

## **THE THIRD SUNDAY OF THE EASTER SEASON**

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- Sun.      **The Third Sunday in the Easter Season**  
April 18   **BELIEVING IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**  
              A reflection on a sermon by St. Augustine
- Mon.      **Monday of the Third Week of Easter**  
19         **DISCERNING GOD'S DESIGNS**  
              from a letter of Edith Stein (Sr. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)
- Tues.     **Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter**  
20         **THE PRICE OF PEACE**  
              from No Bars To Manhood by Fr Daniel Berrigan
- Wed.      **The Memorial of St. Anselm of Canterbury**  
21         **LONGING FOR JOY IN THE LORD**  
              A prayer of St. Anselm from the Proslogion #26
- Thurs.    **The Memorial Blessed Maria Gabriella**  
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              A reflection taken from an Easter homily by St. Bernard
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              A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard

*Sunday*

## **BELIEVING IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

### **A reflection based on a sermon by St. Augustine**

Christ rose from the tomb with his wounds. He knew it would be good for his disciples if he retained the wounds. He knew this would help heal the wound in their hearts! What wound am I talking about? It is the wound of disbelief. So, he should show “himself” to them to heal this! What does the word “himself” mean here? It means that he showed himself as Head of the Church, head of the Body of Christ, as St. Paul calls it. Christ foresaw the Church would extend throughout the world, a vision that his disciples couldn’t yet share but he saw more too.

In showing himself to them as Head of the Church he was promising them the Body but listen to his next words: All these things I told you while I was still among you as a mortal among mortals. But now I no longer live among you as I did before. If we are to understand these marvelous words, we must reflect on what the Church is, as the community of those who love God more than anything or anyone else, and a community of those who love one another as they love themselves. It is a community of mutual love of a kind never before seen.

After showing himself to them, Christ opened the disciples’ minds to understand the Scriptures. They had to understand it had been decreed by God that the Christ should suffer, both Head and Body, and that Christ should rise from the dead on the Third Day. The disciples had seen him suffer and now, after his resurrection, they saw him standing in front of them alive. What, then, caused their disbelief? Their inability to see the Body that is the Church as God willed it. They had renounced seeking life and joy in all the old ways; they had declared they would cling to God alone. But they didn’t see the mutual love with which God would surround and support them; they saw Christ but not the Church.

Nevertheless, Christ promised the Church to them and called them to preach repentance to every nation on earth for the forgiveness of sins. Only by turning wholly to God do we find the grace to do this, and we do it convincingly only if we love one another as Christ has loved us. Now you who listen to me find yourself in a situation not unlike that of the first disciples. What was invisible to them is visible to you, but all too often the Church isn’t a community of unconditional and total love for one another in God. Seeing Christ’s Risen Body, they needed to see his Mystical Body, while we see his Mystical Body but have to believe in it as risen with Christ.

When we live as Christ’s Body, we reveal the Risen Christ. To us is revealed the whole Christ when we truly live as members of this Mystical Body. What we need to see is its completion in mutual support and love. For this we need the grace that enables one to keep on loving God first and unconditionally and then to love one another in that same love. Love as Christ loved and all will believe.

Monday

## **DISCERNING GOD'S DESIGNS**

**from a letter of Edith Stein (Sr. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)**

The rule of St Benedict is distinguished by its discretion. Discretion serves as a distinctive seal of Benedictine holiness.

One entrusts a person with something "under discretion", that is one expects silence to be kept about it. But discretion is more than keeping silent. A discreet person knows, without being requested to do so, when to refrain from speaking about something. They have the gift of knowing what must be kept in confidence and what must be revealed; when it is time to speak and when it is time to keep silent; to whom one may entrust something, to whom one may not.

If we are handed a sum of money, it should be handled with discretion. This does not imply we are to dispose it at will. The donor has left us the choice of its application out of the conviction that we are most capable of deciding what should be done with it. In this case discretion signifies a gift of discernment.

