

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
July 4 **TRUSTING IN GOD'S LOVE HERE & NOW**
 A reflection taken from Catechesis
 by Symeon the New Theologian
- Mon. **Monday of the 14th Week of the Year**
5 **BEARING THE BURDEN OF CHRIST'S WAY**
 A reflection adapted from a sermon by Bl. Guerric of Igny
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 14th Week of the Year**
6 **HOPE IN THE LORD AT EVERY MOMENT**
 AND EVERYWHERE
 A reflection adapted from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus
- Wed. **Memorial of the Dead**
7 **I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE GRACE OF MEETING**
 THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LIKE JESUS OF NAZARETH
 from Companions of Jesus by Fr Jon Sobrino SJ
- Thurs. **Memorial of Blessed Eugene III**
8 **PUTTING OUR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST**
 A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Pope Leo the Great
- Fri. **Friday of the 14th Week of the Year**
9 **PRAYING FOR HELP TO LIVE AS A MONK SHOULD**
 A prayer composed by St. Anselm of Canterbury
- Sat. **Saturday of the Blessed Virgin Mary**
10 **ASPIRING AFTER THE HEIGHTS OF LOVE FOR GOD**
 A reflection developed from On The Love of God
 by St. Francis de Sales

Sunday

TRUSTING IN GOD'S LOVE HERE & NOW

A reflection from Catechesis by St. Symeon the New Theologian

Many people never stop saying—and I have heard them myself—that if only they had lived in the days of the apostles and been counted worthy to gaze upon Christ as was then possible, they would have become holy. People who say this don't listen to the Gospel of this Sunday and, worse, don't realize that Christ speaks to them, and speaks throughout the entire world, just as he did to those who saw and spoke with Him in the flesh. We believe Christ is God. We believe the Father is always in the Son and the Son is always in the Father, and we believe that God is the same now and always and always speaks the same message and works in the sacraments in the same way. We believe the words Christ spoke through the Spirit: *"My Father is still working and so am I"*.

Do you think that merely hearing Christ's words now and being taught through them about the Kingdom and about Christ himself is not the same as having seen him in the body? But did those who saw him all believe in him? In fact, the situation is the same as it was in Christ's time, except that for us the situation is better. We are more easily led to faith, and to a deeper faith and conviction, than those who saw and heard him in the flesh. Or is your response like that of the people of Nazareth when he visited them in the flesh?

Then Christ appeared to uncomprehending people and appeared to be a person of lowly station. Now he is proclaimed as true God. Then in his body he associated with tax collectors and sinners and ate with them. Now he is seated at the right hand of God and is never in anyway separated from the Father and the Spirit. We are firmly persuaded that it is Christ who feeds the entire world and we declare—if we believe—that without Christ nothing came into being. Then people of the lowliest estate held him in contempt: *"Isn't this the son of Mary and of Joseph the carpenter?"* This is the one kings and rulers now worship as Son of the True God and himself true God. Yes, now in the faith of all, he is glorified and glorifies those who worship him in spirit and in truth, even though he may punish us when we sin. Christ transforms us from, so to speak, clay into iron.

In the flesh he seemed no different from others. Now we believe that the formless and invisible God, without change or alteration, assumed a human form and showed himself to be a normal human being. He ate, he drank, he slept, he sweated, and he grew tired. He did everything other people do except sin. It was very exceptional for anyone to recognize him in that human body as the God who made heaven and earth. *"You, he said to Peter, 'are blessed, for flesh and blood has not revealed me to you but my Heavenly Father.'"*

Yes, all this is always revealed to us! And it is certain that anyone who hears Christ cry out through the Holy Gospels and proclaim the will of the Heavenly Father, and yet doesn't obey him with fear and trembling, is like those who refused to believe in him when he was present in the flesh. There is reason to believe that those who now refuse to obey would regard him in the flesh not as true God but as an enemy of God—as actually happened in more than one instance. How can you fail to be grateful that God has made the path to faith so much easier for you? You only have to walk it truly. This is holiness.

Monday

BEARING THE BURDEN OF CHRIST'S WAY

A reflection adapted from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Do you find the way of faith difficult? Recall Christ's words to his disciples calling them to eat his body and drink his blood, and then remember that many found these words too hard to bear. Christ turned to those who remained and asked: "Will you too leave me?" How will you respond to the rough and hard things of the life of discipleship? Will you imitate Simon Peter: "*Lord, you have the words of eternal life! To whom else can we go?*" If you do respond in this way, why do you find weariness in Christ's teachings?

"O Lord, we pray, that you will grant abundantly to those who hope in you what seems hidden from us! Let us always hope in you, even if we are killed. Grant that I may hope even more if scourged, lashed, burned and killed! Only live in me, Lord!"

