

# **THE THIRTY-SECOND WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

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- Sun.**      **The Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Nov. 10**   **BELIEVING IN GOD'S PROMISES**  
A reflection from a sermon by St. John Henry Newman
- Mon.**      **Memorial of St. Martin of Tours**  
**11**        **FEARLESSNESS IN PUTTING CHRIST FIRST**  
A reflection from The Life of St. Martin by Septimus Severus
- Tues.**     **Tuesday of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**12**        **FINDING PEACE THROUGH TRUST IN CHRIST**  
A reflection from a sermon on Psalm 64 by St. Augustine
- Wed.**      **Feast of All Saints of the Benedictine Family**  
**13**        **ASCENDING TO THE LORD**  
A reflection from a homily by St. Aelred of Rievaulx
- Thurs.**    **Thursday of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**14**        **DISTINGUISHING TRUE FROM FALSE PROPHETS**  
A reflection from a homily by Origen of Alexandria
- Fri.**       **Friday of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
**15**        **TRUSTING THAT ALL GOD DOES IS FOR OUR GOOD**  
A reflection from a homily by St. Gregory the Great
- Sat.**       **Memorial of St. Gertrude the Great**  
**16**        **HUMILITY AS THE KEY TO GOD'S GRACE & PRAISE**  
A reflection from The Herald of Divine Love

## **BELIEVING IN GOD'S PROMISES**

A reflection taken from a sermon by St. John Henry Newman

God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. In speaking God identified himself as “*the God of Abraham*”. Christ tells us that this simple announcement contained the promise that Abraham should rise again from the dead. In truth, if we may say it with reverence, the all-wise and all-knowing God cannot speak without meaning multiple things all at once. God sees the end and the beginning; God understands the numberless connections and relations of all things with one another.

When God called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob God implied that those holy patriarchs were still alive, though they were no longer seen on earth. This may seem evident at first sight, though one may still ask whether the saying proves that their bodies would live; for if their souls were still living that would be enough to account for their being still called in the Book of Exodus servants of God.

We are apt to talk about our bodies as if we knew how or what they really are. Actually, we only know what our eyes tell us. Our bodies seem to grow, to come to maturity, to decay; but after all we know no more about them than our senses tell us. We have no direct knowledge of what may be called the substantive existence of the body but only of what we call its accidents.

Again, we are apt to speak of soul and body, as if we could distinguish between them and knew much about them. But for the most part we use these words without meaning. It is useful to make the distinction and scripture makes it. But after all, the Gospel speaks of our nature, in a religious sense, as one reality. Soul and body make up one human being. This being is born once but never dies. Philosophers of old time thought the soul indeed might live for ever, but that the body perished at death. Yet Christ tells us otherwise.

Now look at Christ's words much as you look at God the Father's words. He means many things, not all of them clear to us, when he seems to say only one thing. Whatever he says is fruitful in multiple meanings and refers to many things. It is well to keep this in mind when we read Scripture. Christ tells us that the body will live for ever. In the text he seems to imply that it never really dies, that we lose sight indeed of what we are accustomed to see, but that God still sees the elements we are made of all together even if they aren't seen by our senses.

Our Blessed Lord seems to tell us that in some sense or other Abraham's body might be considered still alive, as a pledge of his resurrection perhaps. Though it was dead in the common sense in which we use this word, Abraham shall rise from the dead because in truth he is still alive. He cannot in the end be held under the power of the grave, any more than a sleeping person can be kept from waking. Abraham is still alive in the dust, though not risen from it yet. He is alive because all God's saints live to him, though they seem to perish.

God graciously called himself the “*God of Abraham*”. He did not say the God of Abraham's soul but simply “*of Abraham*”. He blessed Abraham, and he gave him eternal life—not only to his soul without the body but to Abraham as to an integral human being. We believe God's word even if we don't know how to translate it into our ordinary ways of thinking and speaking. Believing is not the same as understanding or knowing how to explain what God has shown us. That is part of the darkness that surrounds our faith and leads us to trust in our God.

## **FEARLESSNESS IN PUTTING CHRIST FIRST**

A reflection from The Life of St. Martin by Septimus Severus

The barbarians were making incursions into Gaul and the Caesar Julian concentrated his army at Worms. There he began to distribute a bonus to the soldiers. They were called up one by one in the usual way. When Martin's turn came he decided it would be a good time to apply for his discharge, for he didn't think it would be honest to take the bonus if he wasn't going to fight.

He said to Julian: *"I have been your soldier up to now. Let me now be God's soldier. Let someone who is going to fight have your bonus. I am Christ's soldier; I am not allowed to fight."* These words put Julian in a rage and he said that it was fear of the battle to be fought the next day that Martin wanted to quit the service, not from religious motives.

