

THE TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Sun. **The Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Sept. 30 **HOW MANY ARE OF GOD'S CHURCH!**
A reflection adapted from a text of Fr. Henri Lacordaire, OP

Mon. **Memorial of St. Therese of the Child Jesus**
Oct. 1 **MY LOVE AND MY PRAYER**
A reflection by St. Therese of the Child Jesus

Tues. **Tuesday of the 26th Week in Ordinary Time**
2 **MY PRAYER AND THE ROSARY**
A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII

Wed. **Wednesday of the 26th Week in Ordinary Time**
3 **LEARNING TO LOVE WITH GOD'S JOY**
A reflection adapted from homilies by St. Pope John XXIII

Thurs. **Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi**
4 **HOW WE MAY SERVE THE LORD IN JOY**
A letter from St. Francis of Assisi

Fri. **MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
5 **SEEKING GOD WITH ALL ONE'S HEART**
A reflection from an exhortation by St. Columban, monk

Sat. **Memorial of St. Bruno**
6 **THE BEAUTY OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**
From a letter by St. Bruno

HOW MANY ARE OF GOD'S CHURCH!

A reflection adapted from a text by Fr. Henri Lacordaire, OP

“John said to Jesus: Teacher, we saw a person using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop him because he is not of our number. Jesus replied, Don't try to stop such a person...” (Mk.9:38ff). Any one who loves God is a living member of God's Church. It doesn't matter where or when that person lives. St. Augustine tells us that two loves are making two cities. The love of God is making the City of God and the love of merely human things is making the City of Mankind. The love of God makes the Kingdom of God, God's city, and the source of that love is Jesus Christ. Whoever lives that love is a member of God's city.

Jesus has been sacrificed for us from the beginning of the world. Has the extreme character of his suffering moved you? Many find their feelings too cold and too guilty to turn to God naturally. Some can't call on the name of Jesus because he has never been proclaimed to them. Yet people don't have to know the source of the flame of love which consumes them. Many are not led to Calvary from their birth and have not seen at Calvary what the God-become-human suffers in agony for them on that hill. Yet a drop of that sacred blood has sought them by ways invisible to human sight and they sense the fragrance of eternal life and have responded to its mute appeal to charity.

The Church is not only what it seems to be. It is not only a visible organization with buildings, a history, and a hierarchy. Nor is it simply authenticity, virtues, miracles and the like. We see more of it in the kind of half-light and shadow that contains all the saintliness that is hidden from us. Yes, the angels see it and recognize that it is an underground foundation and support for what is seen and see that each person has within a kind of sanctuary which is a personal holy of holies. There a hidden incense of love and mercy is offered to God.

Love is something that cannot be caught or contained. Who is there that can see how it springs to life within a person? There is, so to speak, an immortal substance within each of us of which we aren't aware any more than we are aware of the hidden ways the Divine Love walks to find and possess us.

Wherever the love of God is, there is Jesus Christ. Wherever Jesus is, the Church is there with him. Every human person, certainly every Christian, is called to join the body which is the Church. But so many are prevented by insuperable ignorance! They are, so to speak, left under the direct rule of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is the leader and sovereign head of all Christianity and Christians. The Church of God has for this reason a kind of invisible extension that no human eye can take in. Those who see only boundaries which appear, lack all idea of the twofold radiance which is its true nature. The Church that is Jesus Christ and all who labor knowingly or unknowingly in his name calls and raises up all who live the unselfish love of Jesus, wherever in the world they may be found. Do not seek to forbid them this labor. Show them the fullness of Christ so their labor may be yet more effective in advancing the Kingdom of God.

MY LOVE AND MY PRAYER

A reflection by St. Therese of the Child Jesus

One who is enfolded by Divine Love can't remain inactive. One may, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to those words of his, so full of fire and of comfort. One may not appear to be contributing anything but really one contributes very much. One is doing more than Martha, as she hurries distractedly to and fro, and wishes her sister would do the same.

It is not that our Lord has any fault to find with Martha's exertions. His own mother, Mother of God though she was, put up with humble work of that sort all her life. Didn't she get the meals ready for the Holy Family? Martha is a devoted hostess, but she won't keep calm. That's the trouble.

