

TWENTIETH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME
SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION
SOLEMNITY OF ST. BERNARD

- Sun. **THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**
Aug 15 **MARY'S ASSUMPTION FULFILLS GOD'S PROMISE**
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- Mon. **Monday of the 20th Week in Ordinary Time**
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- Tues. **Memorial of the Dead**
17 **THE DEAD AND THE LIVING UNITED IN LOVE**
 A reflection from Journeying with the Lord
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18 **COMMENTARY ON THE PARABLE OF THE LANDOWNER**
 By Fr. Karl Rahner
- Thurs. **Memorial of Bl. Gueric of Igny**
19 **ADVICE TO THOSE WAITING FOR CHRIST**
 A reflection from a homily by Bl. Gueric of Igny
- Fri. **Solemnity of Our Holy Father Bernard**
20 **OUR LONGING FOR GOD**
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- Sat. **The Memorial of St. Pope Pius X**
21 **BEING A BLESSING TO OTHERS**
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Sunday

MARY'S ASSUMPTION: GOD'S PROMISE TO US FULFILLED

A reflection from The Seat of Wisdom by Fr. Louis Bouyer

How should we approach Mary's Assumption? It is a living fulfillment of Christ's promise to all his disciples: He has gone to the Heavenly Father to prepare a place for us, because it is his will that where he is there we too shall be. With Him the glory that the Heavenly Father gave him will be ours too, and all that follows from it. So it goes, almost without saying, that Mary's Assumption into Heaven is a fulfillment of the promise made to all of us. Take Jesus literally.

Mary conceived and gave birth to her Son by a divine promise fulfilled in her. By opening herself to this grace she, in effect, opened all of us to grace. She was the first saved as God intends to save all of us. She was saved perfectly, freed from the consequences of our first parents' sin she was freed to be fully open to grace and to show us the marvelous effects of this saving and forgiving grace. We see in her what we are to grow to be under the power and driving force of God's grace. This is what we become by answering God's call. It is the grace of entering the nuptial chamber and becoming one with Christ and God.

Mary's assumption is the pledge of the glory Christ gives to all who are his spouse. He has already shared that glory with his mother. He now asks us to share it too. As St. John says: "*It has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, because we will see him as he is*". For Mary this has already been fulfilled; her faith has passed into sight. In her we are given the pledge of our God's seriousness in promising this to all who believe. We shall see God as God is, with Mary, like her already fully like Christ.

St. Paul tells us: "*We shall be taken up together to meet Christ and so we shall always be with the Lord*". Have you ever tried to imagine what that state of "glory", as we call it, will be like? We know that it is already realized for Mary and for endless other saints in her train. We also know that Christ's ascension didn't mean that he had left us to our own devices in our present condition. He has gone only to prepare a place for us with him. Where he is we are soon to be. Yet his going didn't, and doesn't, separate us from Christ! Now apply this to Mary. She has been taken to Heaven and is with Christ but as Christ is with us still so is Mary. She can't be absent from wherever he is because he has promised we will be with Him always. The same is true for us.

If we want to imagine what it is like to be with Christ we have to begin from the fact that it means we won't be absent from any of those who are still on earth—after all Christ is with them and we will always be with Him. Mary's blessedness has been made perfect and it doesn't separate her from us any more than does Christ's. The same will be true for us. But Christ always stands interceding for us before the Heavenly Father. So does Mary, and so shall we. Everyone, in the bliss of an eternal Eucharist, shall be one of innumerable many bearers of blessing. With her we will ever be united with her Son and our Savior, interceding and bringing blessings upon all. That is God's will for us, fulfilled already in her. Don't be afraid! Christ is with us always!

Monday

THE WORK OF SELFLESS ATTENTION

A talk by Fr Laurence Freeman OSB

The word “meditation” is related in English to the word “medicine”. And the prefix “med” implies care and attention. Care and Attention! If you go for a check-up or if you go to a hospital emergency room, what you want and need is someone to care for you. There are of course different kinds of caring. There is the superficial caring or there is a caring where you think the person really cares, they are not just doing their job, they care.

