

THIRTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Sun. **The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
June 30 **KEEPING AWAKE IN QUEST OF HOLINESS**
A reflection from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Mon. **Monday of the 13th Week in Ordinary Time**
July 1 **IMITATING CHRIST IN LOVE & MERCY**
A reflection from a sermon by St. Cyprian of Carthage

Tues. **Tuesday of the 13th Week in Ordinary Time**
2 **TRUSTING WHOLLY IN GOD**
A reflection from Life in Christ by Nicolas Cabasilas

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Wed. **Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle**
3 **WHAT MAKES BELIEVING DIFFICULT?**
A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Thus. **Independence Day**
4 **LETTING GOD OPEN US TO LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS**
A reflection developed from a mediation by Fr. A. DeMello

Fri. **Friday of the 13th Week in Ordinary Time**
5 **HONORING GOD WITH YOUR LIVING**
A reflection from the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria

Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
6 **MARY'S NEVER-ENDING THANKSGIVING**
Reflection developed from a sermon by St. John Chrysostom

KEEPING AWAKE IN QUEST OF HOLINESS

A reflection from a sermon by Blessed Gueric of Igny

Jesus had set his face toward Jerusalem. You too have been chosen by Jesus to be one of his companions on the path he walks toward the Father and the Heavenly Kingdom. In circumstances like these, would you go aside and take a nap? Of course not! So why aren't we intent on our prayers. Why don't we stay wide away and carry out all the duties that fall to us with fervor? The very morning of the unending day has dawned. You have glimpsed the serene and eternal light of Jesus returning to us from the dead; it has given everything a new brightness and gladness.

Listen, then, to the psalm: *"It is now time to wake up from sleep; the night is far along and day is very near!"* Keep awake so the morning light will revive you. It is none other than Christ who is revealing himself, as surely as the dawn does. If you are keeping watch for him you will relive yet again the mystery of his resurrection today! Don't you want to sing: *"The Lord is God and has given us light! This is the day the Lord has made, let's rejoice and be glad in it!"*?

The Lord holds, as though hidden in the hollow of his hands, a light which he wants to let shine on you! You are the Lord's friend and Jesus is telling you that this light is his to give and that you only need to get up and accept it. Will you act like a sluggard? Will you go on sleeping and being oblivious? Didn't you listen to the Scripture: *"A little sleep, a little napping, a little time to fold my hands in rest"*? Didn't you hear the warning this passage contains? Aren't you afraid that while you are asleep Christ will come, resplendent in life, and pass you by? You won't deserve even to see his back as he walks by.

Don't you realize it may be too late when you finally wake up? Do you want to spend the rest of your life lamenting your mistakes and trying to repent when the time for repenting is past? Listen to three Scriptures. First, *"because we have wandered from the way of truth, the light of righteousness hasn't shown upon us nor have we found understanding"*, and second, *"but for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise"*, and finally *"the one who lives an upright life shall see the King in all his splendor"*. These refer to the happiness to come, but they also tell us what is granted to us for our consolation, even in this life.

Whether we're going to watch in prayer or will work with a will, let's get ourselves going and show a renewed and lively zeal and zest. After all, we have received a share in the Lord's resurrection! The chief sign of renewed life is vigorous and energetic action. If we die to the body and open our eyes to contemplation, we will show we have risen to a new life. We will be undeserving of this unless we grow in active love.

Life begins to return when prayer increases love. It reaches perfection when our understanding receives the light of contemplation. Strive to mount ever higher on the ladder of growth in holiness. That is how we finally come to resurrection. What more can we long for than that?

IMITATING CHRIST IN LOVE & MERCY

A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Cyprian of Carthage

What Christ did and taught is God's will. That means practicing humility in behavior, steadfastness in faith, modesty in words, justice in deeds, mercy in good works, and discipline in daily life. This means we are to become incapable of doing injury to another but capable of bearing injuries. It means rejoicing in the prosperity of a neighbor as though it were our own, thinking of another's loss as our own, believing another's gain is our own. It is to love even friends for God's sake and not simply for their own. It means putting up with enemies, and even loving them. We are to do nothing to another that we would not want to befall us and not to refuse to another anything that you could rightly want to have given to you.