Where do we obtain this Benedictine gift of discretion? To a certain degree there is a natural disposition towards it. This we call tact, or sensitivity, the fruit of an inherited spiritual culture and of wisdom which has been assimilated after much education and life experience. Cardinal Newman says that the perfect gentleman resembles the saint enough as to be mistaken for one. But it demands more than natural discretion. The thoughts of the heart, the deep interior of the soul, remain hidden from it. Only the Holy Spirit penetrates that far, that Spirit who searches out all things, even the depths of divinity.

Genuine discretion is supernatural. It can be found only where the Holy Spirit reigns, where a soul listens in total surrender and unhampered flexibility to the soft voice of the Fair Guest and awaits His latest nod.

In the gift of discretion, it is most obvious that it is the gift of making distinctions. We have to distinguish in each life situation what is the proper thing to do. Where the Holy Spirit reigns, the human spirit becomes docile and submissive. When we submit to the Holy Spirit without resistance, we are capable of meeting any situation we confront.

Accordingly, the discretion of which St Benedict teaches, is radically different from human cleverness. It is not about step-by-step research, or by comparison or gathering, concluding and proving. The spiritual eye, enlightened by the heavenly light, peers to the farthest reaches and blurs nothing. In a single ray of light, the whole world becomes visible, as happened for St Benedict in the *magna visio*.

*Tuesday*

## **THE PRICE OF PEACE**

from No Bars To Manhood by Fr Daniel Berrigan

The Word of God is one of crisis. It confronts us putting our acts under the scrutiny of the God of history, there to be judged. We are familiar with this. We know too, that out of submission to God's word issues the deepest stream of joy, that this word liberates us from pharisaic fear, dread of life, and the multiple powers of death in the world.

But even this is not the deepest meaning of the Word of God in us. That meaning, I take it, is bound up with history and this world, to the degree that God's Word becomes our own- that we recognize in the Bible our own people, speaking our own tongue, prophets and saints, men and women who lived in the depths the common life of humanity, with all that implies for our own darkest hours. And finally: The Word comes to us in the mysterious life of our brother and friend, God's Son, living our life, beckoning to us from the common condition- marketplace, family, courtroom, monastery, garden, agony, and death itself.

The Word of God thus urges us forward and extends the range of our human experience. One of the invitations from God's Word – into exodus, into freedom, into death, comes towards the end of the Gospel of John. The Lord is summoned into a courtroom, as he declares to give testimony to the truth. The truth itself is on trial. It must not be presumed, before the fact, that God is speaking the truth; so men say, so the human powers decree God must submit to the probing of humanity. It is for God to render an account of God's self. So, God answers the summons; the docket of Jesus is opened before his fellows.

And this was no mock trial. Its outcome may possibly grant him new prestige, a new and cleansed people. Or the trial may hand him over to death.

We know that in fact the second outcome occurred. But more to the point, is the extraordinary self-conscious and deliberate manner in which the Lord entered into the courtroom scene, and made it his own scene. So out of Pilate's court comes some of the most profound and disturbing of his self-revelations. Consider "for this I have been born, for this I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth. I suggest that the life of Jesus would have lacked something of its majesty and strength, had he not stood in the court of Pilate and endured the proceedings there. It is the same for us, truth is never fully apart from the condition of witness. The issue is met, when one testifies under pressure, amid dangers, to the sovereignty of a truth that he does not claim or preempt but that is literally possessed by him.

*Wednesday*

## **LONGING FOR JOY IN THE LORD**

### **A prayer of St. Anselm from the Proslogion #26**

My God and My Lord, my hope and the joy of my heart, tell me whether this joy of which you speak to me through your Son, is that which all will receive in your Kingdom. I have, indeed, found a joy that is full and more than full. When heart and mind and soul, and the whole person, are full of this joy can it be that a joy without measure still remains?

But that joy with which your chosen ones will rejoice is a joy that eye hasn't seen or ear heard of and isn't something that has entered even into the human heart, as of yet. Not yet, then, have I spoken of or conceived, O Lord, how greatly your blessed ones will rejoice. Without doubt they will rejoice in proportion to their love, and they will love in the measure that they know you. How deeply they will know you, Lord, in that day! How fully they will love you! Truly, this cannot yet have entered into the human heart in this present life.

