

LAST SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

THE THIRTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sun **OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE**
Nov. 22 **LONGING FOR WHAT OUR GOD HAS PREPARED**
A reflection by Hippolytus of Rome

Mon. **Monday of the Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**
23 **THE CHURCH AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**
from Interracial Apostolate by Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ (written in 1979)

Tues. **Memorial of Sts. Andrew Dung-Lac & Companions**
24 **LET US GIVE THANKS EVEN FOR THE CROSS**
A letter from one of a group of 117 Vietnamese martyrs

Wed. **Wednesday of the Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time**
25 **THE VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM**
from Scripture as Liberation by Fr Richard Rohr OFM

Thurs. **THANKSGIVING DAY**
22 **HOW GRATITUDE CONFIRMS US IN GRACE**
A reflection inspired by a sermon of St. Bernard

Fri. **Friday of the 33rd Week in Ordinary Time**
27 **COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS BY GIVING THANKS**
A reflection from a commentary on the Lord's Prayer by St. Gregory of Nyssa

Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
28 **MARY'S GIFT OF NEW LIFE**
A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Sunday

LONGING FOR WHAT OUR GOD HAS PREPARED

A reflection by Hippolytus of Rome

The Holy Gospel clearly proclaims that the Son of Man will gather together all the nations and divide them into two groups, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, and will say to the sheep: "Come, you lovers of the poor and of strangers. Come, you who fostered my love. I am love and peace and I bid you come, you who shared peace and love. Come, my Heavenly Father's blessed ones, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you."

You didn't make an idol of wealth. You gave alms to the poor. You helped orphans and widows. You gave drink to the thirsty. You gave food to the hungry. Come, then! You welcomed strangers. You clothed the naked. You visited the sick. You comforted prisoners and helped the blind. Come, you who kept the seal of faith unbroken and were swift to assemble in the churches to listen to my Scriptures. You longed for my words and observed my law, day and night. Like good soldiers you shared in my sufferings because you wanted to please me, your heavenly king. Come, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!

Look, my kingdom is ready paradise stands open, my immortality is displayed in all its beauty. Come now, all of you, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. When we hear this will be astounded by such a great and wonderful thing. We will be addressed as friends by one who the angelic hosts are unable to behold clearly. And you will reply, exclaiming: "But, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? Master, when did we see you thirsty and give you a drink? We hold you in great awe and how could we have found you naked so as to clothe you? You are creator of all, so how could we see you a stranger and welcome you as though you were not always in your own place? How could you who are immortal be sick or in prison and needing a visit?"

You are the Eternal, without beginning like the Heavenly Father, you are co-eternal with the Spirit. You are the One who created all things from nothing. You are the king of the angels. You make the depths tremble. You are clothed in light as in a robe. You are our maker who fashioned us from the earth. You are the creator of the world invisible. How could we possibly have received your Lordship, your Royal Majesty, as our guest?

Then the King of Kings will say in reply: Inasmuch as you did this to one of the least members of my Body, to my brothers and sisters, you did it to me. Inasmuch as you received, clothed, fed and gave drink to those members of mind, about whom I have just spoken and described as the poor, you did it to me. So, come and enter the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Enjoy forever the gifts of my Heavenly Father, and of the most holy and life-giving Spirit. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him.

Monday

THE CHURCH AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION **from Interracial Apostolate by Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ (written in 1979)**

Race relations and poverty are not necessarily and everywhere two aspects of the same problem. But, as a matter of fact, in the United States the problem of racial discrimination can hardly be considered apart from the problem of poverty. For it is especially among the hundreds of thousands of racially exploited that the description of the poor is distressingly verified.

The poor are rightfully demanding fair participation in the benefits of scientific and economic progress. They are seeking earnestly for leaders who will enable them to secure their just share of the earth's bounty.

