

FOURTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
July 7 **LIVING IN THE JOY OF THE LORD**
 From Apostle & Apostolate by Fr. Lucien Cerfaux
- Mon. **Memorial of Blessed Eugene III**
8 **PUTTING OUR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST**
 A reflection from a sermon by St. Pope Leo the Great
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 14th Week of Ordinary Time**
9 **REJOICING IN THE GIFTS GOD GIVES TO OTHERS**
 A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard
- Wed. **Wednesday of the 14th Week of Ordinary Time**
10 **WISDOM CONCERNING THE SEARCH FOR GOD**
 A reflection extracted from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny
- Thurs. **SOLEMNITY OF OUR HOLY FATHER BENEDICT**
11 **FINDING COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD**
 A reflection developed from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny
- Fri. **Friday of the 14th Week of Ordinary Time**
12 **SEEKING GOD WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING**
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- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
13 **ASPIRING AFTER THE HEIGHTS OF LOVE FOR GOD**
 A reflection developed from On The Love of God by St. Francis deSales

LIVING IN THE JOY OF THE LORD

A reflection from Apostle & Apostolate by Fr. Lucien Cerfaux

“The Lord appointed another 72 and sent them out, ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he planned to visit. He told them: The harvest is rich but the laborers are few.” When the disciples had completed the task Jesus gave them, they reported, filled with excitement, that even the devils had fled before them! His response was that he had indeed seen the reign of Satan crumbling but that they shouldn't so much rejoice in this as in the fact that their names were written in Heaven. Those sent to bring the Good News to others first bring it to themselves. You can't bring to others anything but what you have received. You benefit first, proclaiming to yourself first what you then proclaim to others.

An apostle of the Lord is chosen and saved because chosen to be an apostle; such a person is already established in Heaven. In the measure you share this mission worthily you are saved already. That God has called us to bring Good News to others is evidence that God has saved us. We can forget about our personal salvation and center our entire life on the one longing that God's Kingdom be established fully. Our mission is to save as many as possible.

How does the Kingdom of God come? It is through work like that of those hired by a vineyard owner. He started in the early morning with a few but needed more. That's why Jesus added 72 others to the 12. After Pentecost comes a great horde of workers into God's vineyard—think of Peter and Paul and the whole history of the Church. God is calling people into the vineyard until the end of time. Our greatest joy is to be God's hired hands. Many are unhappy because they don't seem to have a task in life and search ceaselessly to find out what they are good at. They are terrified of being mediocre or useless. But not us!

There are many troubles in the world. Many of them are physical, and someday these may be overcome. Many are moral and some are deliberate denials of all ideals and the dreadful feeling that God is absent. But our job is not to wait for others to do something about all those problems, our task is to work for the Kingdom as though no one had ever done anything before us. Of course, in God's Kingdom you can never say nothing has yet been done, but the thing is to obey Jesus literally. Don't stop for anything. He tells us not to stop to engage in elaborate greetings to those we meet along the way. Don't listen to voices that would slow you down or fill you with doubts of the sort that weaken enthusiasm.

Are you worried that you haven't fully accepted God's grace, or have abused it? Are you concerned that you aren't worthy of your call? Do you hesitate because you aren't sure you'll have the courage needed? Have you made lots of resolutions, and failed to carry through on them? Well, there is always time to begin again! Perhaps for half or more of a lifetime we haven't been faithful to the call. Maybe we only have five minutes of life left! Then it is for those five minutes that God chose you, for that one last moment. Rejoice! Your name is written in Heaven! Proclaim the Lord's grace and love!

PUTTING OUR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Pope Leo the Great

The solidity of the faith which was praised in the apostle Peter is perpetual. That which Peter believed of Christ remains, and so does what Christ instituted in Peter. When the Lord asked his disciples who they believed he was, Peter replied that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Peter spoke among a variety of opinions filling the world and did it, Jesus says, not because of anything mere human flesh and blood could figure out but because it had been revealed to him by the Heavenly Father. Then Jesus adds: *“You are Rock and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven”*.

The work of sharing the truth Christ brought us continues. Perseverance in the faith Peter professed has continued. How could a mere human be said to be a rock, and called the foundation of the Church, and be constituted the doorkeeper of the Kingdom of Heaven? How can such a person’s judgments on binding and loosing be valid not only on earth but in heaven? All these matters depend on Peter’s association with Christ. The same is true for those who occupy the same office as Peter but come after him.

