

THIRTIETH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. **The Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Oct. 24 **THE SIGHT WE NEED FROM THE LORD**
From Exhortation to the Greeks by Clement of Alexandria
- Mon. **Monday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time**
25 **CORRECTLY USING GOD'S LAW**
A reflection from Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time**
26 **THE GROANS THAT THE SPIRIT UTTERS WITHIN US**
A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini
- Wed. **Wednesday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time**
27 **OPENING OUR EYES TO REAL HOPE**
Reflection developed on the basis of a text by Fr. Jean Danielou
- Thurs. **Feast of the Apostles Simon & Jude**
28 **I AM WHAT I AM ONLY IN JESUS**
A reflection developed from a homily by Fr. Stephen Yim of Singapore
- Monastic Desert Day
- Fri. **Friday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time**
29 **KEEPING THE SABBATH HOLY**
A reflection by St. Thomas Aquinas
- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
30 **THE LORD IS WITH US**
A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard

Sunday

THE SIGHT WE NEED FROM THE LORD

A reflection from Exhortation to the Greeks by Clement of Alexandria

“The commandment of the Lord shines clearly, enlightening the eyes”. That is what Scripture tells us, and it also shows us that we receive this light *from* Christ. It is by this light that we differentiate what is divine from what is only human. This is knowledge *“more delightful than gold and precious stones, more desirable than honey or than a honeycomb”*.

Despite the light of the stars, without the sun the world would be plunged into darkness. If we had not known Christ, the Word, we would have been no better off than the chickens that people raise in complete darkness so they will be more tender—i.e., we would have been reared only for death. We have to open ourselves to the light; we have to become disciples of the Lord. Christ promised to the Heavenly Father: *“I will make known your name to my brothers and sisters and praise you where they are assembled”*. So we sing God’s praises. Christ’s words save us and instruct us. Once I wandered and got lost searching for God but with Christ’s light, we find the right path. With you O Lord Jesus I have light, I find God, I receive the Heavenly Father, I become a coheir with you because you weren’t ashamed of me but made me your brother.

We have to shake off the forgetfulness of these truths. We have to shake off that ignorance and darkness that dims our sight. We need to contemplate the true God and raise a song of praise. *“All hail, O Light!”* Upon us, buried in darkness, imprisoned in the shadow of death, a heavenly light has shown. It surpasses the sun in brightness and is sweeter than anything in this earthly life can be. This light is eternal life for all who receive it. Night is afraid of light, and gives place to the day in something like terror. Unfailing light has now penetrated everywhere. The Day of the Lord is come! Sunset has been turned into dawn.

This is what it means to say that there is a new creation. The Sun of righteousness has come to visit us, just like the Heavenly Father, *“who makes the sun rise upon all, and bestows truth on everyone”*. Christ has changed sunset into dawn and death into life and did it by his crucifixion. He has snatched the human race from perdition and exalted it to Heaven. He transplants what was merely mortal into the Kingdom of immortality. He is God’s gardener and points the way to prosperity. He prompts us all to good works and reminds us how to live according to truth. He bestows the truly great and divine heritage of the Heavenly Father, one that cannot be taken away from us. Christ deifies us by heavenly teaching, instills his laws into our minds, and writes them on our hearts.

What are the laws Christ prescribes? First, that all should know God. *“I will be merciful to those who know me and I will remember their sins no more.”* Let us accept these laws of life. Let us obey God’s promptings. Let us learn to know him so that God may be merciful to us. Although God stands in no need of it, praise God and pay God your debt of gratitude in willing obedience to his Law. Think of it as a kind of rent we owe God for our lodging here below. Watch Jesus and see how to love God. He also shows you how to love each of God’s children.

Monday

CORRECTLY USING GOD'S LAW

A reflection from Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

Why do you transgress God's commandment for the sake of your own tradition? This question was posed to a group of Pharisees by the Lord Jesus himself, and he poses it to us as well. The Pharisees, for example, claimed that the traditions of their ancestors safeguarded the Law of God given them through Moses. But they hadn't looked carefully enough at the actual effect of some of these traditions. Isaiah had already pointed this out parabolically: "Your merchants mix water with the wine"; i.e., they presented as pure what was really adulterated and they did this to secure their own advantage without caring that it might also wrong others.