I speak as a Christian, a Catholic, and Superior General of the Society of Jesus. It is time for all church people, all religious orders, all communities to examine our consciences. It is chastening for me to recall, that before the Civil War, some American Jesuit houses owned black slaves. It is humbling to remember that until recently, a number of Jesuit institutions did not admit black students, even in areas where civil restrictions against integrated schools did not prevail, and this even in the case of black Catholics. It is embarrassing to note that up to the present, some of our Jesuit institutions have affected what seems to be little more than token integration of black students. It is salutary for us Jesuits to reflect upon these facts and for other Catholic institutions to reflect on their own history.

It is true, of course, that in the history of the Society of Jesus in the United States, Jesuits have distinguished themselves in laboring faithfully and effectively with many minority groups. Nevertheless, our record of service to Black Americans has fallen far short of what it should have been. Unfortunately, our apostolate to black people has depended chiefly on the individual initiative and very little on the corporate efforts of the Society. I fear it is the same for the Church generally. Our Church is at risk of being identified more and more with the middle-class, white segment of the population.

It would be a wholesome practice for each of us, individually or as members of Jesuit communities or of whatever community to which you belong, to examine our consciences and to inquire why so little of our efforts in the past have been expended in work for, with, and on behalf of Black Americans. There are some possible answers: a failure to appreciate fully the practical implications of the Christian concept of the human person; an uncritical acceptance of stereotypes and prejudices regarding black people, and the insulation of many of us from the actual living conditions of the poor. It is time for us all to reflect on these important matters.

Tuesday

LET US THANK GOD EVEN FOR THE CROSS

A letter from one of a group of 117 Vietnamese Martyrs

St. Paul wrote from prison and chains to praise the name of Christ. How can we do less? We want only that you too be inflamed with love for God and join us in praise. God's mercy is forever! God is with us in tribulation and has even made tribulations sweet, for God's mercy is forever!

In the midst of torments which usually terrify people we are filled with joy and gladness. We are not alone! Christ is with us! Our Master bears the entire weight of the Cross and leaves us only a tiny share. He isn't a mere onlooker but a contestant in the struggle, and a champion and victor. On his head be the crown!

Beloved brethren as you hear many horrible things give endless thanks in joy. From God every good comes. Bless the Lord with us! "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has looked on me with favor".

O praise the Lord, all you nations, acclaim God all your peoples! God chose what is weak in this world to confound the strong and the philosophers, disciples of the wise of this world and not of God. For God's mercy endures forever!

I write these things so that our faith and yours may be one. In the midst of the storm let us cast our anchors toward the throne of God. What is that anchor? It is living hope in the hearts of all who suffer and yet look to God and God's Christ in trust.

Beloved, for your part run so that you may attain the crown. Put on the breastplate of faith and take up the weapons of Christ for the right hand and the left. This is what St. Paul has taught us. Isn't it better to enter life with one eye or crippled, than with all members intact to be cast away? Come to me with your prayers. Grant us the strength to fight the spiritual fight according to the Gospel law, and so fight a "good fight". Let us finish our race with victory.

It may be that we shall not see one another again in this life. We will have the great happiness of seeing each other again in the world to come. Then, standing in triumph and at the throne of the spotless Lamb, we will together join in singing God's praises and exulting forever in joy.

Wednesday

THE VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM

from Scripture as Liberation by Fr Richard Rohr OFM

In almost all of history the vast majority of people understood the view from the bottom due to their life circumstance. Most of the people who have ever lived on this planet have been oppressed and poor. But their history was seldom written except in the bible. Only in modern times and wealthy countries do we find the strange phenomenon of masses of people having an establishment identity.

Only by solidarity with the sufferings of other people can comfortable people be converted. Otherwise we are disconnected from the cross- of the world, of others, of Jesus, and finally of our own necessary participation in the great mystery of dying and rising. In the early Christian Scriptures, the New Testament, we clearly see that it is mostly the lame, the poor, the blind, the prostitutes, the drunkards, the tax collectors, the sinners-that really hear the teaching of Jesus and get the point and respond to him. It is the leaders and insiders, the priests, scribes, Pharisees, the teachers of the law, and the Roman leaders who crucify him.