Martin was undaunted. In fact, he stood all the firmer because of this effort to frighten him. *"If it is put down to cowardice and not to faith, I will stand unarmed in the front of the battle line tomorrow and I will walk unharmed through the enemy's columns in the name of the Lord Jesus, protected by the sign of the Cross instead of by shield and helmet"*.

So he was ordered to be placed in custody so that he could prove his words and face the barbarians unarmed. The next day the enemy sent envoys to ask for peace, surrendering themselves and all they had. Who could doubt that this victory was due to Martin's blessing and granted so he would not be sent unarmed into a battle! Christ could not have granted any victory for the benefit of his own soldier greater than one in which the enemy was beaten bloodlessly and no one had to die.

On another occasion, many years later, bishops from various parts of the world had been assembled to meet the Emperor Maximus. Many were fawning on him, lowering the dignity of their priesthood. Martin alone retained his Apostolic authority.

Invitations had been sent to a great feast and to persons of the very highest rank. Martin himself occupied a stool next to the emperor and one of his priests was placed nearby, between two very important counts. Toward the middle of the meal a servant, as was customary, offered a cup to the emperor. He ordered it to be given instead to Martin first and waited, expecting that Bishop Martin would then hand it to him. But after drinking, Martin passed the cup to his priest, affirming that no one had a better right to drink after him and that it would be dishonest to give preference to any other than the Lord's priest, even to the emperor.

The emperor, and all who were present, were so struck by this action that the very gesture by which they had been humbled became for them a source of good feeling. The news went around the palace that Martin had done at the emperor's table what no other bishop had dared to do even when eating with the least of the emperor's magistrates. Martin never hesitated to put Christ and Christ's honor above every human rank and sign of prestige.

## **FINDING PEACE THROUGH TRUST IN CHRIST**

**A reflection from a sermon on Psalm 64 by St. Augustine**

The People of Israel were taken captive and transported from the city of Jerusalem to a life of servitude in Babylon. The holy prophet, Jeremiah, prophesied that seventy years later they would return from captivity and that the city of Jerusalem, over whose fall into enemy hands he had lamented, would be restored. At that time there were prophets among the captive people in Babylon and one of these was Ezekiel. The people were looking forward to the end of the seventy years, and indeed, when the seventy years were up, the majority of the people did return and the temple that had been destroyed was rebuilt.

But, as St. Paul says, *“these things happened to them as a warning, and were written down as a lesson for us, upon whom the end of the ages has come”*. We must become aware of our captivity, and then of our liberation. We must be aware that we are enslaved in Babylon and we must long to return to Jerusalem. Consider the names of the two cities. Babylon means “confusion” and Jerusalem means “vision of peace”. Notice the confusion and then contrast it with the peace. You endure confusion even while you long for peace.

How can these two cities be told apart? We don’t seem to be able to distinguish, let alone separate them, in this world. They are intermingled. They have been from the very origin of the human race, and they will remain intermingled until the end of time. How do we know that they are still intermingled? We know it because the Lord has said that he will place some at his right hand and other at his left but only when final judgment comes.

Jerusalem will be on the right. Babylon will be on the left. Jerusalem will hear the words: *“Come, you who have my Heavenly Father’s blessing; take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world”*. But Babylon will hear the words: *“Depart from me into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”*. Nevertheless, with the Lord’s help we can suggest some ways in which believers can be helped to distinguish even now between the citizens of Jerusalem and the citizens of Babylon.

Two kinds of love build these two cities. Love of God builds Jerusalem. Love of the world builds Babylon. We only have to ask ourselves what we truly love in order to learn which city we belong to. Those who find that they are citizens of Babylon should root out avarice and plant charity. Those who find that they are citizens of Jerusalem should endure their captivity while looking forward to their release.

A person can truthfully say that a ship riding at anchor in a harbor has “made land”. The ship is still moving with the motion of the waves and yet, in a certain sense, its passengers can be said to be ashore. It is a fact that they are protected from gales and storms because they are in harbor. On our pilgrimage through life we can say like things. We are safe from storms in the measure that our hopes are fixed firmly on the city of Jerusalem on high. That hope, itself rooted in faith, will prevent us from being swept away by storm winds. We can’t be dashed against any earthly rocks while we are bound firmly to the rock that is Christ.

## **ASCENDING TO THE LORD**

A reflection from a sermon by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

The Gospel tell us that *“when Jesus saw the crowds he went up a mountain”*. How are we to understand this? *“Come, let us go up the mountain of the Lord the House of the God of Jacob and he will teach us his ways”*. Doesn't this explain what the Lord did? Are you a beginner? Do you want to see Jesus? Then climb a sycamore as did Zacchaeus. Embrace Christ as he dies for you on the tree. Go to him like the woman with a flow of blood and touch him. Love touches; it doesn't shove like the crowd who surrounded Jesus as he taught and healed. If we begin to cling to Jesus with a kind of spiritual glue, a crowd of unruly thought may begin to shove against us. Then we have to follow him up the mountain where we can be alone with him.