What is this transgression? It is the sin of interpreting God's law in a way that makes it serve merely human purposes. The net effect was to suppress some of God's commands or add new commandments that claimed to be God's but were not. But most people weren't able to tell the difference between what actually came from God and what came from merely human sources. The Pharisees had the training that could have enabled them to distinguish what comes from God and what doesn't, but they didn't use it carefully. Once they had enunciated a tradition they blindly defended it without considering whether or not it supported or offended the laws coming from God.

Christ healed on the Sabbath and was criticized for it. Some were so offended they wanted to kill him because he did this. The Lord pointed out that the entirety of the Law, as well as the prophet's interpretations of it, was designed to secure the well-being of people and lead them to put God first in their living. The Sabbath was given to help promote these ends. If what he did on the Sabbath led others to love God with their whole heart and their neighbors as themselves then it fulfilled the Law and didn't offend it. No commandment, he emphasized, is more important than the command to love God and love one's "neighbor".

We find St. Paul teaching the same thing when he affirms that "love is the fulfillment of the law". If all other gifts of God fail among us, faith and hope, and love will never fail. The greatest of these is love. To call it "greatest" is to say that faith and hope aren't great themselves apart from love. Without love, they can't fulfill their purpose. Thus, St. Paul goes on to point out that knowledge is useless apart from the love of God and neighbor. The understanding of prophecies or mysteries or faith—apart from love—doesn't build anyone up. It is love that perfects and builds people up. One who loves God with the whole heart and mind and all the activities of life is perfect in this world and in the next.

We must never cease to love God. The more we fix our gaze on God the more our love for God will grow. But eternal life consists in loving God wholly. So, when we help others turn their attention to God and think of God and pray to God and put nothing before God and God's love, then we are fitting ourselves and them more and more for the life God calls us to share forever. That is the purpose of God's Law.

Tuesday

THE GROANS THAT THE SPIRIT UTTERS WITHIN US

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

“We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our complete adoption as children of God”. St. Paul goes on to say that this begins with our groaning cry for the redemption of our bodies. Yes, we have the first fruits of the Spirit, and it is the Spirit that groans within and with us for freedom, for liberation for all that weighs us down and keeps us from giving our entire self to our God.

We have already had some taste of what it means to be saved. For example, how often have we groaned to be free from nonsense, or from frustration and the emptiness of what we thought would fill us with joy. So we first groan because we know that our salvation isn't yet complete. Our groans express our deepest and truest desires for liberation, to become fully what we are.

We are really children of God. Yet how often we live out of our ignorance. How we groan to be free of our limited awareness and the mediocrity that goes with it and causes us to lose heart and give in to laziness. We want to speak to our God freely and confidently and experience God's love and salvation.

We groan to be freed from the way our bodies often weigh us down and refuse to help us find the fullness of life we long for. We want to be able to live our bodily condition as a pure gift. St. Pope John Paul II said many wonderful things about our bodiliness, especially as a symbol of our espousal to God in Christ. So we groan under all that weighs us down and prevents us from experiencing this freedom. We are worn out, tempted, sensuous, obtuse, unable, forgetful of self and others. So much to groan about before our Heavenly Father.

All these groanings are the signs that the Spirit is within us, lives in us, and is leading us towards something we don't yet have but whose seeking gives meaning to our long and difficult journey toward the Kingdom of God.

Can we see that these aren't just private and personal groans but those of all our companions and fellow believers? Can we see they are the Spirit's groans—because God wants all these good things for us even more than we do? Our Heavenly Father speaks to us too in these spiritual groanings. In God's love expressed in this way, we hear peace, God's tenderness, confidence, and a longing to abandon ourselves in the gift that is love. That is the beginning of freedom.

Wednesday

OPENING OUR EYES TO HOPE

A reflection based on a text by Fr. Jean Danielou

People are often called prophets nowadays because they claim to have an insight into some aspect of the historical processes that are shaping our time. This conception fits our way of understanding reality's historical character and is open to our criticism of that conception. That is, one is a prophet because one supposedly sees where class war or some form of technological progress will lead. But this is a misunderstanding just to the extent the insight is taken to be absolutely and factually true. I take it that it is inspired, rather, by the Prince of this World and people who want to interpret history as they would like it to turn out, so it will realize their will to power or their selfish lusts.