We often miss the core point about how power coalesces and corrupts. Once Christians became the empowered group, we kept this obvious point from hitting home by blaming the Jews, the heretics, then sinners. But arrogant power is always the problem, not the Jews or any group we scapegoat. When any racial, gender, or economic group has all the power it does the same thing. Catholics would probably have crucified Jesus if he had critiqued the Catholic Church the way he did his own religion.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the first Christians went underground. They were the persecuted ones, meeting in secrecy in the catacombs. The Church of that time was largely of the poor and for the poor.

The turning point, at which the Church moved from being at the bottom to the top, is the year 313AD when Emperor Constantine supposedly did the Church a great favor by beginning to make Christianity the established religion of the Holy Roman Empire. That's how the Apostolic Church became the established church. As the Church's interests became linked with imperial world views, our perspective changed from the view from the bottom, the persecuted and the outsiders, to the view from the top where we now were the ultimate insiders with power, money, status, and control. Emperors convened and controlled most of the early church councils. So, in the creeds which emerged the words used were highly abstract and there was no mention of love, justice and peacemaking. These creeds were a far cry from the creeds spoken by Jesus 3 centuries before That's what happens when we lose the view from the bottom

Thursday

HOW GRATITUDE CONFIRMS US IN GRACE

A reflection inspired by a sermon of St. Bernard

Great is our God's mercy to us, very great! If only we would recall the disgraceful image of our former life, we could gauge more rightly the greatness of God's liberating mercy. If we could remember, not only that which we have avoided, but that to which we have called, as well as what we have received, we would be filled with endless gratitude. People live lawfully in marriage and work for the good of our families alone, but God calls us to do more and greater things, following the example of the Lord Jesus. So why do we so often complain as if God's mercy and love had fallen short? Are we like the nine lepers who never returned to thank the Lord for their healing? Why aren't we filled with thanks?

There are many who ask insistently for what they know they lack. But we know how few are those who know how to give thanks for all they receive. Would it be a kindness for God to refuse our prayers in order to spare us the sin of ingratitude? It is not necessarily beneficial to cleanse away the leprosy of worldliness when the ulcer of ingratitude eats away at our inner self.

Our God has given us so much! God has given us the entire world and all the good things that fill it. It would only be gratitude on our part to keep beautiful and serviceable all these gifts. Happy is the one who returns each gift, and especially each gift of grace, to the Lord who gives all good gifts. This is the gift of gratitude. Don't show yourselves ungrateful to God for all we have received.

Surely, it is only our ingratitude that gets in the way of our progress in conversion. And we know that God views what is given as though it had been lost if it is not returned in by prayers of thankfulness and gratitude. From that point of view, the more our God gives us without receiving our thanks the more things God has to write off as a loss.

In the beginning of our conversion we were more grateful than we now are when for now we take all God's gifts for granted. When we confessed ourselves sad and wretched and admitted that apart from God, we had nothing, God's generosity seemed to overflow. We even received the gift of being God's friends. When we cease to give thanks, aren't we bringing it about that one belonging to the Lord's own household is acting like one of the Lord's enemies?

I beg you all, be humble and humble yourselves more and more under the powerful hand of God most high. Strive to keep far away the most wicked vice of ingratitude. If we turn to God with a complete devotion, shown by giving thanks with all our hearts, then we gain the grace of our God, that grace which alone is able to save us. Not only by word or tongue, but indeed and truth we need to show ourselves grateful. But God expects from us much more than just lip service. We must perform genuine acts of thanksgiving, loving not just in words but in deeds. It is by living deeds of love that we become like God. Thanksgiving makes this happen; we become like God and like God's Only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Giving thanks confirms us in such great grace!

Friday

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS BY GIVING THANKS

A reflection taken from On the Lord's Prayer by St. Gregory of Nyssa

I think that even if we spent the entirety of our lives in constant prayers of thanksgiving and praise, we should still be endlessly far from having made an adequate return to God for all we have been given. Even to begin giving thanks is yet another gift, as is every thought and word of gratitude. The harder we try to thank our God the more gifts we have received from God's generosity and love.

