

EIGHTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Sun. **THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

Aug. 2 **TRUSTING IN THE LIVING BREAD**

A reflection by Bishop Theophylact

Mon. **Monday of the 18th Week in Ordinary Time**

3 **GOD'S CALL, TO EACH AND TO ALL**

A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Tues. **Memorial of St. John Mary Vianney**

4 **FOLLOW ONE MASTER ONLY**

Homily of St John Mary Vianney

Wed. **Tuesday of the 18th Week in Ordinary Time**

5 **PRAYER AND AN APOSTOLIC LIFE**

A reflection by Fr. Bede Jarrett, OP

Thurs. **THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION**

6 **THE TRANSFIGURATION**

A Homily by Fr Gregory Collins OSB

Fri. **Friday of the 18th Week in Ordinary Time**

7 **ENTERING THE MYSTERY OF COMMITTED LOVE**

From The Wellspring of Worship by Fr. Jean Carbon, OP

Sat. **The Memorial of St. Dominic**

8 **DOMINICAN PILGRIMS**

From Why be a Christian? by Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP

Sunday

TRUSTING IN THE LIVING BREAD

A reflection by Bishop Theophylact

Scripture tells us; “*Our ancestors ate manna in the desert; God gave them bread from heaven to eat*”. When the Lord Jesus performed a miracle by multiplying bread, did those who ate think only of earthly hunger or did they see what he did as a sign that God is always ready to satisfy our spiritual hunger? Jesus makes the contrast clear by telling those who came to him, “*it wasn’t Moses who give you bread*”; only God could give manna. What’s more Moses couldn’t give the true bread but could only represent this gift symbolically by the manna. The true giver was God and the true bread was, and is, Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us that he is the true bread come down from heaven, and it is “true” bread because it gives “true” life; i.e., a life that lasts forever.

The bread that is the Son of the living Heavenly Father is life by its very nature. Thus, it gives life to all who eat it with true faith. Just as earthly bread sustains the frail substance of the flesh and prevents it from decaying, so Christ gives the soul life through the power of the Spirit. He also preserves even the body for immortality. Through Christ’s resurrection from the dead and through bodily immortality, everything pertaining to life is given freely to the human race.

We read in the Gospel: “*Jesus said to the people: “I am the bread of life and whoever comes to me will never hunger and whoever believes in me will never thirst*”. He didn’t say he gave a bread for bodily nourishment and nothing more; he said that he gave “the bread of life”. When everything had been reduced to a condition describable only as “spiritual death”, then the Lord gave life through himself. He is bread because, as we believe, the leaven in the dough that is our humanity was baked through and through by the fire of his divinity.

Christ gives us the bread not of ordinary life but of a very different kind of life. Death can never cut short this kind of life. Whoever believe in the true bread that is Christ will never hunger and never be famished. What sort of hunger is he speaking of? It is a hunger for hearing God’s word. Christ is the Word of God and one who eats him can’t lack God’s Word. Nor can such a person be parched by spiritual thirst. One is given to drink of the Spirit through the waters of baptism. One is thereby consecrated by the Spirit.

Compare your condition, then, to that of an unbaptized person. Such a one lacks the refreshment given by the sacred waters. Such a one suffers great spiritual aridity. But we who are baptized and have been possessed by the Spirit can be sure of being given continually all that is needed for spiritual consolation. You have only to ask. God has promised you all things by choosing you and then gifting you with his Christ and his Spirit. What would God withhold from you? You have only to ask in prayer for what you truly need.

Never allow the gift of prayer to fade within you. Pray daily. Pray continually. Pray with Jesus. You will have all you need. But you have to trust that what God has given you meets the needs you truly have. Trust God to know what you need and gives that to you in love.

Monday

GOD'S CALL TO US, EACH AND ALL

A reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Our Lord Jesus Christ, after dying for our sins on the cross and ascending on high, didn't leave the world as he found it. Jesus left a blessing behind him. He left in the world what before wasn't in it—a secret home for faith and love to enjoy. And this secret home is there for us in spite of the world around us.