I pray, O God, that you will let me know you, and love you and so rejoice in you. And if I cannot attain joy's fullness in this life then grant that I may make progress day by day, until that joy comes which is indeed joy's fullness. Let my knowledge of you advance even now, and in your Kingdom may it be made full. Let love for you increase and let it be realized in full truth.

Lord, through your Son you command and counsel us to ask for all this. You promise that we shall receive what you lead us to ask for, and you do this so our joy may be full. I ask for this, Lord, exactly as you counsel me through our Wonderful Counselor.

I know I will receive what you promise because you are true. I will receive it because you want my joy to be full. In the meantime, grant that my mind may meditate on this joy. Let my mouth speak of it constantly. Let my heart love it immeasurably. Let my soul hunger for it ceaselessly. Let my flesh thirst for it. Let my whole being long for it more than anything else.

I want to go on praying like this until I actually enter into your joy, O Lord. You are the Three and the One God. Help me always to pray rightly! May you be blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

*Thursday*

## **LOVING ONE ANOTHER IN GOD**

### **A Letter of Blessed Maria Gabriella**

Dearest Mother,

I'm writing you these lines to send you my last thoughts and my last greeting. The Divine Bridegroom has renewed his invitation, and the longed-for day is getting closer. I'm not speaking to you about the day of my death but about the day when the bonds of this poor flesh will be loosened and I'll be able at long last to pass from this life to the happy and blessed life of Heaven.

Being separated from the body is no real death, but a passing to true life. So rejoice, mother mine, because up there enclosure won't exist any more for you. You might not be able to see me while you're still here but I'll be able to pay you visits and give you such a hug! And all the while I feel my love for you growing and growing.

Rest easy, because from up there I'll be every so much more helpful to you than I am now. From there, after all, I'll see all the things you need clearly, and I'll be able to pray for you from closer to the Lord. Don't cry. And don't go around making a fuss the way they do at Dorgali. I wouldn't like that at all.

I'd also like it if, on the same day you receive the news, you all go to Holy Mass and communion. And that you pray for me in this way and really thank the Lord for the graces He has given me and the special love he has had for me.

I do hope that Salvatore and my brother-in-law have done their Easter duty. If they haven't, I very much urge them to do so as soon as possible, if only to carry out my final wish. And I'm going to be praying for them so much!

I also urge you to keep peaceful and contented in the Lord, and to pray for me and to recommend me to the prayers of our relatives and friends. I send them my last greetings, as well as to all of you.

I ask everyone, this one last time, to forgive me for any offence I may have committed. And to you and to all the family I give a big bug in the Heart of Jesus.

As ever, your daughter,  
Sr. Maria Gabriella

*Friday*

## **OUR NEED TO BE CLEANSED IN CHRIST**

### **A reflection excerpted from an Easter sermon by St. Bernard**

In medicine doctors begin by identifying the agent within one that is causing illness and then remove it. This is exactly what Jesus, the doctor of our souls, did. When he came, he found us filled with seven evils as horrible as leprosy. We were like Naaman the Syrian. Now Jesus invites us to follow him in going-down with him, rather as the Prophet Elisha told Naaman to go-down into the Jordan. Thus, we are cleansed because the root cause of spiritual leprosy is pride.

We suffer from wanting to take pride in special clothing. We want to be like the rich of this world. Christ descended from the indescribable riches of heaven and choose poverty. Our symptom shows we want to be a part of the empty show of this world. Christ shows himself wrapped in rags in a manger. Are we still too ashamed before others to stop pursuing worldly things that lead nowhere? Do we want pleasures that lead nowhere? Or do we want to be like Christ?

For instance, we suffer from running off at the mouth with complaints about misfortunes and discomforts. Christ, however, was led like a sheep to the slaughter and didn't even open his mouth. We suffer as well from boastfulness in speech. We are led to commend and praise ourselves and those like us. Jesus wouldn't allow demons to call him Son of God, though he was.