Those who go to Jesus are the disciples who pursue peace. What does he teach? *“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* Yes, brethren, this is the criterion by which we see whether we are disciples of Jesus. The Lord has called us together to listen to his teaching and to love one another. This is our re-creation. He teaches us humility. It is this which separates light from darkness, justice from iniquity, the chosen from the reprobate. Humility is the first step in the ascent to the Kingdom of Heaven. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for there is the Kingdom of Heaven!”*

This is the way, dearest brethren, by which we must return to our homeland and come into the full fellowship of those whose feast we are celebrating today. It was by this laborious way that they went up before us. From this way no persecutions, no hardships, were able to deter them. For they had heard from the Lord the consoling words with which he speaks. *“Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice sake”* and *“Blessed are you when people hate you and criticize you and revile your name as evil on account of me”*.

So let there be, dearest brethren, true praise of all our brother and sister saints who have come to holiness through monastic living. Let's not praise them with our lips alone and insult them by our deeds. We praise them truthfully if we do everything we can to imitate them. Whatever we do freely we show we love. Even if our lips are silent we praise by our deeds. Let us hasten to enjoy the extremely pleasant company of the saints who have gone before us on this narrow way that brings us into God's presence and delight. Let nothing hold us back—not indolence nor indecisiveness nor the unparalleled difficulty of the task.

We can set before us the trust in God alone of those who have gone before us. Let us look to the help of the Lord and the unceasing prayer of all our brothers and sisters. There are more who are with us than there are opponents. All we need to do is ask for help. The Lord will help us as we fight and bring us to a crown of everlasting happiness. Servile fear has been banished by the love of a child for a parent. We are no longer servants but friends of our God. We have labored to love one another in peace and shared service of God. Are we not counted among those who are peacemakers and so accounted blessed. We are called children of God. Did these others not help us seek purity of heart? Are we not told that the pure of heart will see God? See the many who have gone before you and never doubt that the way you walk will lead you to God and God's Everlasting Kingdom.

## **DISTINGUISHING TRUE FROM FALSE PROPHETS**

A reflection taken from a homily by Origen of Alexandria

***“Son of Man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy from their own hearts.”*** This word of God applies to all who teach in the Church. Some teach by words but most teach by their deeds and their lives. If your teaching is contrary to the truth in either sense then you are a false prophet.

A prophet teaches first of all what those who turn to God can hope for. What sort of hopes do you teach by your way of living? That is even more important than what you teach by word of mouth. If you live as the Lord Jesus did then you teach what our Lord Jesus Christ taught. You “speak” the word of the Son of God and are inspired by the Holy Spirit and not simply by your own heart’s longings.

Those who walk with the Lord Jesus agree with the Holy Spirit who guided him. If they don’t walk with the Lord then they speak only from their human hearts. The Holy Spirit spoke through Paul and through Peter and through all the apostles. That is not what people do when they interpret the Gospel according to their own ideas about what is good and bad, misunderstanding the Lord’s words because they misunderstand his deeds.

***“Woe to those who prophesy from their own hearts and follow their own spirit.”*** There are two sins in question. One is of the heart and the other of the spirit. St. Paul says that he prays with his spirit and his mind. He also sings psalms with his spirit and his mind. Those who prophesy merely from their own hearts and their own minds have no true hope to give others. They have merely human hopes but what God gives is much greater, and it will come true!

We are told that prophets who speak or act from their own hearts and minds and not the Lord’s “see nothing at all”. Let me give you an analogy. We have physical eyes and we have spiritual eyes. The physical ones see only what is of this world but the spiritual eyes see the Lord Jesus and recognize him as their Lord. We were created to contemplate the Lord. If we cannot then we are completely blind in what really matters. If I live in sin then I see nothing. A sinner is incapable of looking at the light of truth. The Lord said: ***“I have come into the world so that the blind may see and those who see may become blind”***.

The word ‘seer’ means “one who sees”. If one is righteous then one receives God’s grace and can rightly be called a seer. Blessed are those whose eyes the Lord opens so that they can see the wonders of God and of God’s law and of God’s salvation. One of the prophets prayed: ***“Lord, open my eyes that I may behold the wonders of your law.”*** It is through such prayer that we begin to be able to live from God’s law and do the deeds of love that this law commands. Do you want to be a true prophet? Then pray that God will open your eyes, and send the Holy Spirit into your heart, and fill your mind with understanding of the Gospel’s teaching so that you may live—now and forever.

## **TRUSTING THAT ALL GOD DOES IS FOR OUR GOOD**

A reflection from a homily by St. Gregory the Great

Because the Israelites had trusted in others than their God they went into captivity and became slaves of the king of Babylon. Yet the prophet Ezekiel, who trusted only in God, was sent into captivity with them. Let us ponder, if we can, how wonderful is the dispensation of divine love by which it was possible for the Lord to be so angry with his people, and still not be angry at all.

