

Corpus Christi

THE ELEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

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Sun. **The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ**
June 14 **IMAGINING THE UNIMAGINABLE**
 A reflection from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus

Mon. **Monday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time**
15 **JOY**
 St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Tues. **Memorial of St Lutgarde**
16 **SAINT LUTGARDE**
 Fr Thomas Merton OCSO

Wed. **Memorial of Blessed Joseph Mary Cassant**
17 **TURNING TOWARDS GOD**
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18 **CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN MATURITY**
 A reflection by St. Pope John XXIII

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20 **HER TENDER HEART**
 Pope Francis

Sunday

IMAGINING THE UNIMAGINABLE

A reflection from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus

We are told that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed. What can that possible mean? Are we hoping for something tiny? Can something like that motivate a virgin's long years of self-restraint, can it be the prize for the blood of a martyr? Can this be that mystery which no eye has seen or ear heard and which no human heart has imagined? Here we see a challenge to our faith—we don't know how to think of that which is promised to those who love God with all their heart.

Let's face this challenge by recalling the Scripture passage which tells us that God's weakness is stronger than human strength, and that God's foolishness is wiser than all human wisdom. If we believe this, it shouldn't surprise us that the smallest of all seeds is somehow greater than the entire earth. This means that the Kingdom of God is sown in us, in our minds and hearts, as something needing to grow, and grow in a way that will lift us up with it as high as God's Kingdom. It will enlarge our faculties of mind and heart and will produce a great knowledge and a vast love that will make us burn with longing love and grasp the breadth of God's truth.

We start by remembering that Christ himself is the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ has been sown within us like a mustard seed. He was first sown in the Virgin's womb but he grew up into the Tree of the Cross with branches that now spread over the entire world. When a mustard seed is crushed then its pungency is experienced and it not only flavors and seasons everything with which it is mixed but preserves it. So it was with Christ. So it is to be with us in whom the crushed Christ has been sown. This mustard seed must be crushed in us if we are to experience the power of God's Kingdom, and if we are to spread it throughout the worlds that are our lives.

Christ became all things in order to restore all of us to God's image and to the full sharing in God's life of loving. The man Jesus received the kingdom of God as a mustard seed and sowed it in the garden that is the Church, his Body. It extends over the entire world—tilled by the plow that is the Gospel, protected by the stakes that are sound doctrine and discipline, cleared of every noxious weed by the labors of those sent as evangelists, and lovely with the perennial flowers that are holy lives. This is the paradise of God and we are its gardeners.

A mustard seed is a symbol of hope. God promised a kingdom to the patriarchs. This hope took root and sprang up through the ministry of the prophets. Through the apostles and all who preach the Gospel by word or example it grew great like a plant large enough to house a whole flock of birds; the Church became a tree filling the entire earth. We too must "take the wings of a dove" to fly to this tree and find rest in its branches. There we may dwell securely no matter what tribulations come. From this resting place we show forth foreshadowings of all that is to come into the world here and hereafter. Rest and labor become one reality and bring us both suffering and joy. What imagination can't encompass, a heart at rest in God can embrace in hope. That hope is yours. Rejoice in it.

Monday

JOY

St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Joy is not simply a matter of temperament. In the service of God and souls, it is always hard to be joyful- all the more reason why we should try to acquire it and make it grow in our hearts.

Joy is prayer; joy is strength; joy is love; joy is a net of love in which we catch souls. God loves a cheerful giver. She gives most who gives with joy. If in the work you have difficulties and you accept them with joy, with a big smile-in this like any other thing- they will see your good works and glorify the Father. The best way to show your gratitude is to accept everything with joy. A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love.

Joy is a need and power for us, even physically. A sister who has cultivated a spirit of joy feels less tired and is always ready to go on doing good. The devil is a carrier of dust and dirt- he uses every chance to throw what he has at us. A joyful heart knows how to protect itself from such dirt: Jesus can only take full possession of our soul only if it surrenders itself joyfully. St. Teresa was worried only about her sisters when she saw any of them losing their joy. God is joy. God is love. A sister filled with joy preaches without preaching. A joyful sister is like the sunshine of God's love, the hope of eternal happiness, the flame of burning love.

In our society, a cheerful disposition is one of the main virtues required for a Missionary of Charity. The spirit in our society is total surrender, loving trust, and cheerfulness, This is why we are expected to accept humiliations readily and with joy; to live the life of poverty with cheerful trust; to imitate the chastity of Mary, the cause of our joy; to offer cheerful obedience from inward joy; to minister to Christ in his distressing disguise as the poor man or woman, and all with cheerful and joyful devotion.

Tuesday

SAINT LUTGARDE

Fr Thomas Merton OCSO

Without any question, the most extraordinary and most important figure in Cistercian mysticism in the early thirteenth century was St Lutgarde. She was a famous stigmatist of her day.

