

# **THE TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

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Sun. The Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Oct. 3 **OUR UNION WITH GOD IN CHRIST**  
A reflection by Bishop Jacob of Serugh

Mon. Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi

4 **WALKING IN PATIENCE TO THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL JOY**  
A reflection the Little Flowers of St. Francis

Tues. Tuesday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time

5 **HOW JESUS CALLS PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM**  
A reflection by Fr. J-M. Tillard, OP

Wed. Wednesday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time

6 **THE LESSON OF JONAH'S MISERY**  
Inspired by a text of R.J. Rushdoony

Thurs. Memorial of our Lady of the Rosary

7 **THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF PRAYING THE ROSARY**  
A reflection from a talk by St. Pope John XXIII

Monastic Desert Day

8 Friday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time

**THE MISSION OF A POPE & OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE**  
A reflection taken from a talk by St. Pope John XXIII

Sat. Saturday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time

9 **THE BEGINNING OF KNOWING GOD IS SELF-DISCOVERY**  
A reflection by Thomas Keating, OCSO

*Sunday*

## **OUR UNION WITH GOD IN CHRIST**

### **A reflection by Bishop Jacob of Serugh**

*“What God has joined together, no one must divide.”* The Heavenly Father created us to be one in faith and love and a beauty that makes us God’s People and bride. If the Spirit grants you prophetic sight you can see all this in the Scriptural words just spoken. God becomes one with us in baptism and makes us yet more one, as a bride of the Only Son. It is written in the Book of Genesis that men and women are to leave their birth families and be joined to one another in such a way that in truth the two become one. When we contemplate this mystery, we contemplate ourselves and our lives.

Scripture speaks of men and women in this way as a foretelling of the union of Christ and the Church. Christ becomes one with us first through the water of baptism. Christ has been drawing us to himself from the very beginning of his life in human flesh as from the beginning of our life in faith. As the Church responds in whole hearted love it too, so to speak, draws Christ to itself. Bridegroom and bride are joined and wholly united not simply with and in one another but with and in Christ. Scripture says that the two are to become one.

All of this is presented to us in Scripture in a veiled way. But after the marriage ceremony took place on the cross, God began to unveil this mystery. St. Paul entered into it and became God’s special instrument to reveal these wondrous truths to the entire world. In an outburst of inspiration, he cried out: “What a great mystery!” The union of two human persons is seen as a revelation of the union of Christ and the Church. We were many and are now made one.

A wife and a husband aren’t united to one another as closely as the Church is to the Son of God. He died for us before we loved him or had any idea of becoming one with Him. What bride ever chose a crucified man as her husband? Who ever gave his own blood as a wedding gift to his bride? The only one who ever did this was the one who died on the cross and sealed the marriage bond with us through his wounds and dying. Who was ever seen lying dead at his own wedding banquet with his wife at his side seeking to console herself by embracing him? At what other wedding celebration, or at what other sort of feast, is the bridegroom’s body distributed to the guests in the form of bread?

Clearly, we are become part of a great mystery! Ordinarily death separates wives and husbands. But in this case alone it is death that unites them. The groom died on a cross and bequeathed his body to his spouse. Now she consumes it daily under the form of bread and wine, food and drink. In this way the Church proclaims to the entire world that we are no longer separated from our God but are one instead of two. But there is yet a further mystery. Having been joined with Christ in this way we are called to live out the mystery of our oneness with God by living and loving each other as one with one another. This is the consummation of our marriage union whereby our union bears fruit and realizes the fullness of the love that binds us. It is through our love for one another that we enter into joy as in a marriage banquet. We do it symbolically only so that we can do it really as we bear our crosses with the one who has married us into unity with God in Him and through love for one another.

*Monday*

## **WALKING IN PATIENCE TO THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL JOY**

### **A reflection the Little Flowers of St. Francis**

On day St. Francis was going from Perugia to St. Mary of the Angels. It was winter and he was suffering much from the cold. He called to Bro. Leo who was walking ahead of him: Brother, holiness and edification are not the sources of perfect joy. He kept calling out such things until Brother Leo ask: Father, tell me what is the source of perfect joy.