What is this home? It is the Church of God, our true home provided by God. There God dwells with all the angels and saints and he introduces us into it by giving us a new birth. We can even enter into it in a way that enables us to forget the troubles of the world around us.

A foretaste was provided by the Jerusalem Temple. It rose stately & beautiful on Mount Zion. It invited worshipers and led them into an outer court and away from the outward world and into God's presence. But it was confined to one place and couldn't be a home for the whole world but only for a few at a time. Our Christian temple is spiritual and invisible and can be everywhere at once. It is wherever Christians are and are praying in Jesus' Name. All may enter it and be part of God's heavenly family in a way that is just as real as was the Jerusalem Temple when one entered it.

Yes, this temple is invisible but this is a necessary condition for its being everywhere. Listen to St. Paul: "You are come to Mount Zion and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant." So leave this earthly scene, Virgin Soul. No matter how attractive and winning you are aim at a higher prize, the noblest companionship.

We are able to enter into the tabernacle of God. Though we are in a fleshly body and a member of this world we have only to kneel reverently in prayer and we are at once in the society of the saints and angels. Wherever we are, we can, through God's incomprehensible mercy, in a moment bring ourselves into the midst of God's Holy Church invisible and receive secretly that aid the very thought of which is a present and perceivable blessing. Whatever may have been our past life, whether we have never trusted anyone wholly but God and God's sacred light has been with us, or whether we have trusted in the world and it has failed us, God's mercies in Christ are offered in full abundance.

Come, then, to God and ask for these mercies. Approach God as you are asked to do with all your heart and mind and strength. You will find God!

Tuesday

FOLLOW ONE MASTER ONLY

Homily of St John Mary Vianney

What a sad life does he lead who wants both to please God and serve and please the world! It is a great mistake to make my friends. Apart from the fact that you are going to be unhappy all the time, you can never attain the stage at which you will be able to please the world and please God. It is as impossible a feat as trying to put an end to eternity. Take the advice I am giving you now and you will be less unhappy: give yourself wholly to God or wholly to the world. Do not look for and do not serve more than one master, and once you have chosen the one you are going to follow, do not leave him. You surely remember the words of Jesus in the Gospel: it is impossible to serve both God and Mammon, that is to say, you can't follow the world and the pleasures of the world and Jesus Christ with his cross.

Let me put this more clearly, you would like if your conscience, if your heart, would allow you to go to the altar in the morning and the dance in the evening; to spend part of the day in church and the rest in cabarets; to do a good turn for your neighbor on one occasion and on some other to do him harm; in other words to do good and speak well when you are with good people and to do wrong when you are in bad company. Put simply, you can follow one master only.

One section, and perhaps it is the largest section, of people are wholly wrapped up in things of the world. They no longer believe in anything. They even take pride in making themselves out to be more impious and incredulous than they really are.

And, yet there is hope. Even they can change. Voltaire, in the course of a dinner given one day for his friends, that is to say the impious, rejoiced that of all present, there were none who believed in religion. And yet he himself did believe, as he was to show at the hour of his death. Then, he demanded with great earnestness that a priest should be brought to him that he might make his peace with God.

Wednesday

PRAYER IN AN APOSTOLIC WAY OF LIFE

A reflection by Fr. Bede Jarrett, OP

It surprises some to know that St. Dominic calls for his followers to pray the full cycle of the chanted Divine Office. It is, of course, a fact that Dominic was a great lover of liturgical prayer, and not just because he began his life with God as a canon. Dominic's biographers tell us repeatedly of his ways of practicing devotion, as it was then called. He sang his morning mass whenever that was possible and arranged his trips so he could stay at certain priories where he knew the liturgy was celebrated devoutly and well. We read about his practice of the devotion of repeated genuflections before the crucifix as that of repeated prostrations before the Blessed Sacrament. Bowing, kneeling, standing and every other bodily posture were part of the proper way to address God. He thought of worship as claiming the whole of a person, body and spirit.