All the saints have seen the importance of Mary's attitude, even some of those who have done the most to fill the world with the light of the Gospel teaching. Great friends of the Cross like St. Paul and St. Augustine and St. John of the Cross and St. Thomas and St. Francis and St. Dominic all went to prayer to find the secret of their wisdom. It is a divine wisdom that has left the greatest minds lost in admiration.

Give me a lever and a fulcrum, said Archimedes, and I will move the world. He wasn't talking to God so his request wasn't granted, and, in any case, he was thinking only of the material world. The fulcrum God told the saints to use was God's self and the lever was prayer. Only it must be the kind of prayer that sets the heart on fire with love. That's how the saints shift the world, and how they'll do it until the end of time.

What an extraordinary thing is the efficiency of prayer! It has access at all time to God's presence. It can get whatever it asks for. And it's a mistake to think your prayer won't be answered unless you've something out of a book. If that were true I'm afraid I would be in a terribly bad way. You see, I recite the Divine Office with a great sense of unworthiness, but apart from that I can't face the strain of hunting about in books for splendid prayers. There are so many, each more splendid than the last. How could I recite them all, or choose between them?

I do what children do before they've learned to read. I tell God what I want quite simply, without any splendid turns of phrase. Somehow, God always manages to understand me. For me, prayer means launching oneself out of one's heart towards God. It means lifting up one's eyes very simply to heaven. It is a cry of grateful love, either from the crest of joy or the trough of despair. It's a vast supernatural force that opens out my heart and binds me close to Jesus. There is no need to be special or say special things. It's enough to be small, smaller than ever!

MY PRAYER AND THE ROSARY

A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII

The substance of a well-meditated rosary is a three-note chord. It sounds a music in our heart and soul that raises us to God's love and its delight.

The first note is contemplation, pure and clear and immediate. Each mystery focuses us on a truth of faith which speaks about the redeeming mission of Christ and reminds us that we share it.

As we contemplate this we find ourselves in close communion of thought and feeling with Jesus in his life and teaching. He is Son of God and son of Mary. He lived on this earth. He redeemed and taught and sanctified. In the silence of his "hidden life" everything was prayer and work. But the same thing was true of his passion and its suffering, and of the triumph of his resurrection, and in the glory of Heaven.

The Risen Jesus sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father. He is constantly helping and sending us the Holy Spirit. He is always giving life to us and to the Church which he founded. It walks his way through the centuries in prayer and work; it must follow his example.

The second note is reflection. It diffuses a kind of radiance over everything and everyone. This comes from the mysteries of Christ's life and their fullness. It is prayer that is responsible for this.

In each mystery each praying person finds the right teaching for that time and place. We find sanctification through the Holy Spirit as it guides our hearts and minds. It dwells within us and from our depths intercedes with sighs too deep for words, as St. Paul reminds us.

Each one of us is offered the opportunity to confront our own life and all its weaknesses with the strength that comes from God in prayer. In this we find an inexhaustible grace for our own spiritual struggles and the needs of those we will meet during the day.

Finally, the third note of our cord of love is our intention. Why do we pray? We intercede for individuals of all sorts. We pray for various institutions and the needs of the institutions in which individuals live and work. We pray for needs that are personal and needs that are institutional. We practice charity towards these neighbors God has given us in both ways.

What is more important than that charity should fill our hearts and everything that issues forth from them. We want all that comes forth from us to be a sharing in the charity of Christ and a labor on behalf of the Mystical Body of Christ and the healing of its wounds.

Think of God's intention in our regard. God seeks only our salvation and that of all. What does our prayer inspire us to do? We are moved from within to reach out and share our faith and our hope, and share them in love. If you daily pray the Rosary you daily renew your own determination to share in this loving and saving intention of our loving and saving God.

LEARNING TO LOVE WITH GOD'S JOY

A reflection adapted from homilies by St. Pope John XXIII

How many billions of people are there on earth who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and who have no personal experience of God's love. St. Therese of the Child Jesus is a patron of the mission to evangelize the entire world. Indeed, God has given to each of us a personal helper in carrying out our part in this mission—our Guardian Angel. The entire existence of an angel is taken up in prayer; i.e., in an active and total giving of self to God as mirroring the Divine Son's total openness to the Heavenly Father's gift and the returning of that gift. The Lord Jesus shows us how a human person may let life itself be an acceptance of God's gifts and a returning of these gifts to God by devoting one's self wholly to prayer and mission.

