

## **TWENTIETH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

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**Sun.**      **The Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Aug. 18**   **THE PROMISE & THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION**  
A reflection by Joachim Jeremias

**Mon.**      **Memorial of Bl. Gueric of Igny**  
**19**         **ADVICE TO THOSE WAITING FOR CHRIST**  
A reflection from a homily by Bl. Gueric of Igny

**Tues.**     **Solemnity of Our Holy Father St. Bernard**  
**20**         **SEEKING GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART**  
A reflection taken from St. Bernard's sermons on the Canticle

### **MONASTIC DESERT DAY**

**Wed.**      **Memorial of St. Pope Pius X**  
**21**         **RESTORING ALL THINGS IN CHRIST**  
A reflection a pastoral letter by St. Pope Pius X

**Thurs.**    **Thursday of the 20<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**22**         **GOD'S PLAN EMBRACES ALL THINGS**  
A reflection taken from St. Gregory of Nyssa's homily on the Song of Songs

**Fri.**       **Memorial of St. Rose of Lima**  
**23**         **LOVE OF GOD OVERCOMES ALL OBSTACLES**  
A reflection developed from a Wikipedia article

**Sat.**       **Feast of St. Bartholomew**  
**24**         **STRENGTHENING ONE ANOTHER**  
A reflection taken from a homily by John Henry Cardinal Newman

# **THE PROMISE & THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION**

A reflection by Joachim Jeremias

***“Jesus said to his disciples: I have come to bring fire to the earth and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress till it is over!”*** Any attempt to sketch what Jesus promises his followers has to start from his conviction that his mission is the prelude to the coming of a time of distress. We call this the eschatological time to remind ourselves that it is the prelude to the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation and bliss. But no one should imagine that Jesus came to bring only peace. No, Jesus brought a sword to the earth; he brought fire and a baptism of suffering that is not just personal but cosmic.

Jesus was convinced that the sufferings of his disciples were linked indissolubly with his own sufferings. He foresaw that his disciples would be involved in a collective suffering to be introduced by his own passion. He was certain that the Kingdom of God comes through suffering and only through suffering.

Jesus was convinced that his suffering would fundamentally alter the situation of his followers. The rejection of Jesus would also involve his disciples. Jesus’ passion marks the turning point and prelude to the time of the sword. To agree to follow Jesus means to venture on a life that is as hard as the last walk of a person condemned to death. Discipleship involves the readiness to tread the lonely road and to bear people’s hatred. For a disciple, the special sting of suffering will be the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Micah, “one’s enemies are those of one’s own house”.

A division will go right through the midst of families and the closest relatives—fathers and brothers, mothers and daughters, even one’s own children. They will denounce each other and deliver each other up to death. Yes, Jesus envisages martyrdom as the fate of his disciples. The law that the Kingdom of God comes through suffering applies also to the disciples of Jesus. But suffering brings with it the promise that the surrender of life is simultaneously the acceptance of life. God will deliver those who endure to the end, and persevere faithfully in the hours of trial. God will deliver those who pray to be freed from the Evil One. For the work of sieving Jesus disciples is that of Satan. That is how the wheat is separated from the chaff.

As great as Satan’s power may be, God’s power is greater. God’s victory is certain! When the tempting of God’s People reaches its climax God will bring about a great turning point. The “little flock” is promised that circumstances will be reversed. The flock may be small in number, but even if it is the persecution that threaten it only makes it clear that they are indeed God’s flock. We shall be clearly the saints of the Most High! The Kingdom is promised to us. It is the greatest of all kingdoms and the only one that lasts forever! Don’t be afraid of the price you have to pay. Look toward God’s promise.

## **ADVICE TO THOSE WAITING FOR CHRIST**

A reflection taken from a homily of Bl. Gueric of Igny

In the Holy Ones of old the Church of Christ waited for his coming. In the same way we wait for Christ's Second Coming. The first hope was that Christ would pay the price of redemption. The second hope is for the reward of the labors of those who follow Christ and live and love as he lived and loved. That means our eyes are raised above earthly concerns and fixed with joyful longing on those of heaven. Some are impatient and try to snatch the prizes this world offers. Blessed are those whose whole hope rests in the Lord's name and take no notice of false and empty foolishness. Isn't it better to be humble with the meek than share ill-gotten gains with the proud? The Lord is our share, and so we will wait for him!

If you are wise, give eye to yourself and see how you are using your time. If you are a sinner don't waste the opportunity to repent. If you are holy then make progress in holiness. Remember the evil servant surprised by his Lord's coming! Evil servants say, "A rule here and a rule there, only a little of this and only a little of that, wait for this and wait for that" and they mock us. The one who grants faith tests it and crowns what he tests. The Lord commands us through Hosea: "You will be waiting for me for many days but you are not to take any other spouse".