He loved what he thought of as serried ranks of people at prayer chanting the Office. He had his own choir stall in Dominican priories. He thought this prayer should be made more impressive by various gestures and he is described as leaving his own stall to pass up and down the ranks of the brothers exhorting them to sing more strongly (*fortiter*). He looked upon all this as having a positive, formative effect on those assigned to apostolic work. It was a way of making people conscious that they weren't alone in a huge undertaking and that a force of praying religious stood behind them. He thought of his success as *preachers* as depending on the power of prayer rather than that of rhetoric or logic in arguing. He saw this mutual support as parallel to that of the ranks of angels standing in perpetual prayer before God's throne.

Dominic was concerned lest his brethren see choosing their own superior in a way that diminished the person's authority. He was also concerned lest studies should develop a kind of critical spirit that could undermine reverence for tradition. To avert such dangers and avoid what he thought of as mere small talk he emphasized the practice and attitudes encouraged by choral prayer. When chanted in a measured way the Office makes one think and feel in a more decorous and grave way.

More *important* yet was the fact that the Office is an opportunity for prolonged contemplation of the mysteries of faith and of the word of God generally. That means it provides one with a daily sustenance for the spiritual life. In his time lesser importance was given to retreats and private devotions than to the choral praying of the office. Dominic thought of the first need of his followers as spiritual, and he saw the Divine Office as the primary and most effective way of nourishing spirituality. That is no less true today than in the time of St. Dominic. It is equally true for us whether we preach or not. We must not underestimate the practical importance of praying the Divine Office and doing so in a serious and decorous way. Leading people to pray the Office, and pray it as Dominic did, is a major factor in any Christian apostolate to the world.

Thursday

THE TRANSFIGURATION

A Homily by Fr Gregory Collins OSB

One of the best ways to come close to Christ is to consider the Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration, which tradition says happened on Mt Tabor. On the holy mountain shining in the full splendor of his glory, Jesus unveiled the deepest truth about himself before three of his apostles. But he also teaches us important things about ourselves as well.

First, Jesus takes the apostles away to be alone with him. The story of the Transfiguration shows us that if we wish to focus properly on Christ, and come to the full knowledge of the truth about him, we must let him lead us into places filled with solitude. The apostles did not discern the glory of Christ in the mist of the crowd or in the chaos and confusion of public ministry. Thus, we can say, if God must speak, we must listen.

The second important thing revealed by the Transfiguration is that one cannot remain permanently on the mountain-top, but must return to the chaos and confusion of the plain. Peter after all, had hoped to capture his transfiguring experience by building booths and remaining there; but it simply could not be. As Pope Saint Gregory the Great points out, the life of an apostle entails a constant oscillation between the glorious vision in solitary prayer, and his struggle to serve his people.

Finally, Maximos the Confessor suggests that when we take the Bible into solitude and listen attentively to the Word of God, we are doing something similar to what the Apostles did when they climbed the mountain with Jesus. By exposing our hearts to the words of Scripture we may, by God's grace, catch a glimpse of his true Word, the Incarnate Lord Jesus. For, the biblical words with their images and ideas are like the clothing of the Word. Just as Christ's clothes suddenly shone from the uncreated light of divine glory and become dazzlingly white, so the words of the Bible may suddenly catch fire from the Word who clothes himself in them to speak to our hearts

Friday

ENTERING THE MYSTERY OF COMMITTED LOVE

A reflection from The Wellspring of Worship by Fr. Jean Carbon, OP

One day isn't long enough to enter fully into the mystery of the transfiguration. What the Incomprehensible One has revealed is endless but elusive beauty seen in the transfigured Christ. The change is not in Christ but in us; our eyes are opened though we had been blind. Note that what we are told to contemplate is Jesus' committed love. In one account He speaks about it with Moses and Elijah.

