

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun.
Oct. 11 **The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
THE LORD'S CALL AND OUR REPLY
A reflection by John Henry Cardinal Newman
- Mon.
12 **Monday of the 28th Week in Ordinary Time**
THE SPIRITUALITY OF AGING (Part 1)
from The Gift of Years by Sr. Joan Chittister OSB
- Tues.
13 **Tuesday of the 28th Week in Ordinary Time**
THE SPIRITUALITY OF AGING (Part 2)
from The Gift of Years by Sr. Joan Chittister OSB
- Wed.
14 **Memorial of the Dead**
THE EXAMPLES GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE
AND BY OUR DEPARTED
A reflection taken from a homily by Basil of Seleucia
- Thurs.
15 **Memorial of St. Teresa of Jesus**
DO YOU WANT TO GIVE YOURSELF TO GOD?
A reflection from The Book of Life by St. Teresa of Jesus
- Fri.
16 **Desert Day**
THE HUMILITY OF A MARTYR
A reflection from one of St. Isaac's letters to his provincial
- Sat.
17 **Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch**
PERSEVERANCE AS A GIFT OF GOD
From St. Ignatius Letter to the Church of Antioch

Sunday

THE LORD'S CALL AND OUR REPLY

A reflection by John Henry Cardinal Newman

"Go and sell everything you own and follow me!" All through our life Christ is calling us. The first time was in baptism but the calls continued. Whether we obeyed or not Christ graciously went on calling. If we fall away from our baptism, he calls us to repent. If we answer the call, we are called again and again, from grace to grace and from holiness to greater holiness, and as long as we live. Abraham was called from his home, Peter from his nets, from his tax office Matthew was called, Elisha from his farm, Nathanael from his retreat. We are all called from one thing to another without rest, mounting toward an eternal rest. Christ keeps calling so as to keep justifying and sanctifying us more and more.

How wonderful if we understood these facts. We are slow to master the truth that Christ is walking among us now and by hand or eye or voice bidding us to follow him. We don't understand that this call happens right now. Don't think it took place only in the Apostles' day. We are called now! Do we watch for our calls? Perhaps we don't have eyes to recognize the Lord, as the Beloved Apostle did when the other disciples didn't. Jesus stood on the shore and told them to cast their net and that one disciple said to Peter, *"It is the Lord!"*

My meaning is this. People who are living their faith from time to time will glimpse truths they didn't previously know and had had no need to consider. Now these truths, these facts, are brought home to them powerfully! They are truths that involved duties; they are precepts and call for the response of obedience. It is in such ways that Christ calls us now. Nothing happens that is miraculous or extraordinary in the way Christ deals with us. Christ works through our natural abilities and the circum-stances of our lives. Yet what happens is in God's Providence. For us it is the same thing as Christ's voice was to those he spoke to when on earth.

It doesn't matter whether Christ calls by a visible presence, by a voice, or by our consciences. The crucial thing is that we feel we are being commanded. We may obey or disobey; we may accept the command as Samuel did or St. Paul did. Or we may put it aside like the rich young man who had to care for his possessions first. We don't have to be afraid of spiritual pride when we follow Christ's call. The important thing is that we respond with earnestness. We need to be determined to do God's will. We simply have to say, *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening"*. We simply have to ask, *"Lord, what do you want me to do?"*

O God, grant us more of this spirit you gave to young Samuel. Help us to look only to one thing—to feel that the one thing we need to do is please our God! So let's each and all beg God day by day to reveal himself to us more and more fully. May our senses come alive! May he give us sight and hearing and taste and touch to perceive the world to come emerging in our daily world. We need to say with sincerity, *"Guide me with your counsel and then receive me into your glory!"* Do you think like this? *"Whom do I have in heaven except you? There is no one on earth that I long for as I long for you! God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!"* Pray for the grace to think this day in and day out.

Monday

The Spirituality of Aging (Part 1) from The Gift of Years by Sr. Joan Chittister OSB

If we learn anything at all as time goes by and the changing seasons become fewer and fewer, it is that there are some things in life that cannot be fixed. It is more possible that we will go to our graves with a great deal of personal concerns, of life agendas, left unresolved. Some of the family fractures will not be healed. Some of the words spoken in haste and in heat will not be redeemed. Some of the friendships will not have been renewed. Some of the dreams will never be realized. So, has it all been for nothing?