The difference between superficial care and serious personal care is attention. We can ask if the person brings attention to the work of caring. This applies to your work. When you are working on plans, when you are working on ideas, when you are making designs, it is not just doing the job superficially that matters, it is caring with attention. When we go to a medical treatment or we speak about personal issues with others, what we need is not somebody to solve the problems for us (most problems can't be solved anyway) but what we really need is this quality of caring attention. And if you receive that, and it is impossible to fake it, if you feel you are receiving that from another person, that is immediately healing, empowering, and energizing, and liberating. We all need to feel this genuine caring attention. You can also call that love, the work of love.

Meditation is caring attention to oneself. We all struggle to give time to meditation. Sometimes 20 minutes seems a big mountain to climb. But as you grow in your practice you begin to understand that it takes time and practice. You gradually learn that giving yourself those 20 minutes is the kindest, most caring, and most attentive thing you can do for yourself. And the fruit of that is the care and attention you give to other people and to your work. It does not make you self-centered, it makes you more selfless, more other-centered. That is the paradox of meditation. You are not focusing in on yourself, indulging yourself; it is not feeding the ego. Quite the reverse. It is liberating yourself from the fears and desires of the ego and the illusions of the ego. Liberating yourself to live in reality. So, think of the work of meditation as caring for yourself in the deepest, most serious, and most gentle way and learning to pay attention.

Tuesday

THE DEAD AND THE LIVING UNITED IN LOVE

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

“It is in regard to death that the human condition is most shrouded in doubt”. These are words of the Second Vatican Council. They are grave and serious words. They don't call us to think of the dead-in-general but of the people we have known and cared for, and who have known and cared for us. Some are saints, whether we know it or not, and some are still working through God's process of purification and of preparation for the work of blessing many others which comes from being one with God and letting our love be transformed into God's love.

We speak of “eternal rest” but that means we no longer worry about what we shall accomplish and whether it will be enough—because all we do will be God's deed even more than ours, and God never fails.

Those who have gone before us into God's presence have left us memories which show us what living the Word of God can mean in our time and place, and by people who led a life like we do. Their way of life brought them to God, no matter how many times they fell and had to turn to God's grace in order to get up again and continue to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus is our supreme example but our dead give us many precious examples of the multitude of ways in which one can imitate Jesus. After all, what we have to do is imitate Jesus' love. How many ways are there to love others? There are endlessly many. No two of those we remember today lived love in exactly the same way or with the same deeds or words.

We don't remember our departed ones only in sadness because of their separation from us. Actually, when we strive to imitate Jesus we strive to do exactly what they do always. We are not separated because we continue to work together to build up others and draw them toward the resurrection and life's uttermost fullness. In Jesus we, and our dead, have everlasting life and everlasting loving service and care and joy. We begin now in praying for one another. Our dead speak to us of Jesus' love and we speak to them of that same love. That is the language of prayer. It brings us together in mutual care, now and always.

Wednesday

COMMENTARY ON THE PARABLE OF THE LANDOWNER **By Fr. Karl Rahner**

“Jesus said to his disciples: The Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard.” It seems to me that this gospel gets stranger and more incomprehensible each time it is heard. That everyone receives the same reward simply doesn't hold true of eternity. Nor can we conclude that God doesn't give to each of us according to our works, for it is written in scripture that God does. What is this story really telling us?

The landowner explicitly asks the grumblers whether he hasn't the right to be generous. So what he gives the latecomers isn't a wage they have earned or a matter of justice; it is an expression of his free generosity. This brings us to the point of the entire story. It is about the incalculable mercy, the grace that cannot be reckoned up in terms of wages and justice, the generosity and mercy which ultimately prevails between God and human persons.

