

# SIXTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

---

- Sun.      **The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
July 19   **OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS' CARE FOR US**  
            A reflection from St. Bede's Commentary on Mark's Gospel
- Mon.      **Monday of the 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
20        **WHAT JESUS ASKS OF US**  
            A reflection from Christian Life Day by Day  
            by Leon Cardinal Suenens
- Tues.     **Tuesday of the 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
21        **OUR NEED FOR A DOUBLE PORTION OF GRACE**  
            A reflection from A Retreat for Priests by Fr. Ronald Knox
- Wed.     **The Feast of St. Mary of Magadala**  
22        **APOSTLE TO THE APOSTLES**  
            Homily by Archbishop Arthur Roche
- Thurs.    **Thursday of the 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
23        **WHAT WE NEED TO LEARN FROM MARY**  
            A reflection adapted from a sermon  
            by John Henry Cardinal Newman
- Fri.      **Friday of the 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time**  
24        **THE HEALING THAT WE NEED MOST**  
            A reflection from a Biblical Commentary by St. Ambrose
- Sat.      **Feast of Saint James the Apostle**  
25        **THE RITE OF THE PILGRIM**  
            Pope St John Paul II (at Santiago de Compostela)

Sunday

## OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS' CARE FOR US

### A reflection from St. Bede's Commentary on Mark's Gospel

*"The apostles returned to Jesus and reported to him everything they had done and taught."* Jesus said to them: *"Come away to a place where we can be alone by ourselves and rest awhile."* Another passage in the Gospel shows us why there was a real need to give the disciples some rest: *"Many were coming and going and they had no time even to eat"*.

That there was great happiness in those days is seen from the hard work of those who were sent to teach and heal, and even more from the enthusiasm of those who were learning. What a joy it would be in our days if there were such a concourse of listening believers pressing around the ministers of the word so eagerly as not to give them even time to attend to their own needs!

Should we attend only to the fact that those who lack time to look after themselves will thus have less opportunity to fall into temptation? No, in fact, people from whom a word of faith and a saving ministry is demanded, both in season and unseasonably, will have an incentive as well as a need to meditate on heavenly things without neglecting earthly necessities. They must watch carefully that what they teach is not contradicted by what they do. So they need time apart from their ministry and service to care for themselves spiritually.

*"They got into the boat and went away by themselves to a deserted spot"*. The disciples didn't go alone; they went with the Lord. The evangelist makes this very clear. That is what we must do as well. Yet this may not be enough. *"Many people saw them set out and recognized them and from all the towns people hurried on foot to the place to which they were going and reached it before them."* The fact that people on foot got there first shows that they weren't going very far but to a place within walking distance. We need to remember that we don't have to go far to find a place to be alone with the Lord.

*"When Jesus landed, he saw a large crowd and he took pity on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and so, he began to teach them many things."* Matthews adds to Mark by telling us that Jesus cured their sick. That is what it means really to take pity on the poor and those who have no guide. One needs to open the way of truth to them by teaching, and heal their physical infirmities as well, and then one leads them to praise the divine generosity, especially by feeding the hungry. This is what, as we are told, Jesus did.

In a sense, Jesus tested people's faith in going away so they would have to follow him quickly if they were to obtain his help. He wanted to see if they would go to real trouble to follow him. Their effort showed how concerned they were for salvation. Jesus responded by welcoming them, instructing them, healing them and feeding them. This is what our Lord has done for us.

What sort of devoted trust ought we to show Jesus in response to his love for *us*? What sort of effort should we make to find time to be alone with Him? How should we respond when others' demands take that time away from us? We must hurry to find Jesus now, when he is near!

Monday

## WHAT JESUS ASKS OF US

### A reflection from Christian Life Day by Day by Leon Cardinal Suenens

Life is lived at high tension today. Nerves get frayed and our pace of life becomes very intense. But whatever it may cost, we have to learn to stop and draw a quiet breath. That means we have to learn to recognize our need. We have to learn that an ordinary vacation isn't enough. Going to different places and trying to have fun isn't the same as relaxing. And to learn to relax we must learn how to avoid inner imbalances. The word 'recreation' implies that one is doing something that re-creates, creates one over again, and gives a new life and a fresh start.

