

THE TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **The Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Sept. 26 **HOW MANY ARE OF GOD'S CHURCH!**
A reflection adapted from a text of Fr. Henri Lacordaire, OP
- Mon. **Memorial of St. Vincent de Paul**
27 **TEACHING THE ENTIRE GOSPEL MESSAGE**
A reflection based on homilies by St. Pope John XXIII
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 26th Week in Ordinary Time**
28 **THE PLACE OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE**
from Lovers of the Place by Abbot Francis Kline OCSO
- Wed. **Feast of St. Michael & All the Angels**
29 **GLIMPING THE RICHNESS OF GOD'S WORLD**
A reflection from a homily by John Henry Cardinal Newman
- Thurs. **Memorial of St. Jerome**
30 **BRINGING PEOPLE TO GOD'S WORD**
A reflection taken from Franciscan Media
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri. **Memorial of St. Therese of the Child Jesus**
Oct. 1 **MY LOVE AND MY PRAYER**
A reflection by St. Therese of the Child Jesus
- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
2 **MARY AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY**
A reflection from *Journeying with the Lord* by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Sunday

HOW MANY ARE OF GOD'S CHURCH!

A reflection adapted from a text by Fr. Henri Lacordaire, OP

“John said to Jesus: Teacher, we saw a person using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop him because he is not of our number. Jesus replied, Don't try to stop such a person...” (Mk.9:38ff). Any one who loves God is a living member of God's Church. It doesn't matter where or when that person lives. St. Augustine tells us that two loves are making two cities. The love of God is making the City of God and the love of merely human things is making the City of Mankind. The love of God makes the Kingdom of God, God's city, and the source of that love is Jesus Christ. Whoever lives that love is a member of God's city.

Jesus has been sacrificed for us from the beginning of the world. Has the extreme character of his suffering moved you? Many find their feelings too cold and too guilty to turn to God naturally. Some can't call on the name of Jesus because he has never been proclaimed to them. Yet people don't have to know the source of the flame of love which consumes them. Many are not led to Calvary from their birth and have not seen at Calvary what the God-become-human suffers in agony for them on that hill. Yet a drop of that sacred blood has sought them by ways invisible to human sight and they sense the fragrance of eternal life and have responded to its mute appeal to charity.

The Church is not only what it seems to be. It is not only a visible organization with buildings, a history, and a hierarchy. Nor is it simply authenticity, virtues, miracles and the like. We see more of it in the kind of half-light and shadow that contains all the saintliness that is hidden from us. Yes, the angels see it and recognize that it is an underground foundation and support for what is seen and see that each person has within a kind of sanctuary which is a personal holy of holies. There a hidden incense of love and mercy is offered to God.

Love is something that cannot be caught or contained. Who is there that can see how it springs to life within a person? There is, so to speak, an immortal substance within each of us of which we aren't aware any more than we are aware of the hidden ways the Divine Love walks to find and possess us.

Wherever the love of God is, there is Jesus Christ. Wherever Jesus is, the Church is there with him. Every human person, certainly every Christian, is called to join the body which is the Church. But so many are prevented by insuperable ignorance! They are, so to speak, left under the direct rule of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is the leader and sovereign head of all Christianity and Christians. The Church of God has for this reason a kind of invisible extension that no human eye can take in. Those who see only boundaries which appear, lack all idea of the twofold radiance which is its true nature. The Church that is Jesus Christ and all who labor knowingly or unknowingly in his name calls and raises up all who live the unselfish love of Jesus, wherever in the world they may be found. Do not seek to forbid them this labor. Show them the fullness of Christ so their labor may be yet more effective in advancing the Kingdom of God.

Monday

TEACHING THE ENTIRE GOSPEL MESSAGE

A reflection based on homilies by St. Pope John XXIII

It has been asserted that in this era of the triumph of science and technical skill we are able to set up a civilization that leaves God out. But the truth is that scientific and technical progress themselves give rise to new human problems of worldwide dimensions that can only be resolved in the light of a sincere and active faith in God.

This situation calls for teaching the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ and not just in words but translated into concrete realities. This is a truth which St. Vincent de Paul saw clearly and dedicated his life to making incarnate in practical love for the poor and marginalized. Christian social teaching has as its objective justice and its motive power is love. We must draw attention to the need to educate all Christian believers, starting with children, about this fact and how it relates to effectively dealing with social problems.