Where does this mercy enter our life? Where is it that God shows us his freedom in disposing of us and that he does not negotiate? We can't find the answer to these questions in this parable. We can't make an unjustified application of the story's details to the divine reality. In the last analysis everything one can earn by way of wages depends on the free disposition of God—who gives to us and ordains our beginning and our ending according to divine pleasure, as we say. From this there follows something which can never lose its importance for us.

What we cannot negotiate and must leave to God's freedom is ultimately our self. Our own selves, just as we are with our life and our temperament and our destiny and our surroundings and our time and our heredity and our family—with everything that we may be and cannot change. Whenever we grumble and complain about others with whom God has dealt differently we are really refusing to accept our very own selves! We don't want to accept ourselves as we are from the hand of God.

The parable teaches us to say: We are those who receive the daily wage, we are that wage. We receive ourselves with our destiny, our freedom and whatever we choose to do with that freedom—but ultimately what we receive is our self. This we must accept, not just without grumbling, without inward protest, but with a good will. Why? Because it is given us by the God who asks: Do you begrudge my generosity? Our life's great work is to accept our self as the mysterious and gradually revealed gift of the eternal generosity of God. Everything we are and have, even the painful and mysterious, is God's generous gift. We must accept it with the knowledge that when we do so God gives himself with the gift—gives us everything we could receive. We have not always done this. And yet God is willing to give us everything, if we will only accept it—our selves, and God's self and life without end.

Thursday

ADVICE TO THOSE WAITING FOR CHRIST

A reflection taken from a homily of Bl. Gueric of Igny

In the Holy Ones of old the Church of Christ waited for his coming. In the same way we wait for Christ's Second Coming. The first hope was that Christ would pay the price of redemption. The second hope is for the reward of the labors of those who follow Christ and live and love as he lived and loved. That means our eyes are raised above earthly concerns and fixed with joyful longing on those of heaven. Some are impatient and try to snatch the prizes this world offers. Blessed are those whose whole hope rests in the Lord's name and take no notice of false and empty foolishness. Isn't it better to be humble with the meek than share ill-gotten gains with the proud? The Lord is our share, and so we will wait for him!

If you are wise, give eye to yourself and see how you are using your time. If you are a sinner don't waste the opportunity to repent. If you are holy then make progress in holiness. Remember the evil servant surprised by his Lord's coming! Evil servants say, "A rule here and a rule there, only a little of this and only a little of that, wait for this and wait for that" and they mock us. The one who grants faith tests it and crowns what he tests. The Lord commands us through Hosea: "You will be waiting for me for many days but you are not to take any other spouse".

This is the proper way of waiting for the Lord and keeping your pledge of love. Even though we miss and long for the consolation of his presence we must not look around for other consolations but keep ourselves in suspense looking toward his return. We are in suspense, as it were, between heaven and earth, unable as yet to grasp the heavenly things but seeking not to contaminate ourselves with the earthly. The reason why we choose this suspense, this suspended death, is to make ourselves persevere in our suspension from the cross—until we merit to die on it.

O Lord Jesus, when you were about to exercise that power of laying down your life, and accepting the sort of death by which you would will to lay it down, everything still remained in your own choice. You chose to hang from the cross so that being raised up over the earth you might draw us to yourself and then hang us too above all earthly concerns. You gave us an example so that we might also persevere until death on the cross and ascend from there to heaven all the more easily—stepping as it were from the topmost rung of the ladder of humility. Grateful thanks be to you, Lord Jesus! Where the cross is we are. Where the cross is we wait for you. We wait for "Eli", for our God, to come and take us to himself.

I believe that I shall see the Lord's favor even in the land of the living. Do you believe that too? Then strengthen your heart and bear with the Lord. Woe to those who lose patience. He promises that he will be coming quickly. "Look", he says, "I am coming quickly and bringing with me rewards to bestow on everyone in proportion to each one's labors. The time truly is short, though it may seem long to those who are in turmoil—whether from labor or love. Both are necessary. How long can anyone's labors last upon this earth? Be certain that the Lord will come, this Lord who is our own Lord, our dread and yet our desire, our rest and our reward, the sweetness and embrace we long for. He is the blessedness of all. He has chosen you. Never forget that; love as you are loved.