St. Francis answered: "When we arrive at St. Mary of the Angels soaked with rain and stiff with cold, covered with mud and exhausted with hunger, and we knock at the friary door, and the porter asks angrily, "Who are you?" and we answer that we are two brothers and he says, You are liars! You are a couple of rogues who wander about deceiving folk and robbing the poor of alms. Be off with you! And if he refuses to open the door and forces us to stand outside all night in the snow and rain, hungry and frozen, then if we bear such ill-treatment, abuse, and dismissal patiently and calmly, without complaint, humbly and charitably thinking that the porter recognizes us for the kind of persons we are and that God moves him to denounce us—write down Brother Leo that here is the source of perfect joy.

"And if we go on knocking, and he comes out angrily and drives us away as importunate rogues with abuse and blows, saying--"Be off, you dirty thieves! Go to the poorhouse, for you're not going to eat or lodge here!" And if we bear this patiently, cheerfully, and charitably, Brother Leo, here is the source of perfect joy.

"And if driven by hunger, cold and darkness, we continue to knock, begging him with tears to open and admit us for the love of God, and he, more furious than before, says, "These are persistent rascals! I will give what they deserve!" And if he rushes out with a knotted stick, grabs us by our cowls, throws us to the ground and rolls us in the snow, belaboring us with every knot on his stick; and if we bear this patiently and cheerfully, remembering the sufferings of Christ the Blessed, and how we should bear this for love of Him, then Brother Leo you can write down that here is the source of perfect joy.

"And now listen to the conclusion, Brother Leo. Above all graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit that Christ gives to his friends is the grace to conquer self and willing to bear any pain, injury, insult, and hardship for love of Christ. For we cannot glory in any other gifts of God except these because they are not ours but God's. Therefore St. Paul says: "What did you possess that was not given to you by God? And if you have received it from Him, why do you glory as though you had it from yourself?" But in the cross of suffering and affliction we may glory, because this is our own. That is why St. Paul says, "I will not glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". To Him be everlasting honor and glory for ever."

*Tuesday*

## **HOW JESUS CALLS PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIM**

**A reflection by Fr. J-M. Tillard, OP**

When one gives careful thought to what the gospel accounts tell us about those who welcomed the word of Jesus and became his disciple, we discover that the most common way to follow him was to stay at home among one's ordinary duties. Indeed, we find that Jesus ordered some to do this and even refused to allow them to leave their homes and folk and follow him wherever he went.

Remaining at home is, in fact, the usual way of welcoming the good news and responding to it wholeheartedly. One doesn't forsake one's usual lifestyle but stays at home and continues in one's trade or occupations. They were, in fact, disciples like Mary, the mother of Jesus, and like Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus.

Who would venture to say that these three didn't love Jesus in the deepest way imaginable? Who could say that Mary, his mother, in her everyday life as a woman in an obscure village was not leading a life of holiness? On what grounds could one argue that Martha, Mary and Lazarus were less holy than the sons of Zebedee whom Jesus called to leave everything in order to follow him?

The Gospels point out that some of those who stayed at home remained unwaveringly faithful to Jesus, whereas Peter and the apostles took to their heels and betrayed him. The stay-at-home group may seem mysterious and elusive to us because we have heard again and again about leaving everything for Christ, but those he calls to follow him while remaining where they are when called to be disciples are also with him as they do this. It doesn't seem that those called to leave everything are always more perfect on this account. Indeed, rivalries sprang up among the Twelve, one of them handed Jesus over to his enemies, and Peter three times denied being Jesus' disciple at all.

What is supremely important is declaring and living in a way which says, "One thing alone is necessary!" Jesus is that one thing necessary. He can fill the whole of one's life, leading one to everything one longs for and desires. It is not words that proclaim this, nor even extraordinary actions, but obedience to God and to living as a person who dwells in God's kingdom in obedience.

There are, then, at least two distinct ways of living the Good News that this kingdom has been inaugurated. Both are ways of holiness. Indeed, in many ways the monastic life combines both of them; one gives up everything and then proceeds to live in a settled way doing ordinary occupations. It seems that no matter what we do and what we leave or don't leave behind, the important thing is that all be done in service of the Kingdom of God and as a way of praising and give glory to our God and Savior.

*Wednesday*

## **THE LESSON OF JONAH'S MISERY**

**Inspired by a text of R.J. Rushdoony**

I like Jonah, the prophet. He reminds me of many people I know—including myself! Jonah was commanded by God to go and preach to the people of Nineveh, to the Assyrians who had done such horrible things to his people. Jonah seems to hate these people. He wanted God's judgment to strike Nineveh and not God's mercy. So he tried to run away from God's command, and God's judgment on Nineveh. Twice he ended up in misery. The first misery was the experience of three days in the belly of a great fish. The second was that of being burnt by the heat of the sun and a south wind while waiting with the foolish hope that God would not have mercy on Nineveh just because its people had believed.