This is the proper way of waiting for the Lord and keeping your pledge of love. Even though we miss and long for the consolation of his presence we must not look around for other consolations but keep ourselves in suspense looking toward his return. We are in suspense, as it were, between heaven and earth, unable as yet to grasp the heavenly things but seeking not to contaminate ourselves with the earthly. The reason why we choose this suspense, this suspended death, is to make ourselves persevere in our suspension from the cross—until we merit to die on it.

O Lord Jesus, when you were about to exercise that power of laying down your life, and accepting the sort of death by which you would will to lay it down, everything still remained in your own choice. You chose to hang from the cross so that being raised up over the earth you might draw us to yourself and then hang us too above all earthly concerns. You gave us an example so that we might also persevere until death on the cross and ascend from there to heaven all the more easily—stepping as it were from the topmost rung of the ladder of humility. Grateful thanks be to you, Lord Jesus! Where the cross is we are. Where the cross is we wait for you. We wait for "Eli", for our God, to come and take us to himself.

I believe that I shall see the Lord's favor even in the land of the living. Do you believe that too? Then strengthen your heart and bear with the Lord. Woe to those who lose patience. He promises that he will be coming quickly. "Look", he says, "I am coming quickly and bringing with me rewards to bestow on everyone in proportion to each one's labors. The time truly is short, though it may seem long to those who are in turmoil—whether from labor or love. Both are necessary. How long can anyone's labors last upon this earth? Be certain that the Lord will come, this Lord who is our own Lord, our dread and yet our desire, our rest and our reward, the sweetness and embrace we long for. He is the blessedness of all. He has chosen you. Never forget that; love as you are loved.

## SEEKING GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

A reflection taken from St. Bernard's sermons on the Canticle

It is a great good to seek God. Among all the blessings one can receive there is none greater than this. This is the first of God's gifts. This is also the final step in one's spiritual progress. There is no virtue that leads to it and it gives place to no virtue. What could be added to it to make it better? And since it is the consummation of all virtues how could it be pushed aside by any virtue? One who isn't seeking God has no virtue and there is no limit to this seeking. "Seek His Face evermore!" That is what the psalmist says to us.

I don't think that one who has found God will ever cease seeking God. We seek God not by walking but by longing; we don't move our feet but our heart! When one has been so fortunate as to find God that sacred desire doesn't cease. Rather, when one finds God one's longing is increased. Is the consummation of joy the extinction of one's longing for joy? Rather, it is like pouring oil on a fire. Desire is a kind of flame. Indeed, our desire will be fulfilled but the fulfillment isn't the extinction of the desire. That's why it isn't the extinction of our seeking God.

Why do I say these things? It is because everyone of us who is seeking God needs to know that God anticipated this seeking and sought us before we began to seek at all. I remind you of this so that, even after you receive all sorts of gifts of the Lord, you won't treat them as if they were God's gifts. We must give glory to God for them.

*"By night, on my bed, I reached out for him whom I love"*. We seek the Word because we had already been sought by the Word. If we were abandoned to ourselves we would be a kind of spirit that goes this way and never finds its way back to the one it seeks. The psalmist says: *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, Lord"*. Do you desire to return, to draw closer yet to the Lord? If that depended on your own will or strength you wouldn't beg for help. Why would you ask another for what you already had yourself? It is obvious that we desire what we can't bring about by ourselves.

We long to draw closer and we long to be sought by the one we seek. Yet in this very longing we find a consolation. What is the source of our longing and what is the source of our willingness, eagerness, to be found? It comes from the fact that we have already been sought and visited by the Word. That visitation wasn't without fruit. It has caused us to have that willingness and longing. Without that no greater closeness would be possible. It is simply that it isn't enough to be sought once. If you are in love you want to be sought never-endingly.

But your will to draw closer would be powerless if you were not given the power to do just this. St. Paul said: *"To will is in my power but to perform what I will is not"*. Whence comes this power? It comes as a gift from the one who seeks us. When we are seeking we know that we are being given the power to draw nearer and nearer. This is the grace the psalmist sought when he prayed: *"Seek your servant!"* That is our prayer too. God is answering that prayer even as we make it.

## **RESTORING ALL THINGS IN CHRIST**

A reflection from a pastoral letter by St. Pope Pius X

Who can avoid being appalled and afflicted when beholding, in the midst of a progress in civilization so often extolled, the greater part of mankind fighting among themselves so savagely as to make it seem as though strife were universal? It is certain that the desire for peace is harbored in every heart, and everyone ardently longs for it, but to want peace without God is an absurdity. For where God is absent justice flies away, and when justice is taken away it is vain to cherish hopes for peace. *“Peace is the work of Justice”*, said Isaiah.

