

THE TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **The Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Sept. 27 **HOW MANY ARE OF GOD'S CHURCH!**
A reflection adapted from a text of Fr. Henri Lacordaire, OP
- Mon. **Monday of the 26th Week in Ordinary Time**
28 **THE PLACE OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE**
from Lovers of the Place by Abbot Francis Kline OCSO
- Tues. **Feast of St. Michael & All the Angels**
29 **GLIMPING THE RICHNESS OF GOD'S WORLD**
A reflection from a homily by John Henry Cardinal Newman
- Wed. **Memorial of St. Jerome**
30 **THE GIFT OF GOD**
from Ascent to Love by Sr Ruth Burrows, OCD
- Thurs. **Memorial of St. Therese of the Child Jesus**
Oct. 1 **MY LOVE AND MY PRAYER**
A reflection by St. Therese of the Child Jesus
- Fri. **Desert Day**
2 **SEEKING GOD WITH ALL ONE'S HEART**
A reflection from an exhortation by St. Columban, monk
- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
3 **HUMILITY AND DIVINE MERCY**
from Christ the Ideal of the Priest
by Blessed Abbot Columba Marmion OSB

Sunday

HOW MANY ARE OF GOD'S CHURCH!

A reflection adapted from a text by Fr. Henri Lacordaire, OP

“John said to Jesus: Teacher, we saw a person using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop him because he is not of our number. Jesus replied, Don't try to stop such a person...” (Mk.9:38ff). Any one who loves God is a living member of God's Church. It doesn't matter where or when that person lives. St. Augustine tells us that two loves are making two cities. The love of God is making the City of God and the love of merely human things is making the City of Mankind. The love of God makes the Kingdom of God, God's city, and the source of that love is Jesus Christ. Whoever lives that love is a member of God's city.

Jesus has been sacrificed for us from the beginning of the world. Has the extreme character of his suffering moved you? Many find their feelings too cold and too guilty to turn to God naturally. Some can't call on the name of Jesus because he has never been proclaimed to them. Yet people don't have to know the source of the flame of love which consumes them. Many are not led to Calvary from their birth and have not seen at Calvary what the God-become-human suffers in agony for them on that hill. Yet a drop of that sacred blood has sought them by ways invisible to human sight and they sense the fragrance of eternal life and have responded to its mute appeal to charity.

The Church is not only what it seems to be. It is not only a visible organization with buildings, a history, and a hierarchy. Nor is it simply authenticity, virtues, miracles and the like. We see more of it in the kind of half-light and shadow that contains all the saintliness that is hidden from us. Yes, the angels see it and recognize that it is an underground foundation and support for what is seen and see that each person has within a kind of sanctuary which is a personal holy of holies. There a hidden incense of love and mercy is offered to God.

Love is something that cannot be caught or contained. Who is there that can see how it springs to life within a person? There is, so to speak, an immortal substance within each of us of which we aren't aware any more than we are aware of the hidden ways the Divine Love walks to find and possess us.

Wherever the love of God is, there is Jesus Christ. Wherever Jesus is, the Church is there with him. Every human person, certainly every Christian, is called to join the body which is the Church. But so many are prevented by insuperable ignorance! They are, so to speak, left under the direct rule of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is the leader and sovereign head of all Christianity and Christians. The Church of God has for this reason a kind of invisible extension that no human eye can take in. Those who see only boundaries which appear, lack all idea of the twofold radiance which is its true nature. The Church that is Jesus Christ and all who labor knowingly or unknowingly in his name calls and raises up all who live the unselfish love of Jesus, wherever in the world they may be found. Do not seek to forbid them this labor. Show them the fullness of Christ so their labor may be yet more effective in advancing the Kingdom of God.

