

TRINITY SUNDAY

THE ELEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **Trinity Sunday**
June 16 **THE BEGINNING AND THE END**
A reflection by Fr. Karl Rahner
- Mon. **Memorial of Mary Joseph Cassant**
17 **DO EVERYTHING FOR JESUS**
A reflection taken from “Saint of the Month” Website
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 11th Week in Ordinary Time**
18 **IN THE LORD WE FIND OUR JOY**
A reflection by St. John Chrysostom on John
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Wed. **Wednesday of the 11th Week in Ordinary Time**
19 **WHAT GOD CALLS US TO BUILD**
A reflection by St. Bede the Venerable on Ezra
- Thurs. **Thursday of the 11th Week in Ordinary Time**
20 **SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER**
A reflection from a homily by St. Pope Gregory the Great
- Fri. **Memorial of St. Aloysius Gonzaga**
21 **PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST**
A reflection taken from Wikipedia on Aloysius Gonzaga
- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
22 **HOW MARY TEACHES MERCY AND COMPASSION**
A reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

A reflection by Fr. Karl Rahner

“Jesus said to his disciples: I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of Truth comes it will lead you to the complete truth.” When we first hear the mystery of the Trinity proclaimed our reaction is amazement. How wonderful that the Triune God should have surrendered himself so completely to us creatures as to reveal to us his most intimate and precious secret. But that is what God did. God did it out of a love the incarnate Christ calls friendship and theologians call benevolence. Thomas Aquinas wrote: “Revealing our secrets to a friend is something that is so intimate that two hearts are as one; for whatever we reveal to our friend seems to stay in the depths of our own heart still”. The reason why our Lord told his disciples that he would no longer call them servants but friends is that he had shared his own heart with them. What this means is that we too are at the very heart of God in the Trinity; the secret that is the Trinity has been revealed to us, who are only creatures. St. Ignatius of Loyola says the God wanted to draw us into the depths of his heart.

God has drawn us into the community that is the divine nature because otherwise we would never have been able to grasp and contain it within ourselves. The secret of God’s heart is too vast for us. Yet, mysteriously, the trinitarian mystery has been made the prototype and inmost foundation of our own sanctification. We can never fully understand our state of grace, nor God’s whole plan of salvation, without building on this trinitarian foundation. That is what the Church has done in the classical formula that is the Apostles’ Creed.

The creed is based on a trinitarian statement of belief. In its simplest shape we can see it in an ancient Egyptian papyrus: *“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, and in God’s only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, and in the resurrection of the body and in the Holy Catholic Church”*. The structure of the entire economy of salvation is presented here with wonderful clarity. Our Faith proceeds from the Father, who is God as the first beginning and blessed ending. The creed doesn’t begin with a profession of faith in the One God, for this was taken for granted, but with a profession of faith in this one God as the Father of an Only Son, who is our Lord and bore the earthly name of Jesus and is also the Christ anointed of the Spirit, who is equally the God of my faith.

The resurrection of the body will establish all this conclusively. We will rise again because through Christ the Holy Spirit has brought the divine life of the Spirit to earth. The Spirit has brought spiritual life to the community which, for that very reason, is called the Holy Church. The Church is to be the earthly reflection of what the Spirit is in God. The Church is our native country where we are safe. There our sanctification is accomplished through Christ until the glorious resurrection of our spiritualized being. The Church, then, is the mystic circle where the end joins the beginning. It leads us to our original source, the Father, who sent his Son to bring his children home. In the Church we see the image of the Spirit who unites Father and Son, and us, in mutual love.

DO EVERYTHING FOR JESUS

A reflection from “The Saint of the Month” Website

Blessed Mary-Joseph died at the age of 25 of tuberculosis. His constant trial in life had been difficulty in learning and retaining what he learned. It had prevented his being accepted in the seminary and led his pastor to recommend him to the Trappist abbey of St. Mary of the Desert. He entered the novitiate in 1894 at the age of 16. His formation director told him simply: “Only trust, and I will help you love Jesus!” He kept this in his heart and it led him to the motto: “All for Jesus through Mary!”