In a sense, Peter even today fully and effectively performs the duties we hear entrusted to him and does all that the Lord charged him to do. Peter acts in Him and through Him and with Him, by whom he has been glorified and chosen. It is not human frailty which acts in Peter as he lives on in Christ’s Church, but Christ himself acts. All that is won from the mercy of God by our daily prayers as Peter’s successor, comes of Christ’s work and merits; it is Christ’s power and authority which live in the Roman See. All that was gained by Peter’s confession, inspired in his heart by God the Father, passed beyond the uncertainty of human opinions and was given the firmness of God’s support.

Throughout the Church Peter daily says, *“You are Christ, Son of the Living God”*, and every tongue which confesses the Lord accepts the instruction which this voice provides. This faith conquers the devil, and breaks the bonds which bind the devil’s prisoners. It uproots us from this earth and plants us in heaven. The gates of Hades can’t prevail against it. It endures with such solidity by God that human weakness or evil can’t mar it nor the sickness of unbelief ruin its beauty. We humans beings are often found weak and even lazy. We don’t fulfill the duties of the offices we are given as we ought. The frailty that goes with being human gets in our way. However, devoted and vigorous we want to be, frailty gets in our way. What we have is the never-failing help Almighty God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was like us and yet equal to the Father, and brought the Godhead to involvement with things merely human. Yet he also raised up the human even to things divine. As a result, we can rejoice, and do rejoice, over the opportunities of service he gives. We are entrusted with the care of Christ’s sheep, and that of many of their shepherds. Our help is always in the Lord. All of us who are called to nourish one another’s faith and charity need always to put our trust wholly in the Lord.

REJOYING IN THE GIFTS GOD GIVES TO OTHERS

A reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

You know that in a community of many it is impossible for all to be equally strong, either in body or in character. Our Rule advises us to bear weaknesses with patience and charity requires that we stoop down to each of those who are weak. Suppose another sees this happening and begins to envy the one who receives help or is given some exception to a requirement. The person who is envious ought to feel compassion for the one who is weak but thinks rather that the other has received special care and would like to experience it too.

Sometimes we think others are happy when we ought rather to count them unfortunate and vice versa. The person who is envious of the charity shown another is revealed by this reaction to be trapped in concerns for worldly affection and for being treated specially. He wants to feel himself special. This may even lead one to grumbling that another has received something denied to oneself. The result is that charity is lessened and people begin to compete with one another rather than support and help each other.

I am not saying this to you because I have anything against any one of you. What I consider necessary is that you be forewarned so that you can strengthen yourselves against what may weaken our mutual charity. There are many who are weak, or who are very sensitive and delicate. This may require special consideration be shown to them; that can lead, as described, to a weakening of charity. We need to give thanks for the strength of one who can work especially hard, as we give thank for those who can spend more hours in meditation and prayer, but do we give thanks for those who are weaker and can do fewer things and need more help in doing their work? Do we give thanks for the opportunities of showing charity by helping others?

What kind of persons do we take as models for ourselves and try to imitate? Do we make ideals of persons who are strong only? I remember that a monk once took me aside in the speaking room only to fall at my feet and confess that he had reflected on the virtues of another monk and been over-whelmed by the fact that he counted thirty virtues in that other and they seemed wholly lacking in himself. Was he displaying great humility or only an attitude of holy rivalry? He was most mindful of higher things, but very much cast down by his weakness. Suppose you are able to fast more than another but the other surpasses you in patience. Shouldn't you give thanks for both gifts? Yes, you want to reflect on what you lack and pray to God that the lack may be corrected, but you have to give thanks both for your strength and your weakness. Both show dependence on the Lord and neither should fall into self-depreciation or jealousy. Indeed, we have a duty to vanquish evil with good, and to desire to realize all that is good more and more fully. We might wish for all to be equal, but end up desiring what proves destructive rather than good. Don't long for good like a miser longs for more money. It is not what we have that is most important but our dependence on God. What we give thanks for is God's great mercy toward each one of us. Could we receive more mercy than we do? Truly, we received such marvelous gifts and if others remind us of it daily, give thanks for that.

WISDOM CONCERNING THE SEARCH FOR GOD

A reflection extracted from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

“Happy the person who abides in wisdom and meditates on holiness and is mindful of the all-seeing eye of God!” These words are most fitting when applied to St. Benedict as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the way of life he taught us. We all know about his teachings and we all want to use them in improving our own lives in search of God. His rule promises a reward of happiness and commends wisdom, holiness and the fear of the Lord. Nothing we can acquire is of greater benefit than these virtues.