Monday

THE PLACE OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE from Lovers of the Place by Abbot Francis Kline OCSO

In the same way as God's gift to the Church is different, but enduring and the same, so, too, in the life of the individual monastic, the gift of a vocation is a great journey of many arrivals and departures. One's life differs vastly from the first years of formation to the time of harvest and beyond, yet it preserves the first call with its original ideals and grace. The monastic becomes a contemplative when he or she holds within the self the paradox between self-fulfillment and self-sacrifice. Obviously, the paradox is manifested right in the monastic community, where the monastic's own humble life contributes to the good of the others in the community. There, one bonds effectively with the community where honor, freely given and received, transforms one into a lover of the place, as St. Stephen Harding was called by his brothers at early Citeaux.

The contemplative and the monastic community do not just float about at the edge of secular society. They hug the periphery, but are rooted in the very heart of humanity because of the place they occupy in the church.

The monk is inserted in the monastic community by the imitation of Christ. But the monastery is part of the Church, the body of Christ, because of the baptism into Christ of its members. The monastic community is a church in its own right, and is thereby inserted into the universal church, whose confines in space and time nobody can fix.

The church is the real and living presence of the divine and human Christ—the same Christ who took on our flesh, suffered, died and rose from the dead. Thus, the contemplative in the church is deeply present to the world, not just by desire, or social or prophetic stance, but by an insertion into the Body of Christ, and by a particular position in that body.

Accordingly, the church allows the monastic contemplative to assume a stance of prophecy and forgiveness for the society at large. The monastic community shares in that sign by means of its own special charism. Its sign is to point to the human heart where all contradiction begins. Refusing to assign blame anywhere else, and refusing to settle for any other solution than the most radical one, the contemplative becomes a sign of the conversion of the human heart. Thus, the place of the contemplative is the depths of the human heart. Our place is in that heart of Christ, and our lives are prophetic signs pointing to its ultimate meaning

Tuesday

GLIMPING THE RICHNESS OF GOD'S WORLD

A reflection taken from a homily by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Angels, we believe, are inhabitants of a world invisible. The fact that they exist tells us how many wonders we cannot see though they have been created for our good and joy. Indeed, we are told much more about angels than about the faithful departed. Our departed rest from their labors but the angels are active among us all the time. The Letter to the Hebrews calls them "*ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation*" (1:14) No Christian is so lowly as to lack an angel companion and helper. Those who live by faith and love are especially open to their comforting presence.

If we may judge from what is written in the Scriptures, should one of us catch a glimpse of an angel we would fall to the ground in fear and trembling. Yet they are our fellow servants and fellow-workers and companions. That they form part of an unseen realm is conveyed to us in the vision that the Patriarch Jacob saw when he was fleeing from the brother he had defrauded. "*He came upon a certain place and spent the night there. When the sun had set, he took a rock and put it under his head as a pillow, and lay down and went to sleep.*" He didn't see anything special about the place, other than that it was a holy place of sacrifice for the peoples of the area and he would be safe there. It was not an especially comfortable place to sleep but there was no building. Night had come and he had to sleep where he could.

Yet how different was the truth than what ordinary eyes could see! More was there but it was revealed to him only in a dream. In that dream he saw a world that is not usually seen but is real for all that. "*He dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth where he lay and its top reached heaven. And, behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on that ladder.*" (Gen. 28:12) Now he saw another world and saw how deeply involved our daily world is with this unseen one.

Persons often speak as if they doubted the existence of the world Jacob saw. Many treat it as something that will become real to them only after death. No! It exists now, even if we do not see it. It is among us and around us. Jacob was shown this in his dream. Angels were all about him, though he hadn't realized it. What Jacob saw in his dream Elijah and his servant saw by God's grace. The shepherds at the time of Christ's nativity not only saw it but also heard the voices of blessed spirits praising God. It is what angels do always throughout our nights and days.

When this is shown us, either by faith or by some graced sight, we see that wonderful creatures are always going about on God's errands and doing what-ever is God's good pleasure. The name 'angel' means "messenger". Like these blessed ones we too have been called to be God's messengers, ministers of God's word and blessing. Faith tells us that. It tells us too that we should imitate the angels as best we can, as God gives us the opportunities. Today is one of those opportunities.