He was known in his community for a perpetual smile and a readiness to help. He was always ready to learn—if only he could remember. The learning difficulty often led to misunderstandings and this led to humiliations. This was difficult for him to accept but he trusted, as his formation director had asked, and found he was able to use such experiences to deepen his love for Jesus. His favorite practice was meditation on the passion of Christ. In this way he surrendered all that he was, which meant both the strengths and the weaknesses, to Christ. He trusted that God would provide whatever he was lacking.

Brother Mary-Joseph made solemn profession on the Feats of the Ascension in 1900. He turned to Mary for the help he would need in his studies for the priesthood. He had the same learning difficulties as before but persevered. He was ordained after only two years, in 1902. He had been feeling unwell for some time already and shortly after ordination he was diagnosed with advanced tuberculosis. It surprised all that he hadn’t complained about the increasing pain this disease had to have been causing him. As with his learning disabilities, he bore the pain without complaint offering it to Jesus.

He was acquainted with a group which sponsored the dedication of those with incurable illnesses as what were called “victim souls”. Brother Mary-Joseph practiced this devotion and was helped by it to bear the increasingly severe pain which the advance of his tuberculosis was causing. Since the community knew of no ordinary way in which the disease might be mitigated his abbot sent him home for some weeks. His parents were orchard keepers and their family led a very outdoor life. This didn’t prove to be any help to Mary-Joseph and he only grew worse. His family sent him back to the monastery where he found strength in his self-offering as a victim for the Church and through the celebration of Mass.

On the morning of June 17, 1903 Mary-Joseph passed to God. He was only 25 years old but had borne his cross bravely and with a minimum of complaint. He already had a reputation for holiness and this gradually spread. In 1935 the process for his beatification was begun and he was beatified in 2004. In imitation of him, may we find strength in the knowledge that God loves us and is ever with us. What we can’t do by ourselves the Lord will give us strength to do, if only we do it with Jesus and for Jesus.

IN THE LORD WE FIND OUR JOY

A reflection St. John Chrysostom's commentary on John

In Scripture we find a passage which reads, "*we are comforted because the Lord had sent us home from captivity*". If it was a comfort for those who were captive in Babylon to be released and freed to go home from a strange land, then how much greater should our comfort be because we have been set free from sin. Doesn't this seem to you to be a wonderful reason to be glad and even leap for joy. How, then, can we let ourselves fall back into the very faults from which we were set free?

Let's listen to a second scripture: "*Our mouths were filled with joy and our tongues with gladness; they will say among the nations: The Lord has done great things for them*". Rejoicing at deliverance from captivity helps to fill people with nobler sentiments, but, after all, who wouldn't rejoice at that? Actually, our ancestors in faith didn't always do it. When Israel was released from Egypt and from slavery, they spent more time complaining than rejoicing. In the midst of so many good things they grumbled. They were often angry and even embittered. This went on continually. Perhaps you think, "But we aren't like that!" Even if that is true, why is it that we don't leap for joy?

Let's think about the reason our forebears had for joy. Think of our deliverance from terrible suffering. Haven't we been freed from persecution? Doesn't that very fact make the whole world aware of God's care for us? Yes, as the psalmist says, "*The Lord has done great things for us*". When we say this, are we only repeating words or is there a real joy that we are describing? When our ancestors said these words, they wanted to show that incredible events had lifted up their hearts in wonder.

The People of Israel gave a lesson to the entire world when they were carried off into captivity. They did it again, and in another way, when they were freed to go home. It was clear to all that God had done wonderful things with them and for them. When the emperor, Cyrus, let them go home he didn't ask anyone first. He was moved by God to do what he did. That was another wonder.

Can you look at your own life as filled with wonders done by God? Aren't our lives actually filled with wonders, and some of them such that no one can observe them but us? We have great things to give thanks for. Our call this day is to remember these things and to give thanks and rejoice. Let our joy be our message to the peoples of the world. Where is joy found if not in the Lord?

WHAT GOD CALLS US TO BUILD

A reflection from a commentary by St. Bede the Venerable on Ezra

When the exiled people of Israel were given permission to go home this meant that they could rebuild what the Babylonians had destroyed. The call goes out: *“Whoever belongs to the Lord’s People, let them go up to Jerusalem in Judah and rebuild the House of the Lord, and may God be with them”*. This is a paraphrase of a decree by King Cyrus. The prophet who paraphrased it did this in great faith and out of a great love for God. The People of Israel, more than any other nation, had been called by God to rebuild what had been destroyed. It was not just a matter of being free to return to the land of one’s birth and to live as free men in that land. It was a call to draw closer to God.

