

THE THIRTY-FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Sun. The Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Oct 31 **LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR**

A reflection by St. Francis de Sales

Mon. **SOLEMNITY OF ALL THE SAINTS**

Nov.1 **THE SIGHT THAT REQUIRES PURITY OF HEART**

A reflection developed from a homily by St. Augustine

Tues. **COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED**

2 **HOW DO YOU IMAGINE THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED?**

A reflection from a text by St. Catherine of Genoa

Wed. **Memorial of Saint Martin de Porres**

3 **SEEING OURSELVES AS SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**

A reflection developed from St. Jerome's Commentary on Jeremiah

Thurs. **Memorial of Saint Charles Borromeo**

4 **HOW DO YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE TO GOD?**

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Fri. **Friday of the 31st Week in Ordinary Time**

5 **FILLING OURSELVES WITH CHRIST'S GOODNESS**

A reflection from a homily by St. Augustine

Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**

6 **WHAT LOVE DO WE LEARN FROM MARY, OUR MOTHER?**

A reflection from a text by Fr. Karl Rahner

Sunday

LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR

A reflection by St. Francis de Sales

Because God created us in his own image and likeness, he ordained that our love for one another should be an image and likeness of the love we owe him, our God. God said: *“You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart; this is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it; you must love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Why do we love God? It is because God is supreme and infinite goodness. Why do we love ourselves? It is because we are images and likenesses of God. All of us possess the same dignity and we love this in all as we do in ourselves—each and all are living and holy images of the Godhead. That is why we belong to God, and through a kinship so close, a dependence so lovable, that God doesn’t hesitate to call each of us children. As God’s children, we are capable of sharing with God in the fulfillment that is God’s own sovereign joy and goodness. As children we receive grace and our spirits are bound together with the Holy Spirit. and made, in that sense, sharers in the divinity’s goodness and joy.

It is one and the same charity that gives birth to acts of love for our God and for neighbors. Jacob saw it was one and the same ladder that touches heaven and earth and that the angels use to ascend and descend. That shows how one single charity cherishes both God and neighbor. It raises us to spiritual union with God and it brings us down to love and share with neighbors. Recall the reason for loving our neighbor: Each person is made in the image and likeness of God and each has been created to share God’s goodness, God’s grace, and joy in God’s glory. To love neighbors is to love God in them and love them in God.

When we look at a neighbor we see a person created in the image and likeness of God; shouldn’t we say to one another: Look at the people God has made; aren’t they like their maker! How could we fail to be drawn irresistibly toward them, how can we fail to embrace them and be moved even to tears by love for them? Shouldn’t we call down on them a hundred blessings? Why? For love of them? Yes and no. We can’t be sure whether they deserve love or hate because of what they do to others and themselves but the image of God is always in them and that draws our love.

Everyone can share in God’s own goodness, grace, and glory. We can see this capacity in them knowing God created them in the divine image and likeness. They exist for God. They exist from God. They exist through God. They exist in God. They exist unto God. They resemble God in a very special way. This is why divine love not only commands us, and repeatedly, to love our neighbor but produces this love in us and pours it into our hearts and our actions.

Others bear God’s own image and likeness! Just as we are God’s image and just as we love ourselves in seeing that in us, so we love others in the same way. If we are the image of God we must love a God does—so we love one another as we are loved. Our love itself then becomes an image of God’s divine and heavenly love, for us and for all. This is what we experience now, and all the more marvelously the more fully we experience God’s love.

Monday

THE SIGHT THAT REQUIRES PURITY OF HEART

A reflection based on a homily by St. Augustine

“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God”. The goal of love and its fulfillment is seeing God. It is our “end”, as we say, but not the kind of end that is reached when something is used up; it is the kind that brings things to perfection. Food is destroyed when it has been finished by being eaten; a garment is finished, however, when nothing remains to be added to make it perfect. Now apply this distinction to yourself.

Whatever we do, whatever good deeds we perform, whatever we strive for, and whatever praiseworthy objective we long for, all of these efforts will end in their perfection—if they end in what we call the “vision of God”. What is left to long for or seek when one has God? What will be enough if God is not enough? We want to see God, we strive with all our might to see God, but who doesn’t?