“Happy is the person who abides in wisdom”. In other words, happiness comes of holding fast to the end of the wisdom that is seeking God. We don't become happy as soon as we have found wisdom; we have to hold fast to it. Indeed, Scripture adds that in addition to finding wisdom one must be rich in prudence. You must not only find wisdom but make it your intimate companion and take delight in it. Solomon found wisdom. But prudence didn't abound in him. We are told that he didn't protect himself from the consequences of his many political marriages and fell into idolatry through marrying pagan women.

Many have found wisdom but because they didn't come to prudence, they lost it. Some became proud of heart because of all they learned. Some were led astray by lust. Some lost wisdom due to frivolity of heart, abandoning it as soon as they met even slight set-backs. Some believe for a while, but, when temptation comes, they fall away. They have no roots to hold them steady. But how could one take root if one doesn't stay in one place? Plants don't take root if moved around constantly. A good person, planted in the house of the Lord, can't take root or be well-founded in charity unless he abides stably and will never flower or bear lasting fruit. If you want to know why stability of place is so necessary ask our Holy Father Benedict and he will tell you.

Listen: ***“the cloister of the monastery and stability in the community”*** is the proper way to cultivate virtues. Even Solomon knew this: ***“As a bird that wanders from its nest so are people who leave their place”***. If a turtledove lays eggs and warms them but then flies away, all her labor will be lost. Some hope led her to fly away but that didn't prevent the loss of all she had done hitherto.

One must remain patiently under the discipline of wisdom in order to learn it. One who loses patience tends to cast away wisdom and go off in search of what isn't of lasting value. Teachings may be hard and difficult; many who followed Jesus left him when they found his teaching hard. Maybe the teaching that seems so hard to us is, as for them, the rock that is Christ. But if you stay with Christ you get to drink living water flowing from that rock; it was struck on the cross and from it, life still flows abundantly. We need to say with Peter, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!”*** That is the message of Benedict and his Rule. Cling to the community of those who seek the Lord and you will find life.

FINDING COURAGE & CONFIDENCE IN GOD

A reflection developed from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord”. Our Holy Father Benedict, whose name means ‘blessed’, and whom we remember as a blessing for so many, did trust in the Lord and teaches us to do likewise. Of him Scripture says, ***“your dew is light itself”*** and his rule repeats this. Through such loving and devoted confidence sins are forgiven, bodily ills are healed, the soul is especially healed, dangers are turned aside, fears disregarded and the world overcome. This of the Scriptural consolations taught *us* by his Rule. If one is in sin, think of Christ’s words, ***“take heart, your sins are forgiven”*** and if you suffer from some ill, remember the words, ***“your faith has made you well”***. To those terrified he reminds us of Jesus’ words, ***“why are you afraid, O you of little faith”***? If you are afraid of the world’s cruelty and violence he repeats ***“be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”***. Of course, the victory that overcome the world is our faith! More, heaven is won. By faith one is established in the Lord in charity. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mt. Sion, immovable. What is eternal can’t perish, nor can one who is united with the Lord.

O Lord, I love you. You are my strength and through you every hostile power gives way before me. I seem only a worm but I can defy the guile of the Devil and rely on the help of angels. I love you, Lord, my powerful defender, wise guide, gentle consoler, generous reward. I cast my care upon you, and in your wisdom I can’t be led astray. How much safer, how much better, to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in human help. Where did I learn this? In Father Benedict’s Rule.

Jeremiah compared the blessed who trust in the Lord with trees planted by a water course. They send out the roots of their love to the water of life. Such a one knows by experience what it is to be planted in faith and rooted in charity. In turning to God, we have been transplanted from the sterile ground of the merely human customs we grew up in. We had been marked for the axe and the fire but now all that has changed. Hear me and sink your roots into the very waters of life, into a love for the genuine land of the living. Only a tree rooted above in heavenly places can bring forth fruit that will last. The roots of our love must be fixed in heaven, in the highest of all things, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what Benedict leads us to do. As the earthly body’s nerves lead to the head, so all that makes us live and love genuinely leads us to Christ. The life you have received is bringing you to Him. Never turn back from what you have begun. You can’t do this of yourself but in the love of Christ all things are possible. Never forget the love which has brought you here to Christ and the community which lives his love.

SEEKING GOD WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

A reflection taken from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

The most important thing to seek is the love of God. It is the beginning and end of everything. Of course, we would very much want others to like and love us, especially because they see how we love our God. May God grant us this grace. May we become worthy to be loved by all through striving to grow in love for God. More, may we learn by such striving how to react to human love and use it to grow more in love of God.