An unwilling preacher in an evil city proclaims its destruction. Yet by God's grace the people are converted. That displeased Jonah exceedingly. But he wasn't ready to give up his hope that the city would be destroyed in forty days or there about. So he sat on a hillock outside the city in a little lean-to and enduring the heat and misery he felt. When a vine grew up overnight and shaded the place where he sat and watched his misery was relieved. And then the vine was attacked by a worm and died—just as the day got really hot and the hot wind blew really hard.

What is making you suffer so, Jonah? That was about what God asked his prophet. Why do you want me to destroy all these people? Think of the fact that there are about 120,000 children in Nineveh and they are too young to know the difference between their right hand and their left, let alone the difference between right and wrong.

Jonah's sufferings came from his warped perspective. Getting even with the Ninevites was more important than God's love for his creatures. Even his personal comfort was more important to him than God's mercy. He didn't want to be an instrument of mercy and salvation for those damn Ninevites! His refusal to accept God's love molded him inwardly in a way that caused his miseries, his two great sufferings. To be free from them he only had to obey God inwardly and gladly rather than outwardly and with reluctance. There are many in such a situation.

But perhaps Jonah was able to let go of the hatred he has nourished for so long. That too is one of the causes of our sufferings. As a result we may find ourselves unable to let go of what God tells us to cast away as well as unable to accept as good what God tells us is good. Perhaps Jonah faced both of these predicaments. Ask yourself: How much of the suffering I experience has roots like these? Then we too need to repent and ask the Lord to give us the same sort of grace which turned the Ninevites from their "evil ways" to "God's ways". That is something to pray for each day.

*Thursday*

## **THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF PRAYING THE ROSARY**

**A reflection taken from a talk by St. Pope John XXIII**

The real substance of a well-prayed and well-meditated rosary is three-dimensional.

Its first dimension is contemplation. We strive as we pray to contemplate as clearly and purely and directly as we can one of God's Mysteries. These are truths of faith which speak to us of Christ's redeeming mission and of the Divine Love which sent him on it. When we contemplate we enter into a communion of thought and feeling and will with the teaching and life of Jesus. He is the Son of God and Son of Mary. That is the Mystery of the Incarnation. The Son of God lived on earth, in Jesus the Christ, redeeming, sanctifying, teaching, and living the same sort of life we do. He did this in a hidden life for some thirty years. Those years were all prayer and work, as ours can be. He suffered the Passion, he triumphed in the Resurrection, he Ascended into the Glory of Heaven. He sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father. He ever assists us by sending us the Holy Spirit. He gives life to the Church he founded. These are all Mysteries for us to contemplate because as we do that in prayer we will be drawn more and more into participation in those mysteries, according to the Heavenly Father's will and grace.

The second dimension of rosary prayer is reflection. This is what makes it possible for the fullness of the light that shines from the Divine Mysteries to enter into our minds and hearts. When you reflect carefully you find in each of the mysteries you contemplate a teaching that is especially given to you. You hear a message for your sanctification that is adapted in a special way to the circumstances of your unique life. This is due to the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit which is always interceding for you from within the very depths of your individual soul. What comes from the Holy Spirit is grace, a special gift from God. We are told that even when we are not sure how to pray the Spirit is there "interceding for us with sighs too deep for words".

Each of the Divine Mysteries contains a word to strengthen you in your particular trials and joys. We need this help in order to confront our life in the way Jesus confronted his. We may find ourselves asking God whether a particular trial is really his will for us. If we hear God say that it is we can be sure that with that answer comes a grace to respond, just as it did to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Each time we reflect on a given mystery the Spirit will draw a new and richer lesson in grace and support from it.

That brings us to the third dimension of this prayer. It is what we call its intention. When we pray we pray for people, for institutions and for all sorts of good purposes. We pray for necessities and we pray for personal and social benefits and gifts. This is an integral part of our charity towards our neighbors. We allow God's grace to insert us in a great net that is drawing everyone out of this world and into God's kingdom. We are one of the knots that create this great web of Divine Love. The more deeply we enter into the prayer of the rosary, the more deeply we contemplate and the more richly we reflect, the broader becomes our love for all our brothers and sisters, and, indeed, for all that is the earth and that fills it. This means that the rosary prayer binds us more tightly and wonderfully into the Mystical Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints. It is by our intentions that we begin to share in all this. As our intentions are more and more suffused by charity they become like the very heart of Christ, itself perfectly one with the heart of the Heavenly Father. We celebrate all this today. Today our prayer helps us live the charity which makes us one with God and each other a little more deeply and fully.

