otherwise. "*Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle? One who walks uprightly, acts righteously and speaks the truth from the heart!*"

It is a difficult and rare virtue to mean what one says, to love without pretense, to think no evil, to bear no grudge, to be free from selfishness and to be innocent and straightforward. This sort of character is one of the surest marks of Christ's elect. In spite of what many say, guilelessness carries one on as safely as, and more happily than, does worldliness. It is a great privilege not to experience the moral miseries of the world and this is eminently the lot of the simple-hearted. They take everything in good part and make the best of every one, and have always something to be pleased with. They communicate their own happy peace to those around them. They diminish the evils of life in society and escape from knowing such things themselves. They are cheerful and contented for they desire little and take pleasure even in small things. They have never encouraged what in other people often spreads disorder and unholiness through a whole life.

Guileless persons are, most of all, people skillful in shaming and silencing the wicked. They don't argue but take things for granted in a natural way and so throw the wicked back into the memory of the times of youth when even they were free from sin and thought as only the guileless do now. None but the very hardened can resist this sort of implicit appeal. People of irreligious life live in bondage and fear; even if they don't acknowledge this to themselves, and many would be ashamed to admit this, but they are afraid of certain places or times or even of solitude. They know by a sort of instinct that devils may assail them.

The guileless person has a simple boldness and a princely heart. Such a person overcomes dangers which others shrink, from merely because they aren't dangers at all to the pure of heart. This often gives such a person a worldly advantage not deliberately sought. Straightforwardness can give one advantages the crafty would sell their souls for.

Where is one likely to find such persons? They are often people who live out of the world's bustle and intrigue. They are often not taken account of by the worldly. But our Savior saw such people as the true servants of God. It can be better not to be a person of the world, but to be one who lives quietly in dedication to God. This is the kind of character one receives only by the grace of God. If this gift is offered you do not refuse it. It can make you a saint.

## **MAKE MARY'S TWO LOVES OF MARY YOUR OWN**

### **A reflection from a homily by St. Aelred of Rievaulx**

The spiritual life combines two activities. There are purely spiritual ones, like *Lectio Divina*, and there are spiritualized material ones, like providing food for the brethren. These two activities were perfectly present in Blessed Mary's way of loving. That she clothed our Lord, that she fed him, that she carried him and fled with him into Egypt, all pertain to the realm of physical activities. That she treasured holy words in her heart and pondered them and meditated on the divinity of her son and contemplated his power and savored his sweetness, all these pertain to what is purely spiritual.

As long as we are in this body, in this exile, in this place of penance, let us realize that what is most proper and most natural for us is what the Lord said to Adam: You shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow. This pertained to Mary too. Let us do these tasks punctiliously and with all care as Mary did her tasks, and let us not abandon one role for the sake of the other.

Since all of us must do both sorts of tasks, we must do one sort at one time and the other sort at another time—unless some necessity arises. We must keep carefully to those times which the Holy Spirit has determined for us. At the time of *lectio* we must stay still and quiet, not yielding to idleness or drowsiness, but sitting and listening to Jesus' words. But when it is time for work we should be alert and ready and on no account neglectful. Both are ministries and mysteries of love.

The Lord has brought us into his castle and shut the gate. He has then brought us around to the east gate. This gate is Mary most holy. For the gate which faces east generally receives the brightness of the sun first. Mary most holy always looked first to the brightness of God, and first received it within herself. In Mary this gate was sealed with chastity. It was not broken but made stronger by the entrance of the Lord.

We have within us a spiritual castle, that castle of which I have just spoken. Without doubt, then, Jesus has spiritually entered into us. Without a doubt those who receive Jesus spiritually within this castle are most fortunate. Because of this we also have within us spiritually the Most Holy Mary. Where Jesus is, there she is also. In her we see perfect humility, perfect chastity and perfect charity.

All this is found in this castle which the Heavenly Father fashioned, the Holy Spirit sanctified and the Son entered. The Trinity has uniquely chosen it, and us, for a dwelling place. Let us now enter into our own souls and let us see how all this is, or at least ought to be, realized in us spiritually. Let us give thanks!