Much of the time we feel a certain fear and trembling that we may not be loving God as we should. O yes, we hear St. Paul saying, "*I am certain that nothing can separate me from the love of God!*" But I'm not St. Paul! For you and me the future is unclear. Even Paul had to struggle lest having proclaimed God's love to others he should find ourselves cast away from it. I feel so often wretched and unworthy. How am I to be consoled? Everything seems to denounce me as unworthy. My life doesn't seem a striving against sin but a slavery to it. I seem to want the friendship of this world more than that of God.

It seems a great consolation that others like you or even love you. And yet we recall all that Scripture says about the emptiness of merely human love and how fleeting and changeable it can be. That is the danger of rejoicing in the love of others before one has learned how to love, even how to long for love. How can one be a friend to another if one hasn't learned to be a friend to oneself? Such a person may experience being abandoned by the very friends for whose love one has abandoned God.

It isn't that it takes time to pass between learning to love God to learning to love others. What I am saying is that the two must differ in intensity. It is always necessary to pay attention to each sort of love without neglecting the other. God can't be loved without loving the neighbor and the neighbor can't be loved well without loving God well. But if our heart is right, we can't be unaware of which of these two loves should be the stronger and which should shape the form and expression we give to each type of love, or to limits on human loves.

The blessed state is to live in the truth—to avoid seeking to please out of a love of feeling good and so making yourself amiable in silly ways, or aloof in pride. One who is filled with genuine charity doesn't fall into the one or the other ditch but stays on the path shown us by Jesus. Taking thought for what is good not only in God's sight but also by human standards you mustn't neglect either a clear conscience or the respect of others. We have to show ourselves true friends to others if we are to love God rightly. Nor can you simply try to avoid shocking others; indeed, if you don't build others up in their love for God by correcting them you give a kind of scandal. But, of course, are you sure you have the wisdom to discern who is going wrong and who is simply weak? Indeed, we walk in fear and trembling. We are never wholly secure in knowing that we ourselves are walking in true love of God or in right love of the members of our community. What we are being taught is humility and a humble trust that brings us to God.

ASPIRING AFTER THE HEIGHTS OF LOVE FOR GOD

Reflections developed from On the Love of God by St. Francis deSales

How do you imagine Mary's love for God? Think, for instance, of her sleep. How would you imagine sleep being a way of loving God? Did Mary give rest to her body except that she might regain strength to serve God better as a result? Doing that is assuredly a wonderful act of charity. As St. Augustine says, "Charity places upon us an obligation to love our bodies properly". They are necessary for doing good works for God. Indeed, Christians must love their bodies as living images of the incarnate savior, as though they had been raised with Jesus from the same stock and belonging to him by blood as well as free choice. Above all, this holds if we have renewed our alliance with Him by the real reception of the divine body of our Redeemer in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

What devotion Mary must have shown in loving her own body, not only because of its humble goodness but because it was the living source of our Savior's body and belonged to him in the strictest sense with such marvelous closeness. She might have said to herself as she went to bed: "Take your rest now, ark of the covenant and vessel of sanctity in which God finds a throne".

And think of the dreams she might have had! Did she dream that she still held you, our Savior, in her womb, as she actually had for nine months? Did she dream that Jesus was nursing at her breast? Did she dream he was sleeping on her breast as he once had? In saying this we notice that sleep can be a kind of ecstasy. It needn't be filled with evil imaginings. Perhaps like Joseph of old Mary dreamed of the future joy and greatness of heaven. Perhaps she saw herself clothed with the sun and having the moon under her feet, as Scripture pictures her. Perhaps she dreamed herself totally encompassed by her Son's glory and crowned with the life that belongs to God's saints. Or perhaps like Jacob she saw the progress and the fruit of the redemption brought about by her Son.

How can anyone picture the immense wonders and delights of Heaven? Could Mary have dreamed of conversations she would have with that dear child of hers in glory? Perhaps she dreamed as Solomon did when the Lord came to ask him what he sought. Solomon made such a marvelous declaration that he seemed to speak as though awake. Perhaps her heart was watchful in just this way as she slept. Perhaps she was simply "awake to Christ", rather as St. John the Baptist was when Mary brought Jesus to him and Elizabeth and he leaped for joy. We can't know what she dreamed nor can we limit what God can do for those He loves and chooses.

I like to think of the heart of the Virgin as though it were made of asbestos. It was perpetually on fire with love of God and yet was never burnt up, so to speak, or damaged. The sacred flames of Divine Love need never perish nor go out, and they only make hearts more perfect because they burn within. We can imagine ourselves loving our God and our Savior as Mary loved. We long to be beloved of God just as she was, and we long to use all that we are and have in loving our God, as we may believe Mary did. To think of her is to think only of ways in which we too may love our God with all our heart.