Had the Lord not been angry he would not have delivered the People up to captivity. Had he been completely angry with them he would not have sent his chosen one into captivity with them. God's mercy uses one and the same event to punish his worldly-minded people and to bring an increase of grace to those among them who are spiritual-minded. He purifies the one group by tribulations. He stirs up the other group so they can receive a brighter future by associating them with those who suffer.

God is angry with the unrighteous. At the same time, God consoles his People through the righteous who share their lot. None has to feel wholly abandoned for that would perhaps lead them not to repent of their sin by turning to God. God rejects his people and, at the same time, holds them fast even while he hurls them into the same tribulation inflicted on the guilty.

Who can comprehend the depths of so great a love? The Lord doesn't let his people's sins go unpunished. The Lord still doesn't utterly reject his sinful people. The like happened when Moses sent twelve scouts into the promised land. When they returned ten made the people despair and complain that God had deceived them and that their corpses would lie in the desert.

In anger, God declared that not one of them should enter the promised land. Frightened into repentance, the people acknowledged their sin. They wept, but taking up arms they began to go against the enemy. They hoped that after their tears they could still enter the promised land. But the Lord said to them through Moses: *"Don't go up and fight or you will fall before your enemy; for I am not with you."*

If God were not with them why would he forbid them to go up simply because they would be routed? Why protect them if he were not with them? But if God was with them how could God deny he was with them? How could God both be with them and not with them? What a wondrous combination of discipline and mercy!

God condemns sin yet God protects the sinner. God shows that He is angry but protects his people against their enemies. Have you ever noticed that a mother who is angry may even beat the child she is angry with, and yet if she sees that child in a deadly danger from falling she immediately reaches out to grasp hold of the child and save it. She who beat the child out of anger still holds the child safe in her love.

That is a pale shadow of how God treats us. Never forget that God loves you no matter how you are afflicted or punished. God seeks only your good and does all that he does or permits only to secure your good, because you are loved. God will never let you go!

## **HUMILITY AS THE KEY TO GOD'S GRACE**

A reflection from The Herald of Divine Love

Among the many virtues that God had wonderfully given to this soul in which he dwelt humility was the one which shown out most brightly. This virtue is the treasury of every grace and the custodian of all virtues. Gertrude was led by her humility to consider herself so unworthy of God's gifts that she couldn't be persuaded to believe that they had been given her for her own benefit. She saw herself as a channel through which, by some mysterious dispensation of God, grace flowed to the elect. She herself was so unworthy, and yet she did receive all God's gifts, small and great. So she thought of herself merely as one who was called to share these gifts with others. She took much trouble to do this, in speech or in writing. She did it with such fidelity toward God and with such humility toward herself that she reflected: *"Even if after all this I have to suffer the torments of hell as I deserve, I rejoice all the same that the Lord is able to gather from others the fruits of these gifts"*.

It seemed to her that anyone else, no matter how wretched they seemed, would have been more fruitful soil for these gifts than she had been. And yet she was ready and willing at all times to receive any of God's gifts simply in order to use them for the good of others. It was as though the gifts were of less concern to her than were the others who received them through her.

She tried always to judge herself in the light of truth, and so she considered herself the least of those of whom the prophet spoke: *"All nations are before God as though they had no being at all!"* Just as a little dust, hidden under a pen, is hidden from the sun's heat, so she worked to hide herself from the light which the gifts of God might throw on her. She gave all the glory to God who is able to inspire those whom He calls and whose help accompanies those whom he justifies. She kept for herself focused on that guilt which seemed due to her because of unworthiness and ingratitude. She liked to say: *"It isn't right to defraud God of the greater profit that others might bring him through the benefits he has given me, for I am depraved and wretched."* Whatever work she did, she regarded herself as being of no more value in the Church of God than some scarecrow is on a farm.

That she was dedicated to prayer and vigils is clear from the fact that she never neglected to observe any of the canonical hours, unless she lay sick in bed or was engaged in some charitable work for the glory of God or the salvation of others. Because the Lord never failed to gladden her prayers with the blissful consolation of his presence, she prolonged her spiritual exercises long after her strength would have been exhausted by any other occupation. As St. Bernard said, *"Oh, if you have once been inebriated by the taste of charity, soon every labor and sorrow is made joyful!"*

She had such great interior freedom she couldn't bear to keep anything for her own use unless it was indispensable. If given a present she at once gave it away to others, especially to those who were most in need. If she had something to do or say, she did it at once, lest it should hinder her in the service of God or in doing the work of contemplation. Things pleased her only to the extent to which they helped her to serve God. It was not for herself that she made use of things created by the Lord, but in order that the Lord might be eternally praised.