There are many who in their yearning for peace—for the tranquility of order that means, band together into societies and parties claiming to stand for order. It is hope and labor lost. There is only one “party of order” capable of restoring peace amid all this turmoil and that is the party of God. It is this party, then, that we must promote and attract to it as many as possible—if we are really urged on by the love of peace.

We will never, however much we labor, succeed in calling people back to the majesty and empire of God except by means of Jesus Christ. St Paul encourages this: *“No one can lay a foundation other than that which has already been laid, and it is Jesus Christ!”* It is Christ alone *“whom the Father sanctified and sent into this world”*, as Isaiah said. Who is this but Christ, *“the splendor of the Father and the image of his substance”*. He is true God and truly human. Without him nobody can know God with saving knowledge, *“no one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom it pleases the Son to reveal him”*. It follows that to restore all things in Christ and to lead all to submission to God is one and the same aim.

This is what we have to care about. We have to seek to lead mankind back under the Lordship of Christ. If we do this all will have been brought back to God. When we speak of this we don't mean drawing them to a state of being uncaring about human things, This is a fantasy of materialists. We want to draw people to the true and living God, one in nature and three-fold in persons, Creator of the world and wisest orderer of every, supremely just lawgiver who punishes wickedness and rewards justice.

The way to Christ is not hard to find. It is the Church. Listen to St. John Chrysostom: *“The Church is your hope, the Church is your salvation, the Church is your refuge.”* That is why Christ founded it at the price of his blood. It has his teaching and his law and has received an inexhaustible treasure of graces for the sanctification and salvation of the human race. It is our common duty to bring human society back to the discipline of the Church. Now it is estranged from the wisdom of Christ and the Church will subject it to Him as Christ is subjected to God. It is through the goodness of God that we can bring this about. But we must use every means and all our energy to end the evil of substituting the human for God and restore to their rightful place the holy laws and counsels of the Gospel. But to do this we must first be clothed in Christ so that we can say with St. Paul: *“For me to live is Christ”*.

## **GOD'S PLAN EMBRACES ALL THINGS**

**A reflection from St. Gregory of Nyssa's homily on the Song of Songs**

**In the Letter to the Ephesians we are told that the revelation of the Divine Plan in Christ was not only for human kind but even for the angels. It was "through the Church that the manifold wisdom of God could be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose which God fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have free access to God in the confidence born of faith in him". Even the angels discovered the manifold wisdom of God through the Church! They too see how life results from death, righteousness from sin, a blessing from a curse, glory from disgrace and power from weakness.**

**In earlier times the heavenly powers were aware only of the simple, unqualified wisdom of God. There was nothing complex in God's bringing the universe into being by a simple act of will, bringing the natural world into being and endowing all things with the great beauty that springs from the source of all beauty. Now through the Church all have see the kind of wisdom which combines opposites. They have learned that the Word became flesh, how life mingled with death, how Christ healed our wounds by his own bruises, and how by his weakness he overcame the power of the Adversary. Now they have learned that the invisible is revealed in flesh, that he redeems captives, how he gave himself up to death to pay our ransom, how he entered the realm of death without abandoning life, and became a servant without ceasing to be a king.**

**All these, and many more things, are contained in the manifold works of wisdom. The friends of the bridegroom have learned them through the Church. All are fascinated to perceive in this mystery yet another mark of divine wisdom. Indeed, perhaps in gazing at the beauty of the bridegroom reflected in the bride, they beheld with wonder that which is invisible and incomprehensible to all created being.**

**After all, no one has ever seen God, as St. John says, and no one can see God, as St. Paul witnesses. But God made the Church his own body and by adding to it those who are being saved, God builds it up in love. The goal is that it "attain full maturity, as measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ" himself. If, then, the Church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is that Body's head and impresses his own features on the face that is the Church, we can see why the friends of the bridegroom were fascinated to see the Church. Through her they beheld more clearly the invisible bridegroom. Just as one can't look straight at the sun but must see its brilliance reflected in water, so one can see the Sun of Righteousness in the mirror that is the Church. In the Church all can contemplate that Sun in his reflection. Our call is to be mirrors of Christ to all the world, and even to the Heavenly Powers.**

# **LOVE FOR GOD OVERCOMES ALL OBSTACLES**

A reflection developed from a Wikipedia article on St. Rose

The family of Gaspar Flores, a musketeer in the Spanish army, and Maria de Olivia, received the gift of a daughter on April 20<sup>th</sup> of 1586 in Lima, Peru. She was later nicknamed 'Rosa' by a servant who claimed to have seen her face transformed into a real rose, and she formally took the name 'Rose' when she was confirmed. Evidently through reading she had become acquainted with St. Catherine of Sienna and decided she wanted to imitate her. She wanted to join a religious community but her parents were very much against this and would never give her permission to do so. She decided that she would live like a religious anyway and would not marry as her parents also wanted her to do.