Wednesday

THE GIFT OF GOD

from Ascent to Love by Sr Ruth Burrows, OCD

Can we really believe that God comes close to us? God is so bound up with us. It is like having four connecting circles, the center one being the focus of the other three. Within that inside circle lies helpless man and woman. The divine Trinity comes to our aid, the Father gently lifts us up and tenderly presses his holy face against his leprous cheek; the Son kneels to kiss our dirty, crippled feet delighting in being our servant; the Dove, in flames, the Spirit, the mutual love of Father and Son, swoops down to complete our enfolding into the unspeakable glory of the triune life.

The mystery of the Incarnation is something sublime. Who would have dreamed that the creator of the universe, too great for any created mind to comprehend, would choose to become defenseless as a slave, totally immersed in our feverish, sinful, suffering existence, yearning humbly for our love, prepared to expend himself to win it? So loved are we! Shall we be his joy and delight or shall we break his heart?

When we pore over the Gospels, our heart in our eyes, longing to know our Beloved Lord; as we watch him, listen to him, we see more and more the true nature of our God, what our God is really like. God reveals himself as pure compassion and love.

In former times God used various ways to enlighten us but now he has spoken once for all by his Son. All other modes of communication are abolished. Now there is Jesus; Jesus is the definitive revelation of God. If you crave to know, be reassured, and have a guarantee, you have it. Jesus will satisfy it. You have all the guarantees you need in Jesus. He shows us the Father's steadfast love. He gives us everything. He reveals the Father as total forgiveness, total mercy, total love. What need have you of further reassurance?

If you want to know God, Reality, Bedrock and Ground, Absolute Origin, ineffable Mystery, that in which we and all that is exist as tiny fish in an infinite ocean, we must look at Jesus crucified and risen. Gaze and gaze and you will know, this is what God is really like.

Thursday

MY LOVE AND MY PRAYER

A reflection by St. Therese of the Child Jesus

One who is enfolded by Divine Love can't remain inactive. One may, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to those words of his, so full of fire and of comfort. One may not appear to be contributing anything but really one contributes very much. One is doing more than Martha, as she hurries distractedly to and fro, and wishes her sister would do the same.

It is not that our Lord has any fault to find with Martha's exertions. His own mother, Mother of God though she was, put up with humble work of that sort all her life. Didn't she get the meals ready for the Holy Family? Martha is a devoted hostess, but she won't keep calm. That's the trouble.

All the saints have seen the importance of Mary's attitude, even some of those who have done the most to fill the world with the light of the Gospel teaching. Great friends of the Cross like St. Paul and St. Augustine and St. John of the Cross and St. Thomas and St. Francis and St. Dominic all went to prayer to find the secret of their wisdom. It is a divine wisdom that has left the greatest minds lost in admiration.

Give me a lever and a fulcrum, said Archimedes, and I will move the world. He wasn't talking to God so his request wasn't granted, and, in any case, he was thinking only of the material world. The fulcrum God told the saints to use was God's self and the lever was prayer. Only it must be the kind of prayer that sets the heart on fire with love. That's how the saints shift the world, and how they'll do it until the end of time.

What an extraordinary thing is the efficiency of prayer! It has access at all time to God's presence. It can get whatever it asks for. And it's a mistake to think your prayer won't be answered unless you've something out of a book. If that were true, I'm afraid I would be in a terribly bad way. You see, I recite the Divine Office with a great sense of unworthiness, but apart from that I can't face the strain of hunting about in books for splendid prayers. There are so many, each more splendid than the last. How could I recite them all, or choose between them?

I do what children do before they've learned to read. I tell God what I want quite simply, without any splendid turns of phrase. Somehow, God always manages to understand me. For me, prayer means launching oneself out of one's heart towards God. It means lifting up one's eyes very simply to heaven. It is a cry of grateful love, either from the crest of joy or the trough of despair. It's a vast supernatural force that opens out my heart and binds me close to Jesus. There is no need to be special or say special things. It's enough to be small, smaller than ever!