Are we ready to help a neighbor in time of trouble and not only according to our means but even beyond our means? Do we keep peace with our brothers and sisters? To do such things is to love God and to do them whole heartedly is to love God with all our heart. We love God as our Heavenly Father and we fear him as our Lord. We put nothing before Christ, because he has never put anything before us. Yes, all who love the name of the Lord will be glorified. We can accept being unhappy now, confident that we will be happy hereafter.

We will only be following the Lord Jesus if we behave in this way. Those who say they believe in Christ must live in the same way he did. The Son of God didn't come to reign but to serve. He became poor to make us rich; he accepted blows for our sake; he showed us how to feel no loss when we are scourged. It is a matter of imitating Christ. That is what a Christian is. A Christian is holy, innocent, undefiled and chaste. There is no place in the heart of a Christian for malice, but only for devotion and goodness.

A Christian is one who imitates the life style of Christ. Christians are merciful to all and ignorant of injustice. Christians forbid that the poor be disparaged and help the unfortunate. Christians mourn with those who mourn, feel the pain of others as though it were their own, and are moved to tears by the tears of others. All are welcome at a Christian's table. Everyone knows Christians are genuinely good.

Are you, then, a Christian? Then you are seeking to serve God diligently day and night. Your soul is sincere and without stain. Your conscience is faithful and pure. Your mind is wholly focused on God. You devalue worldly possession precisely so you may acquire heavenly ones. If you are this kind of person then you know joy and peace of heart. God would give you every gift. Open your life to God and to God's gifts.

TRUSTING WHOLLY IN GOD

A reflection from Life in Christ by Nicolas Cabasilas

Christ can be the subject of our thoughts at every moment. We are given the gift of being able to pay attention to Christ constantly—if only we ask. Those who want to call on the Lord need no special preparation or special place for praying. Nor do they need a loud voice. The fact is that God is present everywhere. God is always with us and within us. God is even nearer to all who are seeking the divine presence than are their own hearts. Don't forget these truths!

We are to firmly believe that our prayers will be answered. Never hesitate on account of your evil ways. Take courage, rather, because the God upon whom we are calling is kind even to the wicked and ungrateful. Indeed, before you call on God or even think of God, the Divine Presence is with you. For instance, God came on earth before most people thought to call out for God or to God. Jesus has told us, "I came to call sinners"! Obviously, God doesn't ignore those who sin or ignored him. You are never out of God's mind or heart.

Now you know how God seeks, thinks of, and loves those who don't even want to know Him. So how can God be expected to treat those who call upon him and seek to be close to him? If you were loved even when you hated God, how can you think that you will be rejected when you turn to God? Even less could you think you will be rejected or your prayer will not be heard when you actually love God? As Scripture says, "*If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more now that we are reconciled will we be saved by Christ's life?*"

Think about the things you pray for. We know we are God's servants. So, we pray for the sort of things a servant prays for—a servant who has offended. We don't call upon the Lord simply to ask favors or to receive rewards but we pray that the Lord will have mercy. Are those who love God, and who pray for mercy and forgiveness and remission of sin and all that sort of thing, likely to be sent away empty handed?

The Lord Jesus tells us that those who are well haven't a need for a doctor. But we are always calling upon the Lord for mercy and so we need God's help. But who needs help? Sinners need it. If the Lord calls us to prayer, then the Lord calls us to ask for forgiveness and does it because he wants to forgive us and have mercy on us. Let's call on God with our voices and our minds and our thoughts.

There is only one saving remedy, the name of Jesus. There is no other name but that of Jesus in which and by which we are to be saved. Let's apply that saving remedy continuously. We need only ask for this grace. God is always moving us to ask. What have we to fear? Trust in God with all your heart.

WHAT MAKES BELIEVING DIFFICULT?

A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Why did St. Thomas, the apostle, find it so difficult to believe that Jesus was really risen? Put this with a second question: Why does Jesus praise all those who have believed without experiencing what St. Thomas did? I answer the second question by proposing that ease in believing is only a matter of being ready to inquire and difficult only for those who are reluctant to do this. There are thousands of ways to come to belief—ask others how they came to believe and see. But Thomas declared he wouldn't believe unless he had a special kind of experience. Wasn't that true of many of the other people of Jesus' time?