Blessed is the one who continues in the way of wisdom and with steadfast faith, and who bears trials patiently and with confidence, obedient unto death. Such a person knows that the labors of discipleship will heal the deepest wounds of sin and sorrow. But to achieve this wisdom we mustn't let anything lead us away from the exercises of wisdom. We must never stop praying—whether we pray the divine office or pray privately or pray in "divine reading". We must never turn away from the silence in which we find God no matter how hard such a daily labor may seem. Then one must continue with Scripture. Without perseverance in study how should the Scriptures open themselves to you? Then there is the work of our hands and the many times it seems unrewarding. But don't we realize that the consolation and satisfaction we seek is often reserved to the end of a labor? Recall what Isaiah said: "*In silence and in hope is our strength!*"

Meditate on such things. Wait in silence for the salvation of the Lord. Let the waters of Siloe, as Scripture says, flow silently but inundate the dryness you experience. You will experience this not once but many times, if only your silence is the cultivation of holiness. Meditate and continue in this exercise so that your progress may be revealed to you. The Book of Wisdom says: "*You have desired wisdom, keep holiness and God will give both to you*".

What is horrible thoughts rush in upon you? Fear God and examine carefully whatever thoughts want to enter your heart. You can only do this in the fear of God. Fear of the Lord runs away from evil, both in deed and in thought. It is ever aware of God eternal eye—to whom the entire wheel of time as well as its moving finger is always present. One who at first is restrained by fear is afterwards upheld by love and meditates on holiness and so finds rest and delight in the embrace of wisdom. The outpouring of love casts out weariness and distress with an inpouring of gladness. God wishes to make us partakers of all these things, and even of his own nature. Look to the wisdom of God, to Jesus Christ who lives and reigns in love for ever and ever.

Tuesday

HOPE IN THE LORD AT EVERY MOMENT & EVERYWHERE

A reflection adapted from a sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus

Every Gospel passage can be very helpful, both in coping with the trials of our present life in Christ and transforming us so we will be capable of rejoicing in living the life to come. That means every part of the Gospel offers us hope. This is made very clear by the readings at the Eucharist, especially on Sundays. They teach us that we needn't seek special places or times so that the Lord can help us; we can find him at every moment and in every circumstance.

Think of the story of the synagogue official whose daughter was dying. He came to Jesus and did homage and pleaded with him to come and lay his hand on the girl so she would get well and live. Now compare this person with the centurion who simply sent word to Jesus and asked only that he give the needed command to heal his slave. No special gesture or special coming of Christ is needed, at least not by God or his Christ. When we seek some special sign of Christ's presence, we are confessing only the weakness of our faith.

Whenever we turn our heart and mind to Jesus we are in his presence. Jesus often tried to teach people this. There is no need to go to God in a special place or have God do some special thing in order to obtain grace and healing. One needs only to believe that God is everywhere present, and in the whole of his being. We need only believe that God can do all things, effortlessly and by a simple word of command. Indeed, the Lord wants to gift us with such faith.

One help to doing this is provided by Gospel stories. Think of the times when Jesus put death to flight by a word. He didn't need to touch a dead body, though he often did when it was there before him. God gives life itself by a mere command and without the need of anything special by way of work or word.

Probably the synagogue official who pleaded for his daughter thought that since she had not yet grown cold the soul was still there and if Jesus came right away, he could prevent it from departing from her body. In his ignorance the man thought Christ couldn't raise his daughter unless he touched her. But what is death to the creator of life? It is a kind of falling asleep to this world only. So, when Jesus did come, he told those mourning that the girl was asleep only.

God can restore life and life-giving warmth to limbs that have died more quickly than we can warm them by rubbing them.

Times and spaces don't limit God or God's exercise of power. You may want many things from God. You think you don't receive them because you haven't gone to a special place or God hasn't done a special sign. Perhaps, however, God is telling you that what you want isn't appropriate now. Let your faith itself cast off its limitations. Without doubting, ask God for what you need and don't doubt that God will give it to you if it is really useful—for this life and the life to come. Ask, that is, in unqualified trust in God's love. You will receive whatever is for your genuine good in this life or in the next.

Wednesday

I HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE GRACE OF MEETING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LIKE JESUS OF NAZARETH

from Companions of Jesus by Fr Jon Sobrino SJ

In El Salvador I have been given the grace of meeting thousands of people like this Jesus of Nazareth. I recall Fr Rutilio Grande and Archbishop Oscar Romero. I remember my Jesuit confreres martyred in UCA University, along with their housekeeper Julia Elba and her daughter Celina. I remember the four American women, Ita, Maura, Dorothy and Jean, as well as many hundreds of lay people and campesino men and women.