We measure time in terms of past, present and future. In all of them we constantly receive good in more than munificent measure from the love of our God. Consider the past. You didn't even exist until God created you. Your very growth in your mother's womb was a gift and so was your safe birth. Once you had been born you were showered with gift after gift, right up to now. Think, then, of the present. It is through God that you have life at this very moment. It is through this gift that you can have a future, with all the gifts that you know will fill it. Now turn your attention to that future. You hope that your longings for God and God's Kingdom will be fulfilled. That hope is founded on God. Because you know God you are sure that God will know and love you forever and that by simply clinging to God you can be sure of endless goods and benefits. Your future is not a limited but an unlimited hope. It come to pass no matter what!

We are masters only of the present. In this present, as St. Paul says, it is in God that we live and move and have our being. This present is the unfolding of the gift of new life you received by simply answering God's call to believe. You know that all the gifts of the past and the present are facts. They are the result of the same divine love that you believe is offered you forever. You know, therefore, that you will never cease to have reason to thank God from the depths of your heart and mind. No, none of us will ever finish thanking our God. That is the one thing we know is impossible since life that continues eternally.

Why are we so far from being able to thank God properly? It seems as though we didn't even have a good intention in this. But who spread out the earth beneath me? Whose wisdom made the waters and made it possible for us to pass over them to so many distant places. Who spread out the endless expanse of the heavens? Who gave us the sun and caused it to light each of our days? Who gave life when I was lifeless earth, and gave me a mind and a heart to know and to love? Who gave me so many kinds of tamed animals to work with me and serve me? Who, after all, am I if left only to myself?

God fashioned clay into the likeness and image of divinity. Even if this divine image was tarnished by sin God provided the means to restore it to its former beauty. When I was exiled from paradise, deprived of the fruit of the Tree of Life, I got myself lost in an ocean of earthly goods, but wasn't it God who brought me back? There is no one who really understands all this, says Scripture. But we do understand that we are gifts and that all life is a continual gift. We do understand how wonderful the universe is. We do understand that we are loved beyond our ability to understand. Let us give thanks.

Saturday

MARY'S GIFT OF NEW LIFE

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

There is a person who, under the cross fully lives the reality of our redemption. That person is Mary. She represents an immense treasure that Jesus wishes to share with us. Jesus makes her the custodian of this gift, a saving gift, and shows in her and through her a fully human response to unlimited divine love. As we seek to contemplate Mary at the foot of the cross when need to try to grasp what happened to her at that moment.

Mary is experiencing surrendering her son to God's will and she does it for the sake of all humanity. In that deed she receives all humanity as a gift; i.e., she loves all and so she receives the gift of being the mother of all. She has followed God's plan completely and made it her own; it is her way of reaching the total giving in faith to which all are called in the footsteps of Abraham. She has placed her entire self into God's hands and abandoned herself entirely, together with all that she could ever think of as her own. That includes her own dear son. She receives from God what is most dear to God; i.e., the Church as the Body of the Son. This Son will live in the Church born from the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Mary is given to us as the one who more than any other understood the personal meaning—for her—of Jesus' sacrificial offering, of Jesus' love for humanity and of the fullness of dedication to God's plan that this offering implies. More than anyone else she can thus receive the gift of a new humanity and a new way of being fully human.

Human history is moving towards an ideal unity and harmony with God but is shot through with conflict. Progress is made only through a clear determination of history's goal, by a constant effort for good against all adversity and misunderstandings and by recognizing all the disguises of evil and rejecting them. What part does the woman play in this vision of history? She represents all humanity because she is the one who receives the Word of God and from whom the Son of God is born in Jesus. In her we see our point of departure and our arrival in reconciliation and eternal life. We are all called to share these with Mary. She is the living symbol of humanity on the move. She is a woman reconciled with herself and her mission. She is the sign of renewed humanity, one in which woman regains her place and role and leads all to universal reconciliation—with God and with one another. We are to learn how to do this in our own life and mission. She is a living model for us to follow as we journey toward our goal, the goal with share with her and all humanity.