Thomas and his fellows had the Scriptures and they accepted what they read. They were being told truths they needed to live in order to belong to God. It should have been easy for them all to accept the fulfillment of prophecies as evidence adequate to justify belief in Jesus. But they refused, like Thomas, to believe unless a miracle, and of a type they chose, was worked before their eyes. Even when given miracles, they refused to accept them because they weren't "the right kind" of wonders.

We hear Jesus condemning this stance, as we hear him warning his disciples that they too have been slow to believe what the prophets said. He condemned also the refusal to believe what Moses says in the Scriptures. He says it wouldn't convince them if someone were to come from the dead. They need to imitate the people of Berea are praised in Acts because they "*daily searched the Scriptures to see whether the things told them were so*".

St. Thomas was slow to believe only because he thought he had a right to be picky about what would convince him. He didn't pause and ask seriously if he hadn't already received enough "proof". Why was Christ so gracious as to give Thomas what he asked while praising those who weren't fastidious in this way? Of course, we don't know why Jesus did as he did and more than we know why he refused to give others what they demanded. What we do know is that there are endless ways to come to faith and one of them has been ours.

Our task is only to share the faith we have been given, and perhaps to testify to the way in which God has disclosed himself, and his Messiah, to us individually. The lesson is that it is not for us to tell God what must be done for us if we are to believe the Divine Word, in Scripture or in the Risen Jesus. It is for us to carefully search our own hearts and let ourselves be shown why we resist God's coming to us and resist living it with our lives.

Blessed are those who have not insisted on having God meet their criteria for believing. We don't come to God because we are in control, even of our believing or unbelieving. God decides what to reveal to us and it is enough, if we are willing to humble ourselves and accept that we haven't any more need for special treatment than anyone else. Doesn't it mean something to us that God brings people to his love and to a new life in so many ways? All are adequate. Seek to let God come into your life as he wills and God will indeed come. That is all we need.

LETTING GOD OPEN US TO LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS

A reflection developed from a meditation by Fr. A. DeMello

God's Kingdom is love. What does it mean, fundamentally, to love? It means being practically sensitive to life, especially to persons; it means being sensitive to life and to all living things without exclusion. When the North American colonies rebelled against the English crown their accusation was that the king had refused to be sensitive to their concerns and to the things that would make their lives better or worse. Such exclusions harden a person so that sensitivity dies. Did you ever remove a piece of trash or a dangerous object from a road, even though it posed no danger to you personally? That is sensitivity to others and to their good. Have you ever gone to considerable trouble to help another, knowing that no recognition or benefit would ever come to you? In such acts and moments love came to the surface signaling that it was there within and waiting to be released.

You don't have to struggle to possess this sort of love. It's already there within you. All you have to do is remove the blocks that you, or your past experience, have placed to deprive you of sensitivity. For the most part these are of two kinds.

You become fixated on a certain belief about a person or place or situation and you can't be sensitive to reality in consequence. You are like an airplane pilot who insists on planning a flight by last month's weather report. You have hardened your perceptions and become prejudiced. If you look at such convictions carefully you will see their defects and let them go.

The same thing can happen as a result of attachments. In this case, you find that something or some one gives you pleasure or contentment and you want to hang onto that feeling. You want more of the gratification. You think you won't really be happy otherwise. You are so tied up in the past you can't go on. Its like being stuck on a few bars of a song so that you turn a tiny part of the music into the whole reality of the music. The symphony of life goes on but you stay clinging to just a few bars of the music. No one can love in that way, in such circumstances.

Both of these blocks make one insensitive to the fullness of life and its beauty. Trying to limit yourself to a fragment of God's world and its riches creates tensions and conflicts, just as in the case of the American Revolution. We mustn't let ourselves be trapped in the narrowness our ancestors rejected and rebelled against. We do that if we close ourselves off from others out of fear or attachment. God never does this, and never blesses our doing it. If we want to celebrate God's gifts of life and freedom and joy and creativity and love we have to let God destroy our inner blocks and attachments. That's why he calls us to celebrate the reality of our civic freedom and let it flower into genuine inner freedom in the love that is sensitive to all life and its riches.