Christian formation has to be integral. That means that it must extend to all the kinds of duties we have as responsible Christians and must help all such people feel bound to do something practical to carry out these duties. All have to feel an obligation to behave socially and economically according to the Gospel's teachings and precepts.

The passage from theory to practice often seems difficult. That is due to the selfishness which is so deeply rooted in today's culture. It is difficult for many to grasp clearly and precisely the objective requirements of justice that need to be realized in each individual case. Therefore, it isn't enough to bring people to consciousness of their duty to act in a Christian way in the social and economic fields of life; they must be helped to know how they can carry them out.

A free heart and a pure intention give birth to generous love, which is the core of every virtue and the strength behind every sacrifice. If you find you are eager to love God and love your neighbor then you know you have God dwelling within you. Follow charity. This is the most effective means to overcome the danger of distrust and indifference. This is a message that touches the hearts of all and will recall many to the Gospel of Christ.

The commandment to love in this way brings us face to face with the need not to steal, not to deprive people of their just wages, not to oppress the poor, not to cherish an immoderate appetite for wealth. This value forces us to confront the crucial problem for our entire world, both social and economic. There are many honest people, but the temptation to covet and even steal is everywhere. It must be overcome by charity, by love that seeks only the good of all.

St. Vincent de Paul made the primacy of charity more than obvious when he told his disciples that the service of the poor and needy came before even prayer. "*Offer the deed to God as your prayer*", is what he said. Charity enacted is the greatest prayer. It can bring us face to face with God. But that is what Heaven is. We begin now to live the life of heaven when we live a life of love like that of Jesus.

Tuesday

THE PLACE OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE from Lovers of the Place by Abbot Francis Kline OCSO

In the same way as God's gift to the Church is different, but enduring and the same, so, too, in the life of the individual monastic, the gift of a vocation is a great journey of many arrivals and departures. One's life differs vastly from the first years of formation to the time of harvest and beyond, yet it preserves the first call with its original ideals and grace. The monastic becomes a contemplative when he or she holds within the self the paradox between self-fulfillment and self-sacrifice. Obviously, the paradox is manifested right in the monastic community, where the monastic's own humble life contributes to the good of the others in the community. There, one bonds effectively with the community where honor, freely given and received, transforms one into a lover of the place, as St. Stephen Harding was called by his brothers at early Citeaux.

The contemplative and the monastic community do not just float about at the edge of secular society. They hug the periphery, but are rooted in the very heart of humanity because of the place they occupy in the church.

The monk is inserted in the monastic community by the imitation of Christ. But the monastery is part of the Church, the body of Christ, because of the baptism into Christ of its members. The monastic community is a church in its own right, and is thereby inserted into the universal church, whose confines in space and time nobody can fix.

The church is the real and living presence of the divine and human Christ—the same Christ who took on our flesh, suffered, died and rose from the dead. Thus, the contemplative in the church is deeply present to the world, not just by desire, or social or prophetic stance, but by an insertion into the Body of Christ, and by a particular position in that body.

Accordingly, the church allows the monastic contemplative to assume a stance of prophecy and forgiveness for the society at large. The monastic community shares in that sign by means of its own special charism. Its sign is to point to the human heart where all contradiction begins. Refusing to assign blame anywhere else, and refusing to settle for any other solution than the most radical one, the contemplative becomes a sign of the conversion of the human heart. Thus, the place of the contemplative is the depths of the human heart. Our place is in that heart of Christ, and our lives are prophetic signs pointing to its ultimate meaning.

Wednesday

GLIMPING THE RICHNESS OF GOD'S WORLD

A reflection taken from a homily by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Angels, we believe, are inhabitants of a world invisible. The fact that they exist tells us how many wonders we cannot see though they have been created for our good and joy. Indeed, we are told much more about angels than about the faithful departed. Our departed rest from their labors but the angels are active among us all the time. The Letter to the Hebrews calls them "*ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation*" (1:14) No Christian is so lowly as to lack an angel companion and helper. Those who live by faith and love are especially open to their comforting presence.