Scripture says to us: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”!* What do you need in order to see God? What good would it do one to long to see a sunset if that person were blind? What good does it do if one has damaged sight? If one’s eyes aren’t healthy one can’t enjoy a sunset because the light may bring torment. That happens to those who try to see God with an impure heart.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!” Do you think this blessedness is due to good works, services, merits, and is a kind of reward? But Scripture says otherwise: *“Blessed are the pure in heart for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* *“Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted.”* *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”* *“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”* None of these are said to “see God”. Only to the pure in heart is seeing God promised.

This is because it is the heart that has “eyes” capable of seeing God. To such eyes, the apostle Paul refers when he talks about *“having the eyes of your heart enlightened”*. Eyes of this kind are enlightened by faith now; it is only hereafter that they will be enlightened by sight. *“As long as we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk now by faith and not by sight.”* When we are in this state of faith we are said, *“to see as in a mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face”*. What is it that makes the “eyes of the heart” able to receive the gracious gift of seeing God?

It is love. The pure of heart are those who love the Lord with all their lives and strength and heart. How are we made able to love God so totally? We are changed little by little as we “see” God in others and respond to them with a love like the love of our Lord Jesus. The eyes of your heart are opened first by the faith that Christ is in all whom God has chosen to become “God’s own”. We learn to see this as our faith grows strong. But we don’t only see it; we respond by loving others as we want to love Our Lord. Then our eyes begin to become strong enough to see God. It is the ability to see God in others and love God in others that makes our heart’s eyes able to see God. That’s what God’s holy ones, God’s saints have learned to do. That is why we celebrate their holiness and seek to follow them.

Tuesday

HOW DO YOU IMAGINE THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED? **A reflection excerpted from a text by St. Catherine of Genoa**

There is no complete joy save in paradise. There is no joy to be compared to that of a soul in purification except that of those in paradise. As the rust of sin is consumed one becomes more and more open to God's love. Just as a covered object left out in the sun can't for all that be penetrated deeply by the sun's light so it isn't just that surface defects, our sins, need to be removed. Having opened oneself to being made wholly one with God's will, one lets go of all sin. Only then can one open oneself fully to God. To the extent that God gives this gift one "sees into" God.

Joy in God, oneness with God, is the end of every human person. Seeking this is an instinct implanted in us at our creation. We want to respond fully to the love of God and what we say about God and what it is like to open oneself fully is nothing in comparison with reality. When God finds one pure, as one was first created, then God tugs at us with a kind of glance. This draws and binds one to God with a love that is like pure fire. In that love, God so transforms us that we know nothing but God. And God doesn't stop until we are brought to our perfection!

This is why one seeks to cast off all that gets in the way of being lifted up and brought close to God. Such obstacles are what cause suffering in one who is seeking only to be wholly God's. I don't think that those who have died and are with God but in a state of being purified dwell on their sufferings. They dwell rather on the resistances they find in themselves to abandoning self to God's will. Against a pure love bent on nothing but being one with God one runs into various obstacles. I imagine it as though a bolt of lightning darted from God's love to the person involved and it seems so intense and fiery as to seem to annihilate the one it strikes. Yet it makes one like wholly purified gold. The heat of love purifies one by burning away all that gets in its way.

The last stage of love is that which does its work with any human doing. Which of us is aware of the many flaws hidden in us? If we knew perhaps we would despair. But all these are burned away in us by God. God shows us our weaknesses and does this in a way that shows us how God works within us in ways we can't achieve of ourselves. If we are to come to our perfection many things must change but we can't make the changes. So God does. It is the pure and intense love of God that does this. The overwhelming love of God gives one joy beyond words. Purification is a process of great joy that is also great suffering. They two don't exclude one another.

We have all experienced something like this in ourselves. We have seen that happening in those we love and with whom we sense ourselves united by prayer. Perhaps this gives us pain. Perhaps the pain is part of our purification, just as it is theirs. What response can be more fitting than one that brings a joy that is inseparable from suffering. Both feelings draw us mysteriously closer to our God and open our eyes to see God as God really is.