HONORING GOD WITH ALL YOUR LIVING

A reflection from the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria

We are commanded to honor and worship the one whom we believe to be the Word and our Savior, and through this One the Father and Creator of all. It is not something we are to do only at special times but perpetually and through our entire lives and in every way. The Chosen People expressed this in the promise “*Seven times a day I will praise you!*” If we understand reality rightly, we will thank God for all the gifts of body and spirit and not in a single sanctuary or at certain feasts but everywhere and always, in solitude and in community.

The presence of a good person inspires respect and reverence and is always an influence for the betterment of those such a person meets. Surely, then, those who are in presence of God—through spiritual knowledge and ceaseless thanksgiving in deed, word and thought—can’t help but become better and more helpful to all. This is what comes of believing God is present everywhere. It turns our entire life into a celebration. We praise God as we work the land, sail the seas, and in every other exercise of our skills. This constantly draws us closer to God. One is always serious but always happy too.

Of course, praise is not our only prayer. Petitionary prayer is important too. Yes, God gives us all things even if we don’t ask for them. But God asks us to give thanks, and to pray that others may turn to Him and learn love. Study the Lord’s Prayer to see how manifold our prayer should be. It embodies a knowledge of God that is meant to bring all to salvation.

Prayer is an opportunity for communion with God. We mustn’t neglect it, as we mustn’t neglect any real opportunity for good. The sanctity of persons who are close to God is united with God’s Providence and shows its results in the perfection of human persons and of God’s kindness to us all. Sanctity is a return to God of the goodness and affection God has shown us.

God is under no compulsion to do good. God does good freely and to reward those who turn freely to prayer and contemplation and active love because that is the fulfillment of the divine purpose of creation. God wants to share all the good with us that we are capable of receiving. The true worshipers and servants of God are those who offer God the freest and most loyal and constant loving service. We are given so much so that we might share it and do that in a way that leads others to the Divine Source of all good.

This is what we should remember as we pray. We are doing what is most wonderful, and most beneficial to the entire world. The spring of prayer is a spring of life-giving water, not only for those who pray but for all of God’s creation. Is there any more wonderful thing to do?

SHARING MARY'S NEVER-ENDING THANKSGIVING

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. John Chrysostom

The fact that a child was born of a Virgin is a great miracle. The evangelist, Luke, was amazed by everything that preceded and followed Jesus' birth and offered to all of us the Virgin Mary as a model and example to follow. After all, it was not simply the birth of our savior of which he spoke but his ministry and teaching of the Gospel and his passion and death and resurrection. What did all these mean to Mary? They were opportunities for continual thanksgiving. She didn't remain preoccupied with herself, much less with the trial and difficulties and suffering that she had to bear. She was wholly caught up in gratitude to God, as is shown in her Magnificat prayer.

Let's give thanks to God throughout our lives. That is what Mary calls us to do. How wrong it would be if we enjoyed God's blessings in deed and every day while making no return for such gifts. An offering of gratitude only increases the blessing we receive. God needs nothing from us, but we need everything from God. Our thanks only make us more worthy of the good things with which God showers us continually. The memory of these gifts and loving kindness deepens our love for God. That is what happened for Mary too.

What is the most awe-inspiring and life-giving thing we celebrate? It is called the Eucharist. It is the commemoration of all the many blessings as well as the culmination of the gifts of Divine Providence. It teaches us to give thanks always. Who was ever better aware of God's Providence than Mary? Who was more richly filled with the gifts of God's grace? Who had more reason to trust in God? Can we suffer anything that causes greater anguish than what Mary felt? But her every reaction was a continuation of the trust that she expressed in her surrender to God's word and will, and that brought about the Savior's conception. What have we to fear if she isn't to be afraid?

When the sacrifice of Christ is set before us, in words or in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we are called to give thanks for the entire world and its history. We give thanks for the old dispensation and for the new. We give thanks for all that was done before our times and all that will come later. We rejoice in all that God has done and made and, wonder of wonders, this sets us free from earth and turns us toward Heaven. *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of God's good will"*.

We see the fullness of what this means, however, because we are being set free to love more fully our fellow-servants. We rejoice as much in their blessings and good fortune as in our own. Let's join with Mary in giving thanks, everlasting thanks, for all these gifts, large or small, given to us and to everyone!