Our belief that each person has a guardian angel reflects what Jesus says in the Gospel about each person's having an angel standing before God in adoration and prayer. God has told us that it is not good for us to be alone. That's why we not only have Jesus' promise to be with us always, and God's assurance that he has charged one of his angels to watch over us, but we have a "cloud of witnesses" around us made up of saints and fellow believers.

It is obvious that God wishes each of us to collaborate with others, and with God's very self, in the work of redemption. God has made us, as it were, sharers in his own responsibility. We are God's assistants in mission! God is constantly showing us how we can and are called to assist in this work.

Have we failed to collaborate? We still are able to make amends. We are still able to prove our good will. We are still able to reach out to those who need to hear the Gospel message in a believable way.

How can you make your witness believable? You can imitate your Guardian Angel and St. Therese, and so many others, in living a life of self-giving work and prayer. Earnest and confident prayer is a first blessed step in the right direction.

Some are called to do this full-time. St. Francis Xavier is an example. Others do it in what seems a hidden way by prayer and written support for those who labor, as did St. Therese. These are two lungs and without two healthy lungs how can the Body of Christ work the wonders God has called it to work?

In whatever direction you turn, at every hour of the day and night, you find others around you helping you on your way and supporting you by their strength and love. Why do we so often forget these facts? Now that you remember them never let that memory fade.

Let us bring the joy of knowing that we are given all you need to do the work Christ has shared with us. What we have to share is joy. What is more properly the gift of love than shared joy?

HOW WE MAY SERVE THE LORD IN JOY

A letter of St. Francis of Assisi

Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to carry to all the fragrant words of my Lord, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Word of the Heavenly Father. I must also bring to your attention the words of the Holy Spirit for they are spirit and life.

Although all the world's riches were his, Christ and his blessed mother chose poverty. He subjected his will to the will of the Father, saying: Father, your will be done; not as I will but as you will.

Now this was the will of the Father. His blessed Son whom he gave us and who was born for us should offer himself by shedding his blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the Cross. This sacrifice was not for himself, through whom all things were made, but for our sins. Thus, he left us an example so we would should follow in his footsteps.

Jesus wants us all to be saved through him and to receive him with pure heart and sinless body. How happy and blessed are those who love the Lord and do what he says in the Gospel: You shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart and your whole soul and your neighbor as yourself.

Let us therefore love God and adore him with pure heart and soul, since he says that he is especially seeking authentic worshippers who will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Let us sing his praises day and night. For we must pray always, without losing heart.

We must also fast and abstain from vices and sins and from excesses in food and drink. We must be Catholic. We must visit churches frequently and show reverence to clerics, not only for their own sake, even though they be sinners, but because of the office they hold and because of the ministry of the most holy body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which they offer on the altar and which they receive and administer to others.

Let us all firmly believe that no one can be saved except through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and though the Lord's holy words which they proclaim and administer. We must love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. We are to observe the commandments and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must also deny ourselves and submit our bodies to the yoke of service and of holy obedience, just as each of us has promised the Lord. We are not to be wise and prudent according to the flesh, but rather simple and humble and pure. We must never wish to lord it over others but must rather seek to be servants and subject to every human being for God's sake. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon all who have done this and persevered till the end. This Spirit will make its dwelling place in them and they shall be the children of the Father in Heaven, whose work they do. And they are the spouses and brothers and sisters and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I, Friar Francis, your least servant, by the love that is God beg and implore all whom this letter may reach to receive these fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love and to fulfill them with love and understand them and persevere to the end in putting them in practice.

SEEKING GOD WITH ALL ONE'S HEART

An exhortation by St. Columban, monk

Let us follow that vocation by which we are called from life to the very fountain of life. Jesus is the fountain, not only of living water but of eternal life. Jesus is the fountain of light and spiritual illumination. From Jesus come wisdom, life and eternal delight.