Friday

SEEKING GOD WITH ALL ONE'S HEART

An exhortation by St. Columban, monk

Let us follow that vocation by which we are called from life to the very fountain of life. Jesus is the fountain, not only of living water but of eternal life. Jesus is the fountain of light and spiritual illumination. From Jesus come wisdom, life and eternal delight.

God, the author of life is the first fountain of life; the creator of light is the first fountain of spiritual illumination. Therefore, let's seek the fountain of life and light and living water and do it by devaluing what we merely see. Let us leave the world and dwell in the highest heavens. Let's seek these things like so many shrewd and thinking fish who want only to drink of and dwell in the living water that wells up to eternal life.

Merciful God, good Lord, I wish that you would make me one with that fountain so that I may drink there of the living spring of the water of life and do it with others who likewise thirst for you. There, in that heavenly place, may I dwell always, delighting in the abundant sweetness. I want to hear myself say: "How sweet is the fountain of living waters; it never fails and it wells up to eternal life."

O God, you are yourself that fountain ever and again to be desired. You are ever and again to be consumed. Lord Christ, always give us this water so it will be for us the source of that living water which wells up to eternal life. I ask you for this great gift.

Who doesn't know that you, King of Glory, know how to give great gifts, and you have promised them? There is nothing greater than you. You bestow yourself upon us. You give yourself for us.

Therefore, we ask that we may know what we love, since we ask nothing other than that you give us yourself. For you, O Lord, are our all. You are our life, our light, our salvation, our food and our drink—our God! Inspire our hearts, I beg you, Jesus. Do this with the breath of your Spirit. Wound our souls with your love. Let the soul of each of us say in truth: Show me my soul's desire, for I am wounded by your love.

These are wounds I long for, Lord. Blessed is the one so wounded by love. Such a person seeks the fountain of eternal life and drinks from it. Yes, we continue to thirst! Our thirst grows ever greater, even as we drink. The more we love the greater our suffering. Greater still is our healing. May our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, our good and saving physician, wound the depths of our hearts and minds with a healing wound. That wound is Jesus Christ himself, who reigns in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Saturday

HUMILITY AND DIVINE MERCY

from Christ the Ideal of the Priest by **Blessed Abbot Columba Marmion OSB**

Humility has a function that makes it indispensable for the equilibrium of the whole spiritual life. It is humility alone which enables us to glorify God in accordance with the immensity of his mercy.

This divine perfection is simply infinite charity itself providing a remedy for sin and bringing aid to human wretchedness.

The incarnation of the Son of God “in the likeness of human flesh”, his death for our redemption, our divine adoption, the ever-repeated pardon of our sins, constitute a stupefying revelation of the depths of this immeasurable charity. St Paul teaches expressly that every work of Christ Jesus tends to manifest the abundance and the gratuitousness of this divine goodness when he tells the Ephesians that God is rich in mercy and it is because of his great love that we have been brought to life in Christ. God truly wants to have mercy on us all and to demonstrate that mercy to us. Paul asks the Romans-How shall we appear in heaven before God? The answer is simple, as vessels of mercy.

We are destined to proclaim eternally in the heavenly city the triumph of grace over our weakness and over sin. We can sum up the whole mission of Jesus in this world in a few words “Jesus is the herald of infinite mercy to human misery “.

If, then, there is one divine perfection that we should extol above all others, it is mercy. All the ways of God in regard to us are simply the condescension of love. In the economy of the redemption in which we live, God has shown his compassion in our distress so as to raise us up to the power of participating in his life.

What attitude can we adopt in the face of these marvels except one of profound humility? By acknowledging our many miseries, we admit that we have no right in justice to become the object of divine bounty: our sole title to grace is the constant admission of our unworthiness united to our desire to glorify the eternal mercy which has given us all things in Christ. This is our gift: we are the Beloved. It is then, in humility, and in full knowledge of our weakness, that we can persist in hoping in his love. In that spirit of humility, we can really give glory to God