A true prophet is rather concerned with history as God makes it. Real prophecy is the business of people endowed by God with insight into what can or cannot happen when people follow worldly leadings in preference to God's. The actual maker of history is the Holy Spirit. It is from the Spirit that it gets its purpose and so its meaning. Only the Spirit knows the depths of God's nature and purposes and looks beyond the merely earthly. Entering into the ways of God is the only path by which one can see "where things are heading". One knows it when God reveals the direction in which things are being led.

Everything is moving toward the state of being God's Kingdom. There all will be completely and in a holy way what God calls it to be. The ways of God pass all human understanding but God has revealed a good deal about the paths along which individuals and history are being led. To be entrusted with this hidden knowledge enables one to discern by the help of the Spirit what can and cannot lead people into God's Kingdom.

The natural endowments of those called to prophecy are of little comparative importance; it is nice if they are talented and can use those talents to advance their prophetic mission but (e.g.) it seems that Jeremiah might have been handicapped by a stammer and he was still the Lord's prophet and witness. The quality required in such a witness is the ability to see things as they are and to tell people the way they are with God. Those who see "where God is leading" us, and how this does or doesn't match up with what we organize ourselves to do, can testify to it. A prophet is sent to open people's minds, and ears, and eyes to God's hand working in history and in their hearts.

The prophet calls us to follow God in trust and fidelity rather than trusting in ourselves, or in our knowledge and capacities to make certain things happen. We are called to trust God to lead all things so they achieve God's will. That will move all toward the good things God intends to share with us and which we alone can't attain. We need to have our eyes opened to the path which embodies trust in God. That is the only path which leads us to real hope. Hope needs a basis to be real and the only real basis is God. Look to God for real hope!

Thursday

I AM WHAT I AM ONLY IN JESUS

A reflection developed from a homily by Fr. Stephen Yim of Singapore

Nothing is known of the apostles named Simon and Jude except that Jesus chose them to bear witness to him. Legend has it that they did this in Persian Mesopotamia, where the church has existed from their day to this, usually under persecution. We are familiar with St. Jude because he is the patron of those who are in desperate need; i.e., when people don't know where to turn they ask St. Jude to pray for them. Who wouldn't want to be remembered for more than two thousand years as one who was close to Jesus and had a special gift of praying for others?

It is an interesting fact that depictions of St. Jude always show him with a picture of Jesus on a medallion around his neck. He, and even more his fellow apostle Simon, picture Jesus by what they do. What do they do? They proclaim Jesus and they imitate his constant turning to the Heavenly Father in prayer. Is there anything that any of us need to do besides letting our God make us an image of Jesus and ourselves carry that image always in our hearts?

We are probably headed for obscurity and oblivion. In a couple of centuries who will remember the details of what we did with our lives? But more and more people are coming to Jesus and to the Heavenly Father all the time. As St. John the Baptist said: He must increase and I must decrease. That should be our prayer constantly. That's what it means to choose to be instruments for the proclamation of the Good News.

Saints Simon and Jude are named in the First Roman canon of the Mass. All who pray using that canon remember them as chosen by Jesus and made close to Jesus by God's grace. That is what all Christians pray for. Whether we are remembered by name is of no special importance. We are always with God and God is always mindful of us. Jesus is God and if we are inseparable from Jesus we are inseparable from God. That is what we pray for constantly.

These two saints are remembered as martyrs. All we know is that just as the world hated Jesus, and crucified him, so the world hates those whom Jesus has chosen as his witnesses. They are models for all who suffer because of their faith in Jesus. Whenever we undergo hardships, even interiorly, because we are struggling to let our faith be our very life and the source of all our hopes, we are experiencing the hatred of the world as it has come to be even within us. We have announced that we want to "leave the world" and cling only to Christ. That is what Simon and Jude announced, and what they did wherever they proclaimed the Gospel in word and by their lives. We have experienced that hatred and the pain and suffering that comes with it. Do we rejoice in this? Do we experience our sufferings themselves as reminders that we have chosen Christ as the Way and the Truth and the Light? To remember that is certainly a grace that brings us close to our Lord. It is the best assurance we can have that we are close to God and that we do God's will. That too is what we constantly pray for. Praise God that we have been given such a gift.