When very young, Rose began to fast three times a week and to abstain entirely from eating meat. She spent hours and hours praying and contemplating before the Blessed Sacrament, again in spite of her parents. When suitors began to be interested in her she cut her hair crudely and smeared her hair and face with pepper juice to make herself look unattractive. Over her parents' strong objections she refused to accept the marriages they wanted to arrange for her. She also obtained the very unusual permission to receive communion every day and later made a private vow of virginity.

Finally, out of frustration we are told, her father gave her a room of her own and ceased trying to force her to do as he and her mother wanted. Her life had been a tale of holy disobedience to human authority, because she insisted on obeying God's call to live a life dedicated to him and to service of the poor.

The task she assigned to herself was helping the sick and the poor, especially those who had no one else to turn to. She used part of her parents' home for this. She also grew flowers, did fine needlework and made lace. She sold these to earn money to help those for whom she was caring.

Apart from these activities, Rose lived as a recluse in her room and did penances in a small grotto she built. She wore a heavy cross with small spikes on its inside and she slept only about two hours a night, claiming she needed to do this to have more time for prayer. This is only an example of the sort of penances she did. It was all so extraordinary as to make her life and work famous. She was even able to get her parents permission to become a Tertiary of the Dominican Order while living at home.

She was perceived publicly as a very selfless and caring person. She lived in prayer and constant service to the poor for eleven years, dying on August 24, 1617 with a great reputation for holiness. Thus, her funeral was in the cathedral and was attended by all the important people of Lima. She was declared a saint just fifty years after her death, and then declared a principle patron of the native peoples of the Americas. They had been the majority of those she cared for when they were too poor to afford other help or had been mistreated. Native American peoples immediately began to treat her as a patron.

St. Rose evoked, and still evokes, very much imitation and devotion. She is the symbol of what one can accomplish simply by loving and drawing close to God no matter the opposition one encounters. Her feast day is still a public holiday in Peru. Thus her messages about prayer and penance and unselfish service continue to be proclaimed and to call forth imitators, especially by leading people to prayer.

# **STRENGTHENING ONE ANOTHER**

A reflection taken from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

The name 'Barnabas' means "son of consolation"; i.e., a person who consoles and encourages others. We are told he was a person full of the Holy Spirit and faith, gentle and kind and very generous. He is first heard of in the Book of Acts as one who sold some land he owned so it could be used by the Church to help those who were poor.

When Paul, newly converted, came to Jerusalem it was Barnabas who made the visit successful and so encouraged Paul himself. *"When Saul came to Jerusalem he sought to join himself to the disciples but they were all afraid of him and did not believe he himself was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles and spoke of how he had seen the Lord on the road and had spoken with Him and then had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus"*. He encouraged his fellow Christians to accept a person whose good faith they had doubted. In this way he strengthened the community and faith of all concerned.

He was appreciated by the leaders of the Jerusalem church as one who could bring people together as well as support them. So they sent him on a mission to the newly thriving church of Antioch. Acts says, *"when he came and saw the grace of God he was glad and he encouraged all to cling to the Lord with clear intentions in their hearts"*. Encouragement is a primary form of consolation. It was because he had helped Paul that he conceived the idea of bringing Paul to teach at Antioch.

Encouraging others can begin a ministry which brings Christ to thousands. Later he was again sent to Antioch with a letter from Jerusalem relieving the minds of those who had been perplexed by the claims of Judaizing Christians. He encouraged all and thus helped them maintain unity in the Church. Finally, on the occasion of a famine, he joined with Paul as the minister of the Gentiles' bounty toward the poor holy ones of the Jerusalem church.

Thus, the Scriptural history of Barnabas simply explains his name. He was one who lived fully what he was named. Scripture's words are little more than a continued exemplification of his characteristic grace. The Holy Spirit is called our "Paraclete" because it assists us by encouraging and comforting us. Because Barnabas did this so consistently and in such an outstanding way he was treated like one of the Apostles and seen as one of the founders of the Church of Antioch. He shows us just how wonderful the grace of encouraging and consoling others is.

We too are offered this grace in the Holy Spirit. Do we know anyone who has never needed encouragement or consolation? We are called to meet that need even as Barnabas did. We have been sent by God to be a consoling and encouraging presence within our own community. When we see one another doing this we see the power of the Spirit active among us. Every day many have great need for this grace and its fruit.