If we may judge from what is written in the Scriptures, should one of us catch a glimpse of an angel we would fall to the ground in fear and trembling? Yet they are our fellow servants and fellow-workers and companions. That they form part of an unseen realm is conveyed to us in the vision that the Patriarch Jacob saw when he was fleeing from the brother he had defrauded. "*He came upon a certain place and spent the night there. When the sun had set, he took a rock and put it under his head as a pillow, and lay down and went to sleep.*" He didn't see anything special about the place, other than that it was a holy place of sacrifice for the peoples of the area and he would be safe there. It was not an especially comfortable place to sleep but there was no building. Night had come and he had to sleep where he could.

Yet how different was the truth than what ordinary eyes could see! More was there but it was revealed to him only in a dream. In that dream, he saw a world that is not usually seen but is real for all that. "*He dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth where he lay and its top reached heaven. And, behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on that ladder.*" (Gen. 28:12) Now he saw another world and saw how deeply involved our daily world is with this unseen one.

Persons often speak as if they doubted the existence of the world Jacob saw. Many treat it as something that will become real to them only after death. No! It exists now, even if we do not see it. It is among us and around us. Jacob was shown this in his dream. Angels were all about him, though he hadn't realized it. What Jacob saw in his dream Elijah and his servant saw by God's grace. The shepherds at the time of Christ's nativity not only saw it but also heard the voices of blessed spirits praising God. It is what angels do always throughout our nights and days.

When this is shown us, either by faith or by some graced sight, we see that wonderful creatures are always going about on God's errands and doing whatever is God's good pleasure. The name 'angel' means "messenger". Like these blessed ones we too have been called to be God's messengers, ministers of God's word and blessing. Faith tells us that. It tells us too that we should imitate the angels as best we can, as God gives us the opportunities. Today is one of those opportunities.

Thursday

BRINGING PEOPLE TO GOD'S WORD

A reflection taken from Franciscan Media

St. Jerome spent twenty years translating the Gospels and much of the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin. He began this work at the request of the Pope of Rome but continued it on his own. We are often told that he was irritable and not at all charitable but this reflects the attacks upon him by those who rejected his translation in favor of what they were familiar with. For instance, St. Augustine tells a story about the bishop of Tripoli who read Jerome's translation of the Book of Jonah in church; his people responded by rioting in the streets because it was too different from what they had been used to.

Jerome was merciless, and even abusive, to scholarly opponents but was a kind and gentle friend and one who gave much to the needy. He founded a school for poor children in Bethlehem when he lived there and gave shelter to refugees who had fled Rome after the Vandals sacked it. He spent a good deal of time in giving spiritual direction to monks and nuns who settled in Bethlehem.

Jerome translated only the New Testament Gospels and that part of the Old Testament which was written in Hebrew. He also used a "sense for sense" rather than a "word for word" method of translating. Biblical language in the Latin of his day wasn't open to accepting newly coined words for ideas still unfamiliar to Latin speakers and Jerome both borrowed words from Greek and invented new ones. Thus he avoided what today is called "literalism" in Biblical translation. The "Old Latin" which St. Jerome's translation was to replace had been translated from a pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament and he rejected this and worked directly from Hebrew texts. He also realized that a translator will convey his own interpretation of Scripture whether he wants to or not. Jerome is probably most famous for his commentaries on Scripture and by reading them one can learn about the perspective which guided his translating work. He preferred what came to be called the "allegorical method" of interpreting Scripture. This means one gives less attention to what is merely seen as historical fact and more attention to the application of Scripture to the task of living the Christian life. This is called a "spiritual" interpretation.

Jerome worked very hard to keep himself in harmony with the teachings of the Church's magisterium. This caused him to treat those who were not faithful to what was considered orthodox in his day as stupid. In fact, he seems to have very much enjoyed a good argument and it was customary in his time to argue "*ad hominem*" by speaking abusively of opponents. He tells us that he had a weakness for good rhetoric and style and had a hard time with Hebrew texts that weren't written with Latin or Greek rules of good style in mind. Our characteristics come from our upbringing or education and that end up getting in the way of Christian charity. We can find it as difficult as Jerome did to put these aside when they get in the way of communicating God's love. That love is at the heart of all Scripture and so when we want to help others understand God's Word we have to step away from what seems natural or good to us and try to speak and act in ways that can attract others to God and an understanding of God's word. This is a struggle which everyone faces to a greater or lesser extent. Our personal struggle, then, is to daily put aside what we like and speak and act in ways that others can experience as loving and caring.