Humanly speaking, to acquire the art of balanced relaxation we need to learn to take advantage of little opportunities that life offers us to again become at heart children. To be relaxed, for instance, doesn't mean avoiding others but being accessible to others in a positive way. For people of faith this starts with being accessible to Our Lord. He didn't want his disciples to live in a state of perpetual tension. We have heard the Gospel passage in which Jesus calls upon the disciples to "*come away into a quiet place and rest a little*". What we need is to take such opportunities when they are offered. We are offered the best of Jesus and of his message in moments like the present.

We often stand in need of rest in the ordinary sense of that word. But we need even more to rest in God. In the bustle of our days we need to discover the little times which give us the opportunity to be with Jesus. Perhaps it is a matter of individual prayer. Perhaps it is a moment of meditative reading. It is like our need for oxygen. It is no luxury. It is a vital necessity.

How good it is to sit down like Mary of Bethany at the feet of our Master. We need it especially if we are bustling about in order to complete indispensable daily tasks. In the midst of our work we must keep our hearts open to God. We talk about opening a window so fresh air can come in. We need even more to keep a window open to Heaven!

This is a matter of learning to keep things in their proper relative proportions. Each task has its importance, and all are not equally important. Giving each its proper place is possible only if we have a standard of importance. The need to be with God is of supreme importance and gives us that standard. Without this everything one does is imbalanced and given undue importance.

Faith enables us to see how to judge the relative importance of different things and tasks. Faith trusts first in God. If that is so, then faith tells us to give first priority to being with God and second priority to learning from God during these times. This not only enables us to bring balance to our lives but to relax and open ourselves to genuine refreshment and re-creation. Take time for Jesus! Jesus always had time for God! Paradoxically, that time is always now

*Tuesday*

## **OUR NEED FOR A DOUBLE PORTION OF GRACE**

**A reflection from A Retreat for Priests by Fr. Ronald Knox**

You may remember that Elisha asked for a double portion of his master's spirit. Now what made him ask for a double portion, for a more intense outpouring of the Spirit than that given his master? I think it was that he saw lying ahead of him a very difficult task, one that needed a yet greater divine assistance than that given Elijah. He would need this to carry Elijah's work through to its completion.

One of the things most noticeable differentiating Elijah's ministry from that of Elisha was that Elijah was, so to speak, a free spirit and a wandering prophet, whereas Elisha lived a settled life, ever at the disposal of persons who wanted to consult him and even the habitual counselor of kings. In Elisha's time the position of a prophet seems to have become a fixed thing, an institution so to speak, and a recognized feature in the life of the nation of Israel. Elisha lives in his own house and sends out a servant to interview visitors at the door instead of dealing with them himself. When he goes on a journey he is entertained and stays with the great people of the town he stops in.

And then the "sons of the prophets" are continually mentioned in relation to Elisha. They seem to live in communities which were centers of prophetic inspiration, and perhaps of training for those who would themselves become prophets. They are forever consulting Elisha. At one point they want to enlarge their quarters and ask Elisha about the project. One of them drops an axe into the water and they go to Elisha. They haven't enough food to go around and they ask Elisha. Food is suspected of being poisoned, and they go to Elisha.

Prophecy, instead of being an occasional phenomenon, as in the desert, has become the occupation of a caste and a center of a special kind of community life. In other words, prophecy had been institutionalized.

I have sometimes wondered if Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's grace precisely because it is harder to keep an institution going and alive once it has been founded than it is to found it. An inspiration leads to the establishment of an institution.

The founders of great religious orders, for instance, have been individuals who kept things going by the inspiration of their personal influence, at least during their lifetimes. They left to others the difficult task of preserving what they had begun and making it a tradition capable of ever-renewed life. Even if the founders were great legislators it is inevitable that fresh situations should arise and the tradition should need to be interpreted afresh, perhaps accommodated to contemporary needs.

You have to go aside to be with the Lord and ask for the double grace needed to do this kind of task. We pride ourselves on being the successors of great believers. We need to pray for a double portion of their spirit, and then we need to hold ourselves open to going wherever the Spirit may lead.