Only if we mistake the meaning of the last period of our lives. To hope that all the ruptures will have been repaired, however, is at best unreal. People are long gone and even longer out of touch. Many of the things we still feel responsible, even guilty about, we can't do anything to undo now. We can't cancel years of neglect.

How then can we face the end of our life with any kind of serenity? The fact is that the unrest that accumulates over the years is the very grace reserved for the end time, the last years, the pinnacle of life. Only now can the pain be productive. Because now we must deal with it ourselves. Now we must go down into the deepest part of ourselves and come to peace, not with our old antagonists, but, more importantly than that, with ourselves, with the conscience we have been refusing to reconcile with for years.

There are issues far more germane to what happened in our life than simply the question of who did what to whom and why and what happened to us as a result. What must be addressed now is what we became as a result of them. Did we become fuller human beings? This is the period in our life when we must begin to look inside our own hearts and souls rather than outside ourselves for the answers to our problems. This is the time for facing ourselves, for bringing ourselves out into the light.

This is the period of spiritual reflection, of spiritual renewal in life. Now is the time to ask ourselves what kind of person we have been becoming all these years. And do we like that person? Did we become more honest, more decent, more caring, more merciful as we went along because of all these things? And if not, while we still have time, what are we going to do about it now?

Tuesday

The Spirituality of Aging (Part 2) from **The Gift of Years by Sr. Joan Chittister OSB**

Whatever caused the rifts in our life, we had some part in the making of them. What of that demanding, narcissistic, spoiled child that yet remains in me? Am I willing now to deal with the dross of it?

As the body begins to go to air, as we begin to melt into the beyond, are we able to put down those things in us that have been an obstacle between us and the rest of creation in all our lives?

Can we come eye to eye with our own souls and admit who we are? If we have been selfish, can we bring ourselves to the daily discipline of caring for others? If we have been dishonest about ourselves, can we take care now to tell the real truth about ourselves? If we have been godless, are we able to trust that the Creator of Life must therefore also be the home of our souls, and can we bow before the Lord of Life in love and humility?

Can we begin to see ourselves as only a part of the universe, just a fragment of it, not its center? Can we smile at what we have not smiled at for years? Can we give ourselves away to those who need us? Can we speak our truth without feeling the need to be right and accept the vagaries of life without needing the entire rest of the world to swaddle us beyond any human justification for expecting it? Can we talk to people decently and allow them to talk to us?

Old people, we are told, become more difficult as they get older. No. Not at all. They simply become less interested in maintaining their masks, more likely to accept the effort of being human, human beings. They no longer pretend. They face the fact that now, this period, this aging process, is the last time we are given to be more than all the small things we have allowed ourselves to be over the years. But first, we must face what the smallness is, and rejoice in the time that God has still given us.

A burden of these years is the danger of giving in to our most selfish selves. A blessing of these years is the opportunity to face what is in us that has been enslaving us, and with God's grace to let our spirit fly free of whatever has been tying it to the earth all these years.

Wednesday

THE EXAMPLES GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE AND BY OUR DEPARTED **A reflection taken from a homily by Basil of Seleucia**

In the Second Book of Kings we are given the story of Elisha's raising of the dead son of a woman who had received the boy as a gift from God through Elisha's prayers. We can look at this story as a kind of parable of God's giving new life to Gentile peoples. God had given them natural life but through Christ God gave them in addition a supernatural life. The same is true for us. We were spiritually dead. Our mouth was dead in that it didn't praise God, our eyes were dead in that they never turned to the God of the universe but worshiped created things, our hands were dead in that they sought to make what would satisfy us and make our lives good when that was impossible, and our feet were dead in that we ran after things that could never give us real life. Then Christ came and gave us life.

We, as a whole, were like a corpse in need of a physician who could raise even the dead. That was the "spiritual Elisha", our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He found us thoroughly dead and did spiritually what Elisha had done physically. He placed his whole being over our entire dead body. In other words, the whole fullness of the Godhead was clothed in the whole of our human nature. In Christ, as St. Paul says, the whole fullness of the divine nature dwelt embodied. He had eyes and hands and feet and it was no illusion that we beheld when we looked at him. Life wore a dead garment so as to transform death into life, mortality into immortality. When the Godhead came down into the human body, all its members were sanctified and transformed.