*Friday*

## **THE MISSION OF A POPE & OF THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE**

**A reflection from a talk by St. Pope John XXIII**

The message of the popes has always been about unity in love. We have a message from Linus, the very first pope after Peter, to Christians in the East just as we have the letters of Pope Clement to the Corinthian church. These messages are filled with heavenly teaching seeking to draw those who receive them together in mutual support and love. They provide a kind of spiritual direction together with their sound teaching about spiritual realities. The goal is to provide good counsel adapted to the circumstances of a particular time and place.

Think of the apostolic Letters of St. Peter. Like all the Letters in Scripture, they provide spiritual food for all the believers of the world. They are called “Catholic epistles” because of this intent. If you will reflect on them carefully you will see that they deserve great attention and the closest study. I recommend that they be learned by heart—the better to help us live the message of Christ, our Lord. That, indeed, is my invitation and exhortation to all who read this message of mine. Take these epistles as though they were encyclicals written by the very first pope.

Don’t despise these letters because they are wholly practical. The teaching they contain is really food for spiritual nourishment. They are all the more sublime in that they aren’t theology for theology’s sake but practical. This is something that can give us all a real spiritual delight. It will come to many as a surprise but as you get to know them better you will cherish them more and more.

St. Paul wrote to the Roman church amazing truths about lofty themes of universal interest. St. Peter wrote instead from Rome to encourage all believers regarding subjects important to the daily and practical life of every local church. This applies to the churches of our times and of every time and place. For example, St. Peter’s First Letter speaks of the dignity of a Christian and the call to sanctity. This leads him to speak of the duties of a Christian, duties made resplendent through grace. They are incumbent on all the members of the Chosen Race, the Royal Priesthood, the Holy Nation, the Ransomed People.

The basic duty is one of obedience—to God and to love for one another. These are duties carried out in the joy of a family’s life and of its members’ charity. Then come a series of counsels concerning how we are to wait and look forward to the end of all things and the inauguration of the fullness of God’s Kingdom. All this is seen from the perspective of both the elderly and the young. It is for each of us to view the challenges and the opportunities that each day brings us from this same perspective. We too look forward to the Kingdom and we work for its coming in whatever ways God’s love and Providence have made it possible for us to do that. Do you rejoice in these daily opportunities? They are opportunities to love and to share. One of the special gifts we can share is found in the letters of the popes of the past as much as of the present. We must show what they mean practically for the daily life of a Christian believer.

*Saturday*

## **THE BEGINNING OF KNOWING GOD IS SELF-DISCOVERY**

**A reflection by Thomas Keating, OCSO**

Listen to the prophet Joel: “Even now, says the Lord, you can return to me with all your heart—with fasting, with weeping, with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Turn to the Lord, your God!” (Joel 2: 12f) To repent is not to take on afflictive penances like fasting, vigils, flagellation, or what ever else appeals to our generosity. It means to change the direction in which are looking for happiness.

This challenge goes to the root of the problem. It is not just a bandage for one or another of the emotional problems. If we say yes to the invitation to repent, we may experience enormous freedom for a few months or for even a year or two. Our former way of life, in some degree, is cleaned up and certain relationships healed. Then, after the dust has settled from our conversion, the old temptations recur. As the springtime of the spiritual journey turns to summer, and fall and then winter, the original enthusiasms begin to wane.

Finally we have to face the fundamental problem. It is that the unconscious motivations are still in place, even after we have chosen the values of the Gospels. The false self is a complex of emotional programs for finding happiness. These have grown into sources of motivation.

They have been made more complicated to deal with by the socialization processes which formed us before we were able to make deliberate choices. We over-identified with our culture’s values and conditioning—let them become part of “us”. So ordinary thoughts, reactions and feelings manifest the false self on every level of our conduct.

When the false self realizes that we have been converted and will now start practicing the virtues, it has the biggest laugh of a life time: “Just go ahead and try it”, it says. Now we experience the full force of the spiritual combat—the struggle to do what we want to do and feel we should do and our incredible inability to consistently carry out our program. That is the beginning of a real spiritual journey.

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