It is well known that the murder of the Jesuits, because of its magnitude and international repercussions, and the historical moment when it occurred, undoubtedly helped bring about a negotiated end to the war. This salvation is real. This means, by their life and death, these martyrs have opened a track in history along which it is easier to travel...hunger and thirst for justice for the crucified people...tireless analysis and condemnation of the truth about their crucifixion, and steadfastness and fidelity ... in seeing them taken down from the cross.

These martyrs, men and women were believers, Christians. I do not mention this here as something obvious to be taken for granted, but as something that was central in their lives. When we spoke in our Jesuit community about matters of faith, our words were sparing but really meant. We spoke about the kingdom of God and the God of the kingdom, the Christian life as the following of Jesus, we spoke of the Historical Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth.

In the university, where my late brothers taught, we recalled our Christian inspiration as something central, as what gave life, direction, force and meaning to all our work, and explained the risks that this life involved. There was always plain speaking about the kingdom of God and the option for the poor, derived from the Gospel. The Christian inspiration of the university was never just rhetoric when these Jesuits talked about it, and people understood that this was the inspiration of our lives.

It is important to know, that in spite of the risks of preaching the Gospel, the Good News to the poor, the reality was full of joy. Joy. That a Jesuit priest might be assassinated the same way as a poor peasant, that ironically is a source of joy. That is what we were called to do, trying to make the suffering of others our own suffering. And also, and this is the irony that the joys of others might be our own joys too. That is what the Gospel option for the poor means in El Salvador and elsewhere.

Thursday

PUTTING OUR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Pope Leo the Great

The solidity of the faith which was praised in the apostle Peter is perpetual. That which Peter believed of Christ remains, and so does what Christ instituted in Peter. When the Lord asked his disciples who they believed he was, Peter replied that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Peter spoke among a variety of opinions filling the world and did it, Jesus says, not because of anything mere human flesh and blood could figure out but because it had been revealed to him by the Heavenly Father. Then Jesus adds: "*You are Rock and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven; and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in Heaven*".

The work of sharing the truth Christ brought us continues. Perseverance in the faith Peter professed has continued. How could a mere human be said to be a rock, and called the foundation of the Church, and be constituted the doorkeeper of the Kingdom of Heaven? How can such a person's judgments on binding and loosing be valid not only on earth but in heaven? All these matters depend on Peter's association with Christ. The same is true for those who occupy the same office as Peter but come after him.

In a sense, Peter even today fully and effectively performs the duties we hear entrusted to him and does all that the Lord charged him to do. Peter acts in Him and through Him and with Him, by whom he has been glorified and chosen. It is not human frailty which acts in Peter as he lives on in Christ's Church, but Christ himself acts. All that is won from the mercy of God by our daily prayers as Peter's successor, comes of Christ's work and merits; it is Christ's power and authority which live in the Roman See. All that was gained by Peter's confession, inspired in his heart by God the Father, passed beyond the uncertainty of human opinions and was given the firmness of God's support.

Throughout the Church Peter daily says, "*You are Christ, Son of the Living God*", and every tongue which confesses the Lord accepts the instruction which this voice provides. This faith conquers the devil, and breaks the bonds which bind the devil's prisoners; it uproots us from this earth and plants us in heaven. The gates of Hades can't prevail against it. It endures with such solidity by God that human weakness or evil can't mar it nor the sickness of unbelief ruin its beauty. We humans beings are often found weak and even lazy. We don't fulfill the duties of the offices we are given as we ought. The frailty that goes with being human gets in our way. However, devoted and vigorous we want to be, frailty gets in our way. What we have is the never-failing help of Almighty God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was like us and yet equal to the Father, and brought the Godhead to involvement with things merely human. Yet he also raised up the human even to things divine. As a result, we can rejoice, and do rejoice, over the opportunities of service he gives. We are entrusted with the care of Christ's sheep, and that of many of their shepherds. Our help is always in the Lord. All of us who are called to nourish one another's faith and charity need always to put our trust wholly in the Lord

Friday

PRAYING FOR HELP TO LIVE AS A MONK SHOULD

A prayer composed by St. Anslem of Canterbury

Holy and blessed Benedict, the grace of Heaven has made you rich with a full blessing of goodness, not just to raise you to glory but that many others be drawn to that same blessedness. Wondering at your life, stirred by your counsels, instructed by your gentle teaching, I call to you, blessed of God, for help. For I profess to lead a life of continually turning to God, as I promised by taking the name and habit of a monk. But my conscience convicts me as a liar to God, O Holy Father Benedict! I beg you not to be scandalized by my many faults but to have pity more than I deserve.