But we had to learn how to live the new life we were given. Jesus taught his disciples and they taught disciples in turn, and finally, when we were born, some of his later disciple taught us. Think of how many there have been who have helped us learn to walk the way of Christ as far as the Kingdom of God. They taught us to accept the gift of faith. They taught us the commandments of the One God who has given us every good thing we have or can hope for. "Lord, open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise!" This is what we have learned to pray, and even more to live day by day. They have directed our eyes, outer and inner, toward Our God and Lord: "The eyes of all creatures look to you, and you give them their food in due time". Those who brought us to God and taught us to pray have also pointed to the signs of God's presence and care and led us to praise their giver. Their refrain was: "Lift up your hands in the holy place, and praise the Lord through the night." "Let the lifting up of my hands be like an evening sacrifice". Those who dedicated themselves to God led us in dedicating ourselves and in prayers of thanksgiving and praise. They have shown us the path that leads to God and to realize that we are in our God's presence every moment.

Those who taught us didn't do it only in words but by example. They prayed for us, and they continue to pray for us as they stand now before God in the Heavenly Temple. We pray for them too and this shared prayer binds us together as members of Christ, who himself ever stands before the Heavenly Father interceding for us. We lift up one another's hands in never ceasing prayer. We never forget all we have received, nor do we forget those through whose hands we have received so much.

Thursday

DO YOU WANT TO GIVE YOURSELF TO GOD? **A refection from The Book of Life by St. Teresa of Avila**

It is easy enough to promise to give your will to God but when you come to the test it is the most difficult thing in the world, especially if you would do it perfectly. Yet God knows what each of us is able to bear and when God finds one who is brave God doesn't hesitate to accomplish His will in that person. So I want to warn you and help you understand what God's will is. Realize, as the saying goes, whom you are dealing with and what our good Jesus is offering on your behalf to the Heavenly Father. Make sure you know what you are giving God when you pray, "Your will be done!"

First, you are asking that God's will may be done in you. It is this and nothing else that you are praying for. Second, you needn't be afraid that God will give you wealth or pleasures or great honors or any earthly thing. God's love for you is not so weak as that! God sets a far greater value on your gift, and wants to reward your generosity. God gives you the Kingdom, even in this life.

Would you like to see how God treats people who pray this petition without reserve? Ask God's Only Son, who prayed it genuinely and resolutely in the Garden. Wasn't God's will accomplish in Jesus through the trial, sufferings, and insults and persecutions God sent, until at last Jesus' life was ended on the Cross? You see, then, what God gave to the one God loves best of all. That shows you what God's will is.

These things are God's gifts in this world and he gives them in proportion to his love for us! To those God loves more God gives more. God's gifts are measured by the courage God sees we have and the love that we bear for our God. Fervent love can suffer a great deal. Lukewarmness will last very briefly. I myself believe that love is the gauge of the crosses, great or small, that we are able to bear.

If you have much love, think of what you are doing. Don't let the promises you make to God—who is so great a Lord—be no more than empty compliments. Brace yourself to suffer whatever God wants. Any other way of surrendering our will to God is like offering someone a precious stone and then holding on to it when God reaches out to accept the gift. Such mockery isn't for the one who endured so much mockery for us. It would certainly be wrong to mock God in this way every time we pray the Lord's Prayer.

Let's give God once and for all that precious and beautiful gift we have offered him so many times. The fact is that God gave us this very reality that we give back in our prayer. I want to encourage you to yield yourself entirely to our Creator. Submit your will to God's. Detach yourself from created things. Our good Master knows very well how greatly we will benefit by fulfilling this promise we make to the Heavenly Father. It won't be long till we find ourselves at our journey's end. Then we will drink of the fountain of living water and joy.

Friday

THE HUMILITY OF A MARTYR

A reflection from one of St. Isaac's letters to his provincial

During my captivity I often recalled my past life, so blameworthy because of my sins and infidelity to God. I groaned at being stopped in the middle of my course, and because I had no good works to send before me to God. I felt rejected by God and was without the sacraments. In this situation I wanted to live but dreaded death, and I moaned in my distress: "*When shall there be an end to this misery and grief?*" I wanted God to bring calm after the storm and fill us with joy and exultation instead of tears. If those days hadn't been shortened, I would have perished.