As I read such passages of Scripture, it seems clearer than light to me that God is calling us to know Him better. He is non-corporeal, unrestricted to any place, a spirit that is present everywhere simultaneously. We acknowledge that this God has a special relation with Israel and with Jerusalem. He rules there but holds sway simultaneously in the Kingdom of Heaven. He is in Heaven and also on earth with those who believe in him and obey him. He guides our hands and feet, our minds and hearts, to accomplish what is good and saving. Thus, the words of the texts quoted are filled with spiritual significance.

We all recognize that only those with whom God abides can pass from sinfulness to sanctity, from captivity in their own personal guise as symbolized by Babylon and to the freedom signified by Jerusalem. *“Without me, Christ says, you can do nothing!”* This is clearly a reference to the spiritual ascent, the going up to Jerusalem, so to speak. Those who truly seek to please God must lift up their hands to a higher world and its attractions and do it through love for eternal realities.

Those who were once held captive by love for ordinary things and disregard God are now offered freedom from such loves and are summoned to build a House for God. This is not a material house but a spiritual one. We begin by returning to love of God and that enables us to build a house of peace. It is a life of loving and helping relationships that binds us together into the house that is God’s own Church.

We repent by acknowledging our own sinfulness and God’s own loving kindness and grace. This foundation is laid in our hearts for us to become temples where God may dwell by building on that foundation. God will enlighten our hearts by his presence. But we must also take care to bring light to the hearts of our neighbors by leading them toward the fullness of praise and thanksgiving for God and God’s gifts. All must together praise the Creator and Savior. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of holiness and then, by our words and examples, inspire those around us to walk also in this way of holiness. This is the work of building to which our God summons us. Let us walk in God’s way filled with joy!

SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

A reflection from a homily by St. Pope Gregory the Great

Scripture gives us a mental picture of the Heavenly Jerusalem built as though an ordinary city. It is also, and more importantly, a vision of an inward peace created by what we call the communion of saints. But that vision is being realized on earth by the sufferings of believers. Here many are lashed by whips and oppressed in various ways. Perhaps they don't realize that even this is part of the building of that everlasting city we hope for.

This city is also called the Church. It was to those who are its citizens that the Apostle Peter spoke when he said: "*You are being built up like living stones*". St. Paul adds: "*You are God's land, God's building*". Yes, this city already has some great buildings here on earth in the form of the lives of God's saints.

Now in an ordinary building one stone supports another. Each is placed on top of another so that they support one another. Each supports, and, at the same time, is supported. In the Church every member both supports and is supported. Neighbors give one another mutual support so that the building which is love may rise by their deeds. Recall what St. Paul says in another place: "*Bear each other's burdens and, in that way, you will fulfill the law of Christ*". He adds: "*It is love which fulfills the law*".

If I neglect to support you in the way you live for the Lord, and if you pay little attention to supporting me in my efforts to live for God, how will the building of love ever rise among us? Only those who support the entire fabric of the Church supports any other in living the good ways shown us by our forebears. For we begin unformed in the ways of good deeds and love. But I can be supported especially by those who surpass me in the matter of good works and so I will be built up by them and may in turn support others. Each of us has to be supported by our predecessors and support those who come after us.

Note especially that the weight of the entire building is born by the foundation. Our redeemer alone supports the lives of all those who together constitute the building of love that is the Church. "*No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid, and this is Christ Jesus*". The foundation supports all the other stones making up a building but it is not supported by them. Our redeemer supports us all in our troubles and trials but in himself there is nothing that needs support. He is God and in God all support is found.

Let us never be distressed if we seem not to have the support we think we need. Let's always look to Christ and to the Heavenly Father and know that in them, by the sending and ministry of the Spirit, we find all that we need. It is for us to concern ourselves with supporting others and letting them perceive how well God supports us each and all, and will support us, and them, always.

PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST

A reflection taken from Wikipedia on Aloysius Gonzaga

Those who are born into rich or powerful families have great expectations placed upon them. Aloysius (Luigi) Gonzaga was the eldest son of a family with considerable political power and wealth, and was told that he was to have a military career. As early as four years old, Luigi was given a set of miniature guns and accompanied his father on various expeditions all viewed training exercises. At five he was first sent to a military camp and made the leader of a platoon of soldiers. He learned to march, which please his father, but he also learned to talk like a soldier which didn't please his mother. The life he was required to live exposed him to much violence and brutality. Before he was 8, he had witnessed the murder of two younger brothers. At that age he was sent to Florence to serve as a page in the court of Grand Duke Francis I, Medici.

Luigi had to digest, as we say, many disturbing and difficult experiences. In the midst of all this he fell ill with some sort of kidney disease and it became a chronic condition. During the times he had to spend in bed he entertained himself by reading about various saints, much as had Ignatius Loyola. This led him to spend a great deal of time in prayer. At some point he decided that he didn't want to follow the career his father had planed for him and privately made a vow of chastity. When he recovered enough, he and his surviving brothers were sent to the court of the Duke of Mantua for more training. He was shocked by the violent and undirected way of life that he found in the court and among his companions.

All this came together as he prepared for his first communion (given to him by Cardinal Charles Borromeo) and this led him to read more about missionaries, especially the Jesuits working in India. His first reaction was a desire for the life of a missionary but he decided to test his teaching ability and began to volunteer as a catechist for young boys in the neighborhood of Castiglione, his home town, and at the same time he visited the houses of several religious communities. He also adopted an ascetic life style.

His family ruled the Duchy of Montferrat and none of the ideas that Luigi had were acceptable to his father. He was the heir and had to rule the Duchy after his father. This led to a long process through which he first persuaded his mother to let him become a Jesuit and then his father. This reached a climax during a period his family spent in Spain due to a mission his father received from the Holy Roman Emperor. When it was clear that he could not be persuaded the family sought to get him to become a diocesan priest, as a stepping stone of being made a bishop. He refused entirely. Eventually, the family gave in and allowed him to petition the Holy Roman emperor to transfer his birth-right to a brother and to renounce all rights to the family's property or titles.

He became a Jesuit and we know the story of his work with plague victims. He saw this as returning to God the love that had been shown to him. He contracted the disease himself and died. We have a letter he wrote to his mother from his death bed and to accept God's call to build in heaven the Kingdom of love. He would support others better than he had been supported.

HOW MARY TEACHES MERCY & COMPASSION

A reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

Mary, is there anyone who had no good things to say in your praise? Is there anyone, rather, who hasn't asked you for help and received it? If anyone doesn't want to praise you that person should remember that you never fail to show mercy and compassion to those who need them. What's more, we know ourselves to be no more than your servants and helpers and we congratulate ourselves because we have learned humility and compassion and the virginal gift of self completely to God by imitating you.

What we love and admire most is your mercy. After all, it is to this mercy that we owe the restoration of the whole world and the salvation of all of us. Clearly, you cared very much for us all when you listened to the angel: "*Don't be afraid, Mary, because you have found grace with God.*" Who can take in the complete breadth and length and height of God's mercy, and from God you received that mercy to share with us? It stretches even to the Last Day for all who ask it. How could anyone be more blessed than one who has received such a grace?

Mercy and compassion are as broad as the universe and certainly embrace the whole earth. They reach to the city of God. Are the ruins of that city being restored? And you have been the means of repairing them by your consent to God's design. We were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death and now we have obtained redemption. It is through your assent that hell has been emptied, that the breaches in the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem have been repaired.

The life that had been lost has been restored to miserable but hopeful mortals. God is all-powerful and through your acceptance of his will and plan you have been the channel of his all-powerful mercy and compassion. In fact, your charity has been all-powerful because it is God's charity poured out through you. It has shown itself not only in deeds of mercy but in endless compassion. God has made you equally rich in both these marvelous qualities.

O brothers and sisters of mine, let's run with all our might to the fountain of mercy opened for us through Mary. We are so often wretched and miserable. So, our misery has recourse to the treasure of compassion and kindness which God has opened through you! Help us, mother, to learn from you and open ourselves to the endless riches that are God's graces and blessings.