*Wednesday*

## **APOSTLE TO THE APOSTLES**

### **Homily by Archbishop Arthur Roche**

By the express wish of Pope Francis, the celebration of St Mary of Magdala was elevated to the status of a Feast. This decision, in the current ecclesial context, seeks to reflect more deeply on the dignity of women, on the new evangelization and on the greatness of the mystery of God's mercy. St Mary Magdalene is an example of a true and authentic evangelizer, a woman who announces the central joyful message of Easter.

Pope Francis speaks of Mary as "the woman who so loved Christ and was so greatly loved by Christ". St Anselm of Canterbury says of her "chosen because you are beloved and beloved because you are chosen by God". It is true that ecclesial tradition in the West, especially since the time of Gregory the Great, has identified St Mary Magdalene, and the woman who anointed Christ's feet with perfume in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and the sister of Lazarus and Martha, as one and the same person. This has been seriously challenged. What is certain is that Mary was part of the group of the disciples of Jesus, she accompanied him to the foot of the cross and, and in the garden where she met him at the tomb, was the first witness to divine mercy. The Gospel of John tells us that Mary wept because she could not find the body of the Lord; and that Jesus had mercy on her by letting himself be known as her Master, thus transforming her tears into paschal joy.

There are two ideas which help us grasp the importance of this holy woman for today. On the one hand, she had the honor to be the first witness to the Lord's resurrection. Christ sought her in her anguish and suffering in the garden. In the same way he seeks every disciple and tells us not to seek security in this world, but by faith in the Risen Christ.

Secondly, because she was an eyewitness to the Risen Christ, she was also the first to bear witness to him before the Apostles. "I have seen the Lord" she announces. Thus, she becomes an evangelist, a messenger who announces to the apostles what they in turn will announce to the whole world. For this reason, it was St Thomas Aquinas who called her "apostle to the apostles".

Thursday

## WHAT WE NEED TO LEARN FROM MARY

A reflection adapted from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Little is told us in Scripture about the Blessed Virgin. Yet there is one grace that the evangelists see as a pattern for us all. In one word, it is faith. Zachary questioned the angel's message. Mary said, "*See, I am the Lord's slave; let it be done to me as you have said*".

When Mary comes to visit her, Elizabeth seems to allude to the contrast between her husband and Mary. "*You are blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb*", and then she continues: "*Blessed is she who believes that the things the Lord has told her will be fulfilled*".

Yet Mary's faith was not mere acquiescence in Divine Providence or in the revelations made to her. As we are told, she pondered what she heard and saw and experienced. When, for instance, the shepherds told of the vision of angels they had seen and repeated the announcement one of them made about the birth of "*the Christ, the Lord*", they experienced only amazement while Mary "*kept all these things in her heart and pondered on them*".

Another example is given by the story about Jesus being found in the Temple. Her son and savior was twelve, and was entering upon official adulthood as a believer and keeper of God's commands. He had left her for awhile for "his Father's" service. She had been surprised to find him in the Temple learning from the doctors of the Law, asking them questions and answering theirs. When she complained of the distress looking for him had caused her and Joseph he pointed out that there had been no need to search anxiously for him because it was only to be expected that he would be in his Father's House.

His mother kept all these things in her heart. How she used what she pondered is shown by what she did at the wedding celebration in Cana. There her faith anticipated his first miracle and she said to the servers, "*Do whatever he tells you to*". She says it to us as well.

All these tales show Mary as the pattern for all who believe. She shows us how to receive divine truth and how to meditate on it.

She doesn't think it is enough to merely accept what she is told and sees; she dwells on it. It is not enough just to possess it but a way to use it is needed. It is not enough to assent; prolonged meditation is called for. It is not enough to submit reason to God's word, believing without reasoning and accepting the word with love and reverence; no, Mary had to develop her understanding of it. She reasoned after she believed.

This symbolizes for us not only faith, whether it is the faith of the unlearned or that of the Church's learned teachers. She shows us all how to use faith to guide all that we do, and how to meditate upon it constantly. Blessed Mary is the pattern for all. This is something we should ponder in our hearts. We can learn from her how to believe and make our faith the source of our life.

*Friday*

## **THE HEALING THAT WE NEED MOST**

### **A reflection from a biblical commentary by St. Ambrose**

You no doubt recall the tale told about Naaman, a Syrian general, who came to the prophet Elisha to be healed of a skin disease that made him ritually unclean. When Jesus visited his own town of Nazareth and found that its people refused to believe in him, he reminded them of this story. These people, by their unbelief, refused to let God do great things for any of their townspeople. They refused to believe that Jesus could be even a prophet. Who is to help such people?