Friday

OUR LONGING FOR GOD

A reflection from a "Sermon on the Canticle" by St. Bernard

"By night on my bed I sought Him, whom my soul loves." We seek the Word but because we had already been sought by that very Word. If this were not the case, then when we were cast out of the presence of the Word, that Word would never more return to us. So, it would not be possible for us to even glimpse the good things we lost by our wandering from Him. Everything depends on the Word's seeking us.

If abandoned to ourselves we go to and fro and never find what we seek.

Listen to a fugitive and wandering soul and note its complaint. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant!" Do you want to return, then? But if it depended on your own will you wouldn't need to seek help. Why would you ask another for what you yourself already had? It is clear, then, that we can't get what we long for by ourselves. But one who longs to return to the Lord, and longs to be sought after, isn't entirely exposed and left to self.

What is the source of willingness to find the Lord in the one who seeks Him? Where does this willingness come from? It comes from the fact that we are already being sought, and so visited, by the Word. And this visit isn't fruitless! The longing has worked in us in such a way that we have good will. Without it a return would be impossible.

But it isn't enough to be brought back just once. Our inner laziness is so great that it makes every return difficult. It is the very will of the wanderer that has to be made to want return. What if the will to return is present? But it can't unless it is gifted with an effective longing to do what will bring it back to the Lord. St. Paul tells us that "to will is present in me but to perform what I will is not in me".

So, what does the psalmist seek in the passage quoted? He seeks only to be sought. One wouldn't seek this if one hadn't been loved already. So, what the psalmist entreats is the grace not only of seeking the Lord but of being sought by Him. "Seek your servant!" That is the prayer we must all pray day and night. And this is the grace that has been granted to us. God grant we may perfectly attain the fulfillment of our longing. May it be God's good pleasure! Amen!

Saturday

BEING A BLESSING TO OTHERS

A reflection from a sermon by St. Pope John XXIII

More than fifty years have passed since the day of my own ordination to the priesthood. I remember vividly the day of my first Mass and how St. Pope Pius X laid his hand upon my head as I knelt before him in the Vatican. I have always treasured that memory in my heart, that gesture of care and the gentle words of kindness and good wishes and blessing which went with it. What has happened in the years since that day? Pope Pius has become a citizen of heaven and the young man he blessed has followed in his footsteps, first to the Chair of St. Mark in Venice and then to the Chair of Peter.

Pius X always strove to be faithful and clear in teaching the truth of the Gospel. He always strove to shine with virtues like Christ's. He also sought to be an example to others of what we become when we seek Christ continually—in good times and bad—and are transformed until we have put on the full maturity of Christ.

I trusted much in Pius X as Pope. I was not afraid of labor nor did I fear to die in the cause of Christ. The love that is Christ's doesn't let one cease to work for the Gospel or to learn from others how to do that. I first learned from St. Pius X. And when the Lord called him to the Kingdom I turned to him even more in prayer. I was praying that all which might remain for me to do would be done in a way that would build up the Church, and all the Christians my life touched. It has been a blessing and a joy to do this. It has been sweet to live with and to live for so many others who wanted with me to love God more and more. It has been an even greater joy to know in difficult times that I was sacrificing myself in an outpouring of loving-kindness and pastoral care like that of Christ, and like that of St. Pius X.

Jesus came to this world to save all, and spent most of his life doing only the tasks of any working person and manual laborer. The world has priests, contemplatives, apostles, great writers and many who are primarily concerned with material things needed by their families. All work done for God and out of love like that of Jesus is a wonderful thing. It transforms all it touches. Jesus shares his gifts with us through the blessed hands of others in simplicity and by life-giving gestures of service and care.