I turned to Holy Scripture, my usual refuge. I kept certain passages in memory. These taught me to "*think of the Lord's goodness*" (Wisdom 1:1). Even if I felt no sensible devotion, I could recall that "*the holy one shall live by faith*" (Heb. 10:38). I would explore these passages and prob for the smallest streams of devotion in my efforts to quench my constant spiritual thirst. I would "*consider God's law by day and by night*" and remind myself "*were it not that your law is my great delight I should by now have perished in my grief*". I spent two months in that quasi-retreat and became, like St. Bernard, the disciple of the beech trees; I thought of nothing but God.

Because the natives hated me and could no longer stand me, they sent me back to my village before the usual time. The trip took eight days and I was loaded with the enormous weight of the food that I had to carry. I had become a beast of burden before my God. Still I tried to remain with God always, not knowing what awaited me in the next village. Some who had preceded us spread all sorts of rumors. On the road I was almost naked and spent most of the night outdoors. I suffered very much from the cold. The wounds on my fingers which had only closed up toward the middle of January weren't yet completely healed.

In the village they gave me a thin skin to use in addition to the old coat I was wearing. In these clothes I went through the streets begging our Lord to let me join the saints who had served him "*dressed in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, distressed, mistreated*". Every day I observed the natives wearing the woolens and vestments that had been in our baggage, while day and night I was stiff from cold. That was not as important as was seeing them use vestments for secular purposes. One had taken to humeral veils and fashioned leg coverings, a sort of stocking.

Throughout the entire period, which lasted until about the middle of January, I could say before God: "*To this very hour we are victims of hunger and thirst; we are poorly clad and knocked around; we are vagabonds and wear ourselves out with manual labor. When they call us ugly names, we speak well of them. When they persecute us, we bear it with patience; when they insult us, we speak gently. We have practically become the world's scum, the scapegoat of society.*"

Saturday

PERSEVERENCE AS A GIFT OF LOVE

From St. Ignatius' Letter to the Church of Antioch

The last era of our world has arrived. We must either fear it, as expressing a gathering storm of wrath or cherish it as a present time of grace. You must do one or the other, but, in any case, let's keep in union with Jesus Christ! That's how we come to possess the true life!

Apart from Christ nothing should fascinate us. In union with Christ I carry about the chains I now bear, and look at them as spiritual pearls of great price. May they be truly pearls! May I have the privilege to treat them so through your prayers. I hope that I will always have a share in the sufferings of Christ and in this way. I hope to wear these chains which I rise from the dead! Then I will be found in the ranks of the Christians of Ephesus. They have always been of one mind with the Apostles and they are that through the power of Jesus Christ.

Make the effort to meet more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to offer God praise. When you do this the forces of Satan are overthrown; Satan's baneful influences are neutralized precisely by the unanimity of your faith. This oneness brings peace and that is a precious reality. It puts an end to every war waged by heavenly or earthly enemies.

None of what I have said is strange to you. I only pray that you will persevere and to the end. Faith is the beginning of true life and its end is love. When faith and love blend perfectly with one another we have God. Everything else that makes for right living comes from these two. No one who professes faith truly sins. No one who loves hates. The tree is known by its fruit, the Lord tells us.

Similarly, people who belong to Christ are known to belong by their conduct. Surely, what now matters isn't mere professing of faith but whether one is found to have lived it actually and to the end.

It is better to keep silence and be something truly than to talk about it and be nothing. Teaching is an excellent thing. But it is only if the speaker practices what is taught. There is one Teacher. He spoke and all was done. Yet even what that Teacher did silently is worthy of the Heavenly Father. God has made the words of Jesus really his own. God hears them even in his silence.

That shows that Jesus is perfect. Jesus acts through speech and is understood through silence. Nothing is hidden from our Lord. Even our secrets are known.

Let us, then, do everything in the conviction that God dwells in us. In that way we will truly be God's temples. In that way God will truly be our God and within us. This is the truth. This will be made manifest before everyone's eyes. That is why we should love God and love as God deserves to be loved. May he grant this to us each day.