Wednesday

SEEING OURSELVES AS SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

A reflection developed from a text by Joseph Iraburu

What most people remembered about Martin de Porres was humility. He was mulato (a “black” in U.S. categories) and so despised and often insulted, even by other Dominicans. When angry they called him “mulato dog” or “mulato trash”. A combination of racism and anti-Semitism was dominant in the culture of his place and time. But he insisted on re-interpreting insults so as to focus attention on the truth that we are nothing apart from God and of ourselves can do nothing good. We depend wholly on God’s grace. This transformed untruths into truths. It was a matter of viewing everything in terms of our relationship with God in Christ. He simply refocused attention and so corrected the insults without saying them out loud.

He had only two years of formal education but had been apprenticed to a “barber”, not only shaving people (as Martin shaved the tonsures of the roughly 300 Dominicans living in his monastery) but caring for them when they were ill. He came to be in charge of the monastery infirmary where he used prayer as much as genuine concern and herbal remedies. He permeated all he did with prayer and a habit of seeing everything as a way of serving and loving God.

He himself was often sick, and probably suffered from malaria, but when sent to a country estate owned by his monastery, instead of resting he used the time to teach catechism and provide medical care to the poor who did the work of the estate. All this was filled with constant talk of God and of Jesus, teaching the practice of the presence of God. He had a firm grasp of principles. When accused of disobedience for bringing a homeless sick person into his cell to care for him he replied that he had not sinned because charity was the greatest commandment and more important than obedience.

Martin seemed not to do anything unless it had to do with God and the loving mercy God commands. He was always showing compassion and mercy to the poor, sacrificing himself to help them. He thought of himself as one of them and as undeserving of anything special. He turned everything he did or was given into an opportunity to help those who had nothing and could not help themselves. Thus he prayed continually, never ceased doing charity and showing mercy and compassion, and brought it about that what he said always revealed a way of seeing God’s presence in what he was doing or what was happening around him. In God’s grace, we can do the same.

Thursday

HOW DO YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE TO GOD?

A reflection from *Journeying with the Lord* by Carlo Cardinal Martini

What did St. Charles Borromeo do? He took risks. When he did that he gave his life to God. For example, at one time a plague was devouring the people of his city. He threw himself at this scourge, not isolating himself from the plague-stricken like a hired hand but like a good shepherd, he remained with his flock without fear of death.

This is a sample of a thousand other things that Charles Borromeo did as signs of his tireless gift of self to his people. Charles left no autobiography, no spiritual writings telling us his “secret”. He had no secret; his inner life and his prayer were visible to all in his gift of self.

As a witness to the intensity of his prayer, we have only a few pictures showing him in ecstasy or in tears while he venerated the crucifix. Apart from these, his swiftness in grasping the meaning of the Madonna’s tears he saw at the Shrine of Rho gives a confirmation of the faith he lived by.

St. Charles moved in an atmosphere of intense awareness not only of disasters like the plague but of all the wounds in the living flesh of his city and saw them as the same as the wound in the side of Christ. He was intensely aware of Christ’s suffering and Christ’s sorrows. God isn’t recognized as God, or loved, by people who are lazy as Christians and deaf to God’s Word.

If St. Charles lived his inner life in an inexhaustible capacity for praise and for sharing suffering, he was only living what the Psalmist says are the two basic aspects of human praying. It was probably his capacity for sharing suffering that primarily manifested itself exteriorly.

St. Charles was a person of prayer, of tears, and of penance. He understood this last not as something heroic but as a mysterious and even impassioned sharing in the sufferings of Christ himself. He saw this as a path by which Christ enters into the depths of the world’s sin and finds there the absurdity of refusing God. Christ lived this until his heart almost broke and his soul was torn open.

Today we celebrate one of the great witnesses who have penetrated to the very depths of the mystery of divine sharing in human suffering. Christ drank the last drops of this bitter cup and so was capable of understanding very lucidly his age and ours. This was true also of Charles. He understood the deep meaning of the events and history of his times, as we are called to do in our times. He understood and he loved. This is our call as well.