I pledged to serve under your leadership, however feeble a soldier I might be. You have accepted my pledge and placed me under your tutorship, however slow a pupil I might prove. I vowed to live according to your Rule, however carnal a monk I might prove. My perverse heart is as dry and cold as a stone when it comes to deploring the sins I have committed. But when it comes to resisting the occasions of sin I am pliant. My mind is swift to study what is useless and slow even to think of what is good. How slow I am to recall the virtues and with what difficulty do I try to practice them. How long it would take to tell the whole story of my gluttony, laziness, inconstancy, impatience, vainglory, detraction and disobedience. Sometimes my sins drag me hither and thither mocking at me, and at other times they come in a mob and trample me underfoot in triumph.

O blessed Benedict, see indeed how bravely this soldier fights and what marvelous progress is made in your school of the Lord's service! What a marvelous monk I am! Yes, you see a false monk, lost to virtue and burdened with sin. Where shall I turn?

Jesus, my good Lord! Look at my afflictions and my trouble and forgive all my sins! Hear, O Lord, don't cast me off or forsake me. Lead me and help me to do your will. Let my life at least attest what my heart and mouth confess so freely but don't live. Hear the voice of my prayer, my Lord and my God. By the merits and intercession of Holy Benedict, your dear friend, my master and leader, help me.

And you, my good leader and gentle master and dear father, Blessed Benedict, I pray by the mercy that God has shown to you and the mercy you have shown to so many others, that you have compassion on me. Lift up one who is cast down! Strengthen one who wavers! Lead and protect me in the battle against sin. Bring me to the victory and lead me to the heavenly crown. Do it by that charity which you are so anxious for us to take as our rule of life. Make it your care that we may be truly willing, and effectively able, to do all that we ought. We long to glory before the face of God, who lives and reigns forever. Help and lead us and teach us to love the Father and one another as Jesus has loved us.

Saturday

ASPIRING AFTER THE HEIGHTS OF LOVE FOR GOD

Reflections developed from On the Love of God by St. Francis deSales

How do you imagine Mary's love for God? Think, for instance, of her sleep. How would you imagine sleep being a way of loving God? Did Mary give rest to her body except that she might regain strength to serve God better as a result? Doing that is assuredly a wonderful act of charity. As St. Augustine says, "Charity places upon us an obligation to love our bodies properly". They are necessary for doing good works for God. Indeed, Christians must love their bodies as living images of the incarnate savior, as though they had been raised with Jesus from the same stock and belonging to him by blood as well as free choice. Above all, this holds if we have renewed our alliance with Him by the real reception of the divine body of our Redeemer in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

What devotion Mary must have shown in loving her own body, not only because of its humble goodness but because it was the living source of our Savior's body and belonged to him in the strictest sense with such marvelous closeness. She might have said to herself as she went to bed: "Take your rest now, ark of the covenant and vessel of sanctity in which God finds a throne".

And think of the dreams she might have had! Did she dream that she still held you, our Savior, in her womb, as she actually had for nine months? Did she dream that Jesus was nursing at her breast? Did she dream he was sleeping on her breast as he once had? In saying this we notice that sleep can be a kind of ecstasy. It needn't be filled with evil imaginings. Perhaps like Joseph of old Mary dreamed of the future joy and greatness of heaven. Perhaps she saw herself clothed with the sun and having the moon under her feet, as Scripture pictures her. Perhaps she dreamed herself totally encompassed by her Son's glory and crowned with the life that belongs to God's saints. Or perhaps like Jacob she saw the progress and the fruit of the redemption brought about by her Son.

How can anyone picture the immense wonders and delights of Heaven? Could Mary have dreamed of conversations she would have with that dear child of hers in glory? Perhaps she dreamed as Solomon did when the Lord came to ask him what he sought. Solomon made such a marvelous declaration that he seemed to speak as though awake. Perhaps her heart was watchful in just this way as she slept. Perhaps she was simply "awake to Christ", rather as St. John the Baptist was when Mary brought Jesus to him and Elizabeth and he leaped for joy. We can't know what she dreamed nor can we limit what God can do for those He loves and chooses.

I like to think of the heart of the Virgin as though it were made of asbestos. It was perpetually on fire with love of God and yet was never burnt up, so to speak, or damaged. The sacred flames of Divine Love need never perish nor go out, and they only make hearts more perfect because they burn within. We can imagine ourselves loving our God and our Savior as Mary loved. We long to be beloved of God just as she was, and we long to use all that we are and have in loving our God, as we may believe Mary did. To think of her is to think only of ways in which we too may love our God with all our heart.