Friday

KEEPING THE SABBATH HOLY

A reflection by St. Thomas Aquinas

We are commanded to keep the Sabbath holy in part to strengthen our faith in the promise of eternal rest and to foreshadow its fulfillment. Scripture says, "It shall come to pass that God will give you rest from all your work, from your vexations and from your bondage". Again, "my people shall sit in the beauty of peace, in the tabernacle of trust and in the wealth of rest". We hope for rest from three things: labors, struggles, and servitude to the Devil. Christ promises such rest to all those who come to him. However, as we know, the Lord worked for six days and on the seventh rested because that was necessary in order to do a perfect "work". Eternity is rest exceeding anything one can know here on earth.

We are also commanded to keep holy the Sabbath to increase our love. Unless one takes time to raise oneself above ordinary things one always tends toward the earthly. One has to have time for raising oneself up. Scripture even suggests we do this continually: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall be ever in my mouth" it says. But we can also do it during a portion of each day, "Seven times a day I give you praise" Scripture says. In the same way, many find it necessary to have a fixed day for worship. Thus the Sabbath is not set aside for games but to pray and praise the Lord. St. Augustine even says that it is a lesser evil to plow on the Sabbath than to play on this day.

We are commanded to keep the Sabbath holy as a time to exercise acts and works of kindness, especially to those we govern or hire. Some are cruel to themselves and force themselves to labor continually and ceaselessly. We must have mercy and be kind to ourselves so we can be such to others.

But remember that God did not simply say "keep" the Sabbath but "keep it holy". 'Holy' signifies pure and also consecrated. In these two ways, we celebrate feasts by purifying and giving ourselves to divine service, whether in avoiding or doing certain things.

Thus we are not to do "servile" work, usually considered bodily labor, but mental work can also be done in a servile way. However, such labors can be done on the Sabbath if necessary due to charity, if in service of the Gospel, if for the good of neighbor and if commanded by God, as in baptizing. What we must avoid above all is sin. It may seem paradoxical that idleness is to be avoided on the Sabbath and because it goes with evil doing. Always do some good work lest the Devil find you unoccupied.

We should do all that makes us holy on the Sabbath. We should offer sacrifice by offering ourselves to God and by praising God. This includes the giving of alms. We should hear the word of God and contemplate the divine realities, learning to rest in this and so avoiding sin. In all these ways we rest in God and make the Sabbath a delight. This is truly a foreshadowing of eternal life and delight when we shall dwell with God always.

Saturday

THE LORD IS WITH US!

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard

“*Hail, filled with grace! The Lord is with you!*” (Lk.1:28) Notice that the angel doesn’t say “the Lord is in you” but “the Lord is with you”. God by reason of the simplicity of the Divine Essence is equally and entirely present everywhere. Yet by reason of his working and influence in rational creatures God is present to them in a special way. And God’s presence in the good is different than God’s presence in the wicked. God is present in all creatures, yet not all can, so to speak, embrace God. That is why God is in a special way present with us humans. Because God has given us a special ability we can embrace our God.

Only those who are good embrace God in love. That means that only for the good is God present in such a way as not only to be in but with them. This expresses the harmony of their will with God’s will. You can so conform your will to God’s—for example, by one’s willing justice—that it won’t be unworthy of God to will what you will. This is concord between God’s will and a human will, and that means you are united with God in the special way I have described.

This is the case for everyone whom we can call holy. Yet it is particularly true of Mary. She was so closely united to God that not only her will but her flesh was united to God. From God’s own substance and the substance of the Virgin God fashioned one Christ. Better, God became the one Christ who was neither wholly from God nor wholly from the Virgin yet belonged wholly to God and wholly to her. There aren’t two sons but one. One and the same Christ is the son of both God and Mary.

You can see why the angel said, “*Hail, filled with grace, the Lord is with you!*” O Mary, God is with you—and not the son alone, whom you clothed with your flesh, but likewise the Holy Spirit, by whom you conceived, and the Heavenly Father, by whom from eternity your child is begotten. The Heavenly Father is with you and has given you the Son to be yours too. The Son is with you. The Son in a marvelous way has entered your womb without your losing your virginity. The Holy Spirit is with you and is with the Heavenly Father and the Son in preparing your virginal body to be the dwelling place of your Lord and God’s Word. Indeed, the Lord is “with” you!

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