The purpose of Jesus' transfiguration is salvation. As in the burning bush, so here God allows the light that is Divinity to be seen by bodily eyes and the goal is not sharing knowledge but sharing life and salvation, which is its full realization. Christ reveals himself as giving himself totally to the Heavenly Father, the one who has given him everything! Christ shows us how one gives everything back to the Father, including one's very self. We are called to do this. Answering the call with a "Yes!" is salvation. Now we have entered upon this holy ground. So let's take off the sandals of mere human curiosity and enter more deeply into the mystery of self-giving.

A few days before the transfiguration Peter received an interior enlightenment and acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God. All the other disciples heard this and shared the knowledge, but Jesus had to reveal to them the truth that he had to suffer, to be put to death, and to be raised from the dead because it means giving self wholly to God. But no one, Peter included, saw how to put together the revelation of Jesus' true nature with his passion and death. That began with what Jesus revealed when he took three disciples up a mountain to see that the truth about the link between passion and glory is revealed in Scripture.

In the lives of those who love the Heavenly Father with all their heart one may not understand why God requires certain gifts of self. Jesus tells his disciples it is so but they don't actually understand what he means in the concrete. Jesus then repeats that giving one's whole being to the Father means entering into the suffering when it comes from living out a gift of self in particular circumstances. He commits all he is to the loving will of the Father accepting even the self-giving of Gethsemane and the Cross. He is committed wholly to loving totally.

We must enter into the mystery of this committed love. We are called to love in a way that is as committed as was that of Jesus. The transfiguration on the mountain opens our eyes to the intensity of this self-giving. When these truths are glimpsed, we see what glory is. The same radiance is now to shine through us as well. Then we understand the words: "*This is my beloved, who has my favor!*"

When we hear God say this of us, we know that we have given everything to God. When others can "see" the difference this gift makes, they can see the glory that God has chosen to give us. Then all will also grasp why our God says, not only of Jesus but of us, "*Listen to this person!*" Listen, that is, to the witness of committed love. Our transformation in God is to transform the world.

Saturday

DOMINICAN PILGRIMS

From Why be a Christian? by Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP

As a proud son of St Dominic, I have had the opportunity to travel to many parts of the world. When I was Master of the Order I felt like a wandering preacher and this is precisely what Dominic was. His was an Order of Preachers, preachers often on the move.

I would suggest, that just as in Dominic's day the modern way of being religious is to be a pilgrim. If one thinks, as our society tends to, that freedom is just about choosing between alternatives, then one's life becomes just one choice after another. If one makes the wrong choice, then one can just go to Confession and start again and have it erased. Of course, we all stagger to Confession, asking for our sins to be wiped away, and emerge feeling cleansed: and so it should be. But if we remain stuck at that level, thinking of our moral lives as just a succession of good or bad acts, then we will remain morally infantile. Our personal history is not, as Henry Ford said of history in general "just one damn thing after another". St Dominic teaches us that we make sense of our lives by finding a story to tell of them. Our identity is grasped as we rewrite our personal autobiography as we grow older. So, when we make major decisions, then we are deciding the direction of our lives, and the story that may ultimately be told of them. The story that we tell shows who we are. Thus, we make decisions about who we are and not just what we do.

We cannot be like the person who was asked the way to London and replied "If I wanted to go to London, then I would not start here". Wherever we are, in whatever confusions or messes we find ourselves, this is the starting point of the journey home. It is no good telling people that they should not be divorced or remarried or living with a partner or gay. We begin where we are right now. When my good Dominican confrere, St Antonius, Archbishop of Florence, asked Cosimo de Medici to ban all priests from gambling, he replied wisely "First things first. Should we not begin by banning them from using loaded dice".

Samuel Beckett wrote "To find form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist." St Dominic would surely agree. It is also I believe the task of every Dominican, every leader, every pastor. In whatever mess we may be living, a story can be told that will make some sense of it, and this is the precise story that leads to the kingdom.