God, the author of life is the first fountain of life; the creator of light is the first fountain of spiritual illumination. Therefore, let's seek the fountain of life and light and living water and do it by devaluing what we merely see. Let us leave the world and dwell in the highest heavens. Let's seek these things like so many shrewd and thinking fish who want only to drink of and dwell in the living water that wells up to eternal life.

Merciful God, good Lord, I wish that you would make me one with that fountain so that I may drink there of the living spring of the water of life and do it with others who likewise thirst for you. There, in that heavenly place, may I dwell always, delighting in the abundant sweetness. I want to hear myself say: "How sweet is the fountain of living waters; it never fails and it wells up to eternal life."

O God, you are yourself that fountain ever and again to be desired. You are ever and again to be consumed. Lord Christ, always give us this water so it will be for us the source of that living water which wells up to eternal life. I ask you for this great gift.

Who doesn't know that you, King of Glory, know how to give great gifts, and you have promised them? There is nothing greater than you. You bestow yourself upon us. You give yourself for us.

Therefore, we ask that we may know what we love, since we ask nothing other than that you give us yourself. For you, O Lord, are our all. You are our life, our light, our salvation, our food and our drink—our God! Inspire our hearts, I beg you, Jesus. Do this with the breath of your Spirit. Wound our souls with your love. Let the soul of each of us say in truth: Show me my soul's desire, for I am wounded by your love.

These are wounds I long for, Lord. Blessed is the one so wounded by love. Such a person seeks the fountain of eternal life and drinks from it. Yes, we continue to thirst! Our thirst grows ever greater, even as we drink. The more we love the greater our suffering. Greater still is our healing. May our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, our good and saving physician, wound the depths of our hearts and minds with a healing wound. That wound is Jesus Christ himself, who reigns in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

THE BEAUTY OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

From a letter by St. Bruno

I am living in a wilderness in Calabria, sufficiently distant from any center of human population. I am with my religious brethren, some of whom are very learned. We persevere in our holy life, waiting for the return of the Master, ready to open the door for him as soon as he knocks.

How can I speak adequately about this solitude? It is in a wide and pleasant plain between mountains, with verdant meadows and pasturelands adorned with flowers. There are gently rolling hills and shaded valleys where there are rivers and brooks and springs. There are watered gardens and many fruit trees.

But why am I giving so much time to pleasantries. For a wise person there are other attractions, even more pleasant and useful. Nevertheless, scenes like these are a relaxation and diversion for fragile spirits wearied by a strict rule and attention to spiritual things. If a bow is stretched for too long it becomes unfit for its purpose.

Only those who have experienced the solitude and silence of the wilderness can know what benefit and divine joy they bring to those who love them. There the strong can be recollected as often as they wish, abide within themselves, carefully cultivate the seeds of virtue and be nourished by the fruits of paradise. There one can try to come to clear vision of the divine Spouse who has been wounded by love. This pure vision permits them to see God.

You should always be aware of Scripture's words: "If anyone loves the world and what is in the world—the concupiscence of the flesh, the covetousness of the eyes and of pride—the love of God is not in that one". "Whoever wishes to be a friend of this world becomes an enemy of God." Is there any worse folly and downfall of spirit, anything more hurtful or unfortunate, than to wish to be at war against the one whose power cannot be resisted? Are you stronger than God? If, for the moment, God's patient goodness moves us to repentance, will God not, at last, punish the offense of those who disregard his call?

My dear friend, what do you intend to do? What—if not believe in God's counsels? This is God's counsel to you: "Come to me, you who are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you!" Isn't it a burden to be tormented by concupiscence, under attack by the cares, anxieties, fears and sorrows that are the result of those desires? Then flee all this agitation and misery! Go from the storm of this world to the cove where there is tranquility and certain rest.

You know what Wisdom says: "If you do not renounce all your possessions you cannot be my disciple"! Is there anyone who cannot see how beautiful and useful and pleasant it is to dwell in God's school under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and there to learn the divine philosophy, which alone can confer true happiness?

Do not disregard this admonition from your friend. At least come on a devotional pilgrimage. Together we will talk about what concerns the good of both of us. You will not regret the difficulty involved in the journey. By the way, please send me the Life of St. Remi, because it is impossible to find a copy where we are.