An even more deadly condition is self-will. We do what we want and say what we want and think what we want, and that places us at the center of our inner world. But God is its center and has to be given all glory. We have to seek first of all to please God and do God's will, as Jesus did.

Self-will leads us to hide what is within us and withdraw from what is not centered on our supposed well-being. This leads to the illness of taking counsel only with oneself. The more frequently one does this the more likely one is to think that "only I am really sensible". Such persons are unwilling to take advice. Thus, they undermine unity in a community and so its peace. In effect, they swell up with vanity and don't know it. But Christ shows us how to do God's will and only God's will. Not to put God's will first is to fall into the illness of idolatry.

Perhaps you have your own plan for coming to salvation. But how can you imagine yours is better than God's? Jesus worked at home for thirty years and when he heard God calling him he abandoned it all. Are we better than Jesus? What he laid aside was good and in no way sinful. He did the same in the Garden when he asked the Father to free him of the need to die on the cross. But he said: Your will and not my will be done. Are we ready to imitate Christ?

We need to descend from self-exaltation and be cleansed so that we may be raised up with Christ. This is the reason for our mortifications and much prayer. This is the reason for our poverty and humble obedience. This is the reason why we seek to put love of God and love of one another first. In great mercy God grants us these graces. Let us seek in all things to allow our divine doctor to heal and raise us up.

*Saturday*

## **THE ASSURANCE WE HAVE IN CHRIST**

### **A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard**

Let those who are familiar with the narrative of God's saving acts for Israel recall how Pharaoh's daughter drew Moses from the water and by saving him saved Israel as well. This reminds us of Christ because, like Moses, he saves Israel, and, beyond all that Moses did, Christ saves our entire race. Clearly, something more than Moses is here, and Christ comes not only by water but by blood. The true liberation isn't from worldly slavery and it is ours by the blood of Christ. The salvation of Israel reminds us that our salvation is from the futility of every sort of merely worldly dealing undertaken to bring us safety and joy.

Christ is the true Lawgiver and the law he gives is the new commandment to love one another as we have been loved—by our Heavenly Father and by the Only Begotten Son and the Spirit. St. John testifies that as the Lord slept on the cross there was drawn from his side the Church. While Adam slept Eve was taken from his side to be a colleague in the work of caring for creation and preserving the beauty God gave it. The Church is given us as a helper, to show us how to care for ourselves and to recover the beauty that is God's image created in us.

In this Paschal season Christ comes to us by water and by blood that he may give us complete assurance of God's saving love. Not only this, but there is a greater testimony and it is the Spirit of Truth. The testimony of water, blood and Spirit is true and certain; happy are those who receive it! Think of the water as baptism and the blood as martyrdom and the Spirit as love. It is, we are told, the Spirit that gives life, the life of faith; but the inner life of faith is love. As Paul testifies, without love whatever you have profits you not at all. Baptism and martyrdom happen once but are experienced daily. Daily sufferings are a kind of martyrdom and a shedding of blood. There is a daily baptism in compunction of heart and the gift of tears, and if you can't strive for martyrdom you must seek the milder daily way of shedding blood. Just as those who offend repeatedly must seek to be washed repeatedly by the water of compunction.

Why are these things necessary? Listen to St. John: "Beloved, do not love the world or the things of the world. All that is the world—i.e., the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and worldly ambition"—are to be left behind. We need a three-fold defense against temptations coming from such desires. The flesh is overcome by mortification, the covetousness of the eyes is overcome by compunction, and ambition and its desires are overcome by love. The Spirit testifies that even if bodily afflictions cease, even if the fountain of tears dries up, love will never end. Can the Heavenly Father refuse to receive one to whom the Son testifies out of love? More, the Spirit won't fail to agree with the Father and the Son. So, the Father will receive in heaven as children and heirs all whom the Son receives as brothers and sisters. We possess a great testimony indeed, and can't reject it. We are God's children. Rejoice always!