Even before she entered the Cistercian convent of Ayieres, and while she was still a Benedictine nun at Touyres, her sanctity and mystical graces had given her a wide reputation, and we read of important secular and church figures travelling long distances to visit and consult her. So, in her we have an example of a very extraordinary and special vocation, the vocation of a soul called in a particular manner by Christ to a life of intimate union with him in his sufferings.

Her life and her story bring home more cogently and more vividly to the imagination the closeness of Jesus to humanity and his intense desire to pour out his special graces upon souls. We are reminded through her that we are all called to suffer in union with the suffering Christ in his body, the Church, to make reparation for sin and to win grace for sinners. She inspires us to follow her own example of self-sacrifice as best we can, even if it is only a matter of accepting the common routine of religious life in the spirit with which she accepted her own sufferings.

Another thing is that St Lutgarde and her contemporary mystics represent a new development in Christian piety. Nowhere before their time do we find so clear and uncompromising a statement of the ideals of abandonment and victimhood with Jesus.

With St Lutgarde we find the double insistence on the eminently passive character of those sufferings, and on the intensity of personal union with the sufferings of Christ. Thus, we see in the Church a desire to die with Christ, a death for and by love.

St Lutgarde's mysticism is an almost unbroken series of visions, revelations, and ecstasies, together with a clear teaching on discernment of spirits. She experienced difficulties even with her own sisters. They often smiled at her fervor and assured her that she was going through a stage that would soon be over and that then she would be like everybody else. St Lutgarde was tempted by fear and discouragement by what she heard, but she was reassured by a vision of Our Blessed Lady, who assured her that she was not called into a tepid and unspiritual way of life.

St Lutgarde's prayer was thus "Take my heart O lord, but do so as to unite your heart's love to my poor heart that I may possess my own heart only in you, ever safe in your protection. Amen."

Wednesday

TURNING TOWARDS GOD

Fr Richard Rohr OFM

Christianity is more than a moral matter; it is a mystical matter. Humans though, seem to prefer the six stone cold jars of water for ritual purification to the ecstatic wine of the wedding feast. The ego pattern never changes. The mystical mind is the non-dual, spacious, non-counting mind. The ordinary dualistic mind is consumed by counting and measuring how moral I am or you are. It weighs everything up and down-mostly down. The dualistic mind moves towards quick resolution and too easy closure. It is very judgmental. That's why Jesus and all great spiritual teachers say "do not judge". Followers of St Francis follow nothing other than what the man from Assisi calls in his Testament "the marrow of the Gospel"-which is love, always choosing the positive over the negative.

Our negative and critical thoughts are like Velcro, they stick and hold; whereas our positive and joyful thoughts are like Teflon, they slide away. We have to deliberately choose to hold onto positive thoughts before the imprint. Observing my own habits of thought I know this is profoundly true. The implications are enormous for individuals and society. The problem is that the brain prefers to constellate around fearful, negative or problematic situations. We must savor the good in order to change our regular attitudes and we need to strictly monitor all the Velcro negative thoughts.

Anything which the dualistic mind does not understand it quickly names as wrong, dangerous, sinful or heretical. The dualistic mind is responsible for most of the disputes, wars and violence on the earth. The dualistic mind sees most opposition as highly justified and necessary, because it judges one side to be superior and the other inferior. It always takes sides! The non -dual, contemplative mind abides in God, the ultimate positive. It wants the good, the true and the beautiful so much that it is willing to leave the field of the moment open and to hold onto all parts of it, the seemingly good and the seemingly negative, and waits for them to fully show themselves.

In some ways, the Gospel of love is so hard to live because it is so simple. We strangely assume that God has to be complicated. We are so biased to fear and negativity that we find the perfect excuse to avoid the wedding banquet that is right in front of us, a reason not to sit at table with both the good and the bad. We would rather slouch in the corner and criticize, all the time feeling moral and superior. St Francis invites us to sit at God's one abundant table. Sadly, much of Christian tradition has set a scarce table for the very few. Jesus and Francis recognized that people are endlessly diverse, complex and mysterious, and we had best make the law very simple. Just love your neighbor exactly as you love yourself.

Thursday

CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN MATURITY

A reflection by St. Pope John XXIII

It is supernatural life, nourished with the wonderful means to holiness at our disposal, that gives one clear ideas, strong convictions and generous energies. Because it is a supernatural life it can mature us even before we attain ordinary human maturity. That is one of the gifts we celebrate as we remember St. Aloysius Gonzaga. It isn't necessary to describe the delicacy of feeling, the gracious manner, the ripeness of judgment, or the clarity and vigor of mind that came to him from God. And all this came to its harvest not in the ways expected but through his providing the humblest of services to the neediest of people.