Naaman came to the prophet because of the faith of a girl who had been captured in a raid on Israel and enslaved. She knew about the disease her owner was struggling with and in the sort of faith that leaves no room for doubt she simply asked why he didn't go to Elisha and get healed. This is meant to be a challenge to our faith, because one greater than a prophet has come to us, Jesus.

Jesus reminded the Nazarenes that there had been many who suffered from this disease in Israel and asked them why all these people weren't healed by the prophet's word? Perhaps it was because they didn't have the sort of faith that saves. The king of Israel, to whom Naaman came seeking healing, thought the King of Damascus, whom Naaman served, was looking for a reason to go to war by setting him an impossible task. The prophet had to hear about this from gossip and send a messenger to the king so he would direct Naaman to him.

Are you prepared to direct people to Jesus when they need something that seems humanly impossible? Do you dare to believe that Jesus both can and will do what is needed? Naaman came to the prophet, who simply sent a servant to him telling him to go to the Jordan river and wash seven times in it. But Naaman was so offended by this order that he was going to leave in a huff. His own servants had to persuade him to believe and do what he had been told to do.

This too is certainly a lesson for us. If Jesus tells us to do something, and says that obedience to his command will save us, are we ready to believe? Naaman had to have faith to be healed, but without the slave girl and his other servants he didn't have it. Who helps us believe?

Part of the problem is that humility is needed for faith. 'Jordan' means "going-down". To find the healing we really need, an inward one without which outward healing can't take place—we have to be willing to go down humbly, and for however many times this may be needed, that is what the number 7 signifies. Naaman had come to the prophet seeking bodily healing. He quickly discovered that he needed an inward healing before he could be healed outwardly. He had to be cleansed of an inward disease in order to be healed of its outward form.

How do we know of his inward healing? Because he vowed to worship no god but The Lord and God of Israel after his outward healing. He came seeking bodily health and he received that, but also the gift of inward and spiritual health. This was given as the gift of faith. We might say of him what Jesus said to many who sought healing from him: Go in peace; your faith is what saves you. And we are invited to be instruments leading people to such faith, as was a little girl. It may be that we are more like the people of Nazareth than we want to admit.

*Saturday*

## **THE RITE OF THE PILGRIM**

### **Pope St John Paul II (at Santiago de Compostela)**

I come with you as a pilgrim to the resting place of St James. Like all other pilgrims I am overcome with emotion and I will soon go in to the Basilica, venerate the saint's tomb and embrace his statue.

This is World Youth Day, and you the young people of the world have come from all over to do the same. We can be motivated by St James, as we do like him, taking on the adventure of spreading and giving root to the Good News throughout the world. The apostle heard the words of the Master and dedicated his life to Jesus who said "I am the way, the truth and the life".

Today Santiago de Compostela is a great meeting tent and a sign of the Church on pilgrimage. It is not without reason that the first pilgrims were called wayfarers. The Church in travelling along the path of history does not cease to affirm constantly the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, since the mysterious Pilgrim of Emmaus is present on the way of every Christian. St James' pilgrim way reminds us that we too are on a journey, a path of prayer and penance, of charity and solidarity. The churches and abbeys, the hospitals and shelters of the Way to Santiago speak of the Christian adventure of making pilgrimage in which faith becomes life. The church wishes to be the travelling companion of humanity: she wishes to walk with each of us on our pilgrimage. We each need guidance towards salvation.

When I come to the tomb of this great apostle James, I am aware that his way of discipleship challenges each one of us to find our own way. Today as yesterday we need to discover as our Apostle did, that Christ is the Lord, so that like James we too can become followers and apostles, witnesses and spreaders of the Gospel. Be active and generous, like James, and don't abandon your life to sterile indifference, but rather let your life yield abundant fruit. From my heart I, the Successor of Peter, implore you not to forget that which is your own, the historical legacy of St James. Develop his legacy, giving thanks to God for his call, and continuing his pilgrimage on the path to which you have been called.

May St James and Our Lady intercede for us before the throne of the Almighty! Amen