Friday

MY LOVE AND MY PRAYER

A reflection by St. Therese of the Child Jesus

One who is enfolded by Divine Love can't remain inactive. One may, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to those words of his, so full of fire and of comfort. One may not appear to be contributing anything but really one contributes very much. One is doing more than Martha, as she hurries distractedly to and fro, and wishes her sister would do the same.

It is not that our Lord has any fault to find with Martha's exertions. His own mother, Mother of God though she was, put up with humble work of that sort all her life. Didn't she get the meals ready for the Holy Family? Martha is a devoted hostess, but she won't keep calm. That's the trouble.

All the saints have seen the importance of Mary's attitude, even some of those who have done the most to fill the world with the light of the Gospel teaching. Great friends of the Cross like St. Paul and St. Augustine and St. John of the Cross and St. Thomas and St. Francis and St. Dominic all went to prayer to find the secret of their wisdom. It is a divine wisdom that has left the greatest minds lost in admiration.

Give me a lever and a fulcrum, said Archimedes, and I will move the world. He wasn't talking to God so his request wasn't granted, and, in any case, he was thinking only of the material world. The fulcrum God told the saints to use was God's self and the lever was prayer. Only it must be the kind of prayer that sets the heart on fire with love. That's how the saints shift the world, and how they'll do it until the end of time.

What an extraordinary thing is the efficiency of prayer! It has access at all times to God's presence. It can get whatever it asks for. And it's a mistake to think your prayer won't be answered unless you've something out of a book. If that were true, I'm afraid I would be in a terribly bad way. You see, I recite the Divine Office with a great sense of unworthiness, but apart from that, I can't face the strain of hunting about in books for splendid prayers. There are so many, each more splendid than the last. How could I recite them all, or choose between them?

I do what children do before they've learned to read. I tell God what I want quite simply, without any splendid turns of phrase. Somehow, God always manages to understand me. For me, prayer means launching oneself out of one's heart towards God. It means lifting up one's eyes very simply to heaven. It is a cry of grateful love, either from the crest of joy or the trough of despair. It's a vast supernatural force that opens out my heart and binds me close to Jesus. There is no need to be special or say special things. It's enough to be small, smaller than ever!

Saturday

MARY & THE CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

The Second Vatican Council teaches as follows: *“In celebrating the annual cycle of Christ’s mysteries, holy Church honors with special love the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. She is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son. In her, the Church holds up and admires the most excellent fruit of the redemption and joyfully contemplates it in a faultless model.”* (SC 103)

This statement contains three key affirmations. The first teaches that all Marian feasts are a part of our celebration of Christ’s mysteries. This is actually the only cycle that the Church celebrates in its liturgy. Mary is strictly bound to Jesus’ redemptive action because she is the most wonderful fruit of his salvific work. We pray this every time we pray the “Hail, Mary”. She is joined to Jesus inseparably because she received everything from Him.

Second, the Church affirms that Mary opened herself and her heart to receive the fullness of God’s gift, Jesus Christ. In this way, she is the model for every Christian. This is our duty to God. We must let ourselves be loved by God! “The Almighty has done great things for me!” Mary recognizes that everything about her and in her is a gift from God. She knows herself as fully loved by God in Christ.

The Church praises God for the gift God has given in Mary. It uses the same words with which she praised the work of the Lord: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my savior”. We celebrate the lived identification between Mary and the Church and we as Church know ourselves understood by and represented by Our Lady.

The third affirmation is even more explicit than the others. The Church “joyfully contemplates” all that Mary is by God’s gift. She herself seeks and longs to be nothing but God’s. That is what she hoped to be and what God gave her. In other words, the Church, and each of us, look beyond self and beyond the events that fill our days and we look to Mary as she is in God’s glory. Mary is the concrete image of all that the Church longs to be, of all that we ourselves long to be. She is what we hope to be.