This sort of life and maturity are the active fulfillments of the petitions of the Our Father. You know how important meditation on the prayer of Jesus is. The Holy Name of God was the light of Jesus' life; it was the font of his love for all of us. God's Kingdom, extended constantly and enlarged to encompass more and more peoples, is an outpouring of love and joyful enthusiasm for anyone who genuinely knows Jesus.

A superficial observer of the modern world might think that everywhere the absurd and the crazy and the anti-Christian are in the ascendant. But believers have responded with a greater quest for unity with Christ and with one another and have come to grasp the centrality of charity for their living. This strengthens the communion of faith and is a marvelous fruit of supernatural graces.

A Christian is above all a person of faith, prayer, grace and the conviction that fidelity to one's baptismal commitments is the truest foundation for building a better world. Christians are perhaps the only people who know that such a world is really attainable. What will bring it about? The flowering of the sorts of virtues we see in Aloysius Gonzaga.

His name is resplendent in the light which makes every Christian a dedicated worker in the good cause of the Gospel and the Body of Christ. God's Kingdom is the purpose of every apostolic and humanizing endeavor. We have all received from Our Lord a mandate to act and we cannot refuse it. Guard your hearts from the sort of anxious care that drives those who have no faith to despair. Our task is the search for "the one things that is needful".

So let us remember especially the everyday problems of ordinary people, problems whose solutions have been sought in vain by so many nations and their leaders. It is the Lord who enlightens minds and inspires hearts and strengthens wills so that we can accept and carry out our responsibilities of love for God and one another. Let us seek to live in good will, in working to establish friendly relations among those who have been at enmity, and by giving an example of unconditional loyalty to the good of all who live in our world. It is our faith that will always prove to be the secret of success. It is through this faith that we become mature contributors to building up God's Kingdom of love.

Friday

HOMILY FOR FEAST OF SACRED HEART

Fr Tommy Lane

The apostle Thomas went from doubting Jesus' resurrection to professing his faith in Jesus and declaring his divinity, "My Lord and my God". What happened? He encountered the love of Jesus. We could say he encountered the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Jesus invited him to bring his hand and put it into his side. In the Gospel of John life flows out of the side of Christ, flows out of his heart. Earlier in the Gospel during the feast of Tabernacles Jesus said rivers of water would flow out of him to anyone who believes and this life-giving water is the Holy Spirit.

When Thomas sees the wound in Christ's side he is overcome. The physical wound which Thomas saw was only the gateway to the love of Jesus' Sacred Heart. What Thomas really saw was the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for him personally.

Thomas is overcome because he sees a heart that is wounded, wounded out of love for humanity, the Sacred Heart that took the sin of humanity upon himself. That is what love does, love suffers for the other and Thomas now sees this suffering wounded love before his eyes in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Thomas sees the pain in Jesus' heart caused by ingratitude and lack of belief. Thomas sees Divine Mercy in physical form. Divine mercy takes humankind's sin upon its own head. Divine mercy forgives, heals and restores. Thomas when he is invited to put his hands into Jesus' side is invited as it were, to touch the heart of Jesus. His own heart is changed into a heart of love. It is no surprise that Pope Benedict XVII said that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an Easter spirituality.

Christ's Sacred Heart which raised up Thomas from despair to faith is ready to raise each of us from any despair we may have to Christian hope. On this feast, Christ invites each of us to touch his Sacred Heart, to allow our own hearts to become hearts of love. As we look on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we see that Christ's love forgives us, heals us, and restores us. The physical wound in the side of Christ is only the gateway to the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In Christ's Sacred Heart we see the love of Jesus for us and we respond with Thomas "My Lord and my God".

Saturday

HER TENDER HEART

Pope Francis

In times of need when we are entangled in life's knots, we rightly lift our eyes to the heart of Mary, Our Lady, our Mother. Yet first, we should ourselves be gazed upon BY Our Lady. When she gazes upon us, she does not see sinners but children. It is said that the eyes are the mirror of the soul; the eyes of Mary, full of grace, reflects the beauty of God, they show us a reflection of heaven. Jesus himself said the eye is "the lamp of the body"; the eyes of Our Lady are able to bring light to every dark corner; everywhere they kindle hope. As she gazes upon us, she says "Take heart dear children; You are in my heart, here I am, your Mother".

This maternal gaze, which instills confidence and trust, helps us grow in faith. Faith is a bond with God that engages the whole person; to be preserved it needs the Mother of God. Her maternal gaze helps us to see ourselves as beloved children in God's faithful people, and to love one another regardless of our individual limitations and approaches. Our Lady keeps us rooted in the Church, where unity counts even more than diversity; she encourages us to care for one another.

Mary's gaze reminds us that faith demands a tenderness that can save us from becoming lukewarm. Tenderness; yes, the Church of tender hearts. Tenderness is a word that today many want to remove from the dictionary. When faith makes a place for the Mother of God, we never lose sight of the center: the Lord, for Mary never points to herself but to Jesus; and all our brothers and sisters, for Mary is mother.