Friday

FILLING OURSELVES WITH CHRIST'S GOODNESS

A reflection from a homily by St. Augustine

Scripture has a great deal to say about the tongue. "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*" is perhaps the least of these sayings. The tongue, we are told, can be very dangerous: "*Many have fallen by the sword but even more because of the tongue*". The danger is one we ourselves create: "*They have taught their tongues to speak lies*". Who did the teaching? We do it ourselves! We so accustom ourselves to making sure we get what we want that we become used to telling lies—even when you didn't particularly plan to do it.

The tongue is like a wheel. Once you turn it and give it impetus and it goes on turning. It is the same with our tongues. Once we start them they seem to go on of their own accord and in the way that is easiest, to which they are most accustomed.

What are we going to do about this? If you want to use speech rightly you have to make a careful judgment before you open your mouth. Actually, the tongue doesn't wag of its own accord but there is a mind within us that is responsible for moving all our members. The thing is to make sure that the mind is filled with good thoughts and gives rise to good desires. We need the help of grace so that the mind, and heart, can overcome whatever bad habits we have developed.

A soldier has weapons but if he doesn't use them they don't do anything. The tongue is our soul's major weapon. Scripture calls it a "*restless evil*". But who makes it such? If you aren't restless yourself, then the tongue can't be evil. If a servant is good within, then all the services done will be good. The tongue is a bodily reality and of itself does nothing. It won't wag if you don't wag it.

Clearly, when we use our tongues we have to be very careful how we do so. When people are driven by greed they use the tongue to make shady deals. When they want to fool others they use the tongue to swear falsely. They get angry and use God's name, and Christ's name, blasphemously.

The lesson is clear. If your mind is filled with the knowledge of Jesus and how he did all things well then you won't use your tongue to help you do wrong things. Jesus spent his life healing and teaching and lifting people up from misery and sin. We have been given the blessing of a command to follow his example. "Love one another as I have loved you!" That's what he said to us when he taught us to celebrate Eucharist. If our minds are filled with that love then the tongue will be used as an instrument to love as Christ loved. Isn't that what we want him to see we have done when we come before him for judgment?

If your mind is filled with thoughts of love then your heart will long only to do deeds of love. In that case, the tongue will be an instrument of love, and so of grace and of God's goodness and salvation.

Saturday

WHAT LOVE DO WE LEARN FROM MARY, OUR MOTHER? **A reflection from a text by Fr. Karl Rahner**

God chose the Holy Virgin to be the mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. It is a fact that Mary is the Mother of God. The reflection of God's People only gradually gained more and more explicit awareness of the divine sonship of Our Lord. The same was true of our grasp of the unity of the Divine Person indwelling in Jesus Christ. Something very like this gradual development of explicit awareness happened concerning Mary's motherhood. This is a fact of history.

To this day Christians of all denominations confess their belief in the divine motherhood of Mary. Without this, there can't be any genuine Christianity, true faith in the coming of God in human flesh. If this is let go of—this oldest of the articles of faith concerning Mary—it is clear that only very little can be said about the mystery of the incarnation.

Mary, then, appears in Sacred History, like Abraham and other characters in the historical dialogue between God and our race. On the right decisions of these many, but especially on that of Mary, our salvation depended. We are built on those decisions as our foundation in faith.

We are told quite simply and plainly in Scripture: Look, there was a human person to whom an angel came with a mysterious message. This human person said, simply and unreservedly: Be it done unto me according to your word. Through these words that Mary spoke the Son of the Eternal Father came down to this earth, into our flesh, into our history, and into each of our lives.

God has taken to himself forever this world, in the flesh of the Son. All this happened because of Mary; i.e., it happened by the consent of her faith. She became the Mother of God and the Mother of the Incarnate Word. By her loving, trusting faith all this happened. Now notice that hers was not the only decision needed. Jesus had many ancestors. And Jesus has many children, through Mary. We are among them. What does God wish to achieve through the loving, trusting, consent of our faith? Perhaps that depends on how well we learn to love and trust and believe through the example of our mother, Mary.

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