

THIRTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

The SOLEMNITY OF SS PETER & PAUL

.....

Sun **The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
June 26 **KEEPING AWAKE IN QUEST OF HOLINESS**
A reflection from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Mon. **Monday of the 13th Week in Ordinary Time**
27 **IMITATING CHRIST IN LOVE & MERCY**
A reflection from a sermon by St. Cyprian of Carthage

Tues. **Memorial of St. Irenaeus, Bp & Martyr**
28 **BELIEVING IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION**
A reflection derived from Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

Wed. **The Solemnity of SS. Peter & Paul**
29 **LETTING GOD RAISE US ABOVE OURSELVES**
A reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

Thurs. **Thursday of the 13th Week in Ordinary Time**
30 **THE EXISTENTIAL CHRIST**
From In My Own Words by St. Mother Teresa

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Fri. **Memorial of St. Junipero Serra**
July 1 **PUTTING GOD FIRST IN ALL THINGS**
A reflection developed from the writings of St. Junipero Serra

Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
2 **MARY'S NEVER-ENDING THANKSGIVING**
Reflection developed from a sermon by St. John Chrysostom

Sunday

KEEPING AWAKE IN QUEST OF HOLINESS

A reflection from a sermon by Blessed Gueric of Igny

Jesus had set his face toward Jerusalem. You too have been chosen by Jesus to be one of his companions on the path he walks toward the Father and the Heavenly Kingdom. In circumstances like these, would you go aside and take a nap? Of course not! So why aren't we intent on our prayers. Why don't we stay wide awake and carry out all the duties that fall to us with fervor? The very morning of the unending day has dawned. You have glimpsed the serene and eternal light of Jesus returning to us from the dead; it has given everything a new brightness and gladness.

Listen, then, to the psalm: *"It is now time to wake up from sleep; the night is far along and day is very near!"* Keep awake so the morning light will revive you. It is none other than Christ who is revealing himself, as surely as the dawn does. If you are keeping watch for him you will relive yet again the mystery of his resurrection today! Don't you want to sing: *"The Lord is God and has given us light! This is the day the Lord has made, let's rejoice and be glad in it!"*?

The Lord holds, as though hidden in the hollow of his hands, a light which he wants to let shine on you! You are the Lord's friend and Jesus is telling you that this light is his to give and that you only need to get up and accept it. Will you act like a sluggard? Will you go on sleeping and being oblivious? Didn't you listen to the Scripture: *"A little sleep, a little napping, a little time to fold my hands in rest"*? Didn't you hear the warning this passage contains? Aren't you afraid that while you are asleep Christ will come, resplendent in life, and pass you by? You won't deserve even to see his back as he walks by.

Don't you realize it may be too late when you finally wake up? Do you want to spend the rest of your life lamenting your mistakes and trying to repent when the time for repenting is passed? Listen to three Scriptures. First, *"because we have wandered from the way of truth, the light of righteousness hasn't shown upon us nor have we found understanding"*, and second, *"but for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise"*, and finally *"the one who lives an upright life shall see the King in all his splendor"*. These refer to the happiness to come, but they also tell us what is granted to us for our consolation, even in this life.

Whether we're going to watch in prayer or will work with a will, let's get ourselves going and show a renewed and lively zeal and zest. After all, we have received a share in the Lord's resurrection! The chief sign of renewed life is vigorous and energetic action. If we die to the body and open our eyes to contemplation, we will show we have risen to a new life. We will be undeserving of this unless we grow in active love.

Life begins to return when prayer increases love. It reaches perfection when our understanding receives the light of contemplation. Strive to mount ever higher on the ladder of growth in holiness. That is how we finally come to resurrection. What more can we long for than that?

Monday

IMITATING CHRIST IN LOVE & MERCY

A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Cyprian of Carthage

What Christ did and taught is God's will. That means practicing humility in behavior, steadfastness in faith, modesty in words, justice in deeds, mercy in good works, and discipline in daily life. This means we are to become incapable of doing injury to another but capable of bearing injuries. It means rejoicing in the prosperity of a neighbor as though it were our own, thinking of another's loss as our own, and believing another's gain is our own. It is to love even friends for God's sake and not simply for their own. It means putting up with enemies, and even loving them. We are to do nothing to another that we would not want to befall us and not to refuse to another anything that you could rightly want to have given to you.

Are we ready to help a neighbor in time of trouble and not only according to our means but even beyond our means? Do we keep peace with our brothers and sisters? To do such things is to love God and to do them wholeheartedly is to love God with all our heart. We love God as our Heavenly Father and we fear him as our Lord. We put nothing before Christ, because he has never put anything before us. Yes, all who love the name of the Lord will be glorified. We can accept being unhappy now, confident that we will be happy hereafter.

We will only be following the Lord Jesus if we behave in this way. Those who say they believe in Christ must live in the same way he did. The Son of God didn't come to reign but to serve. He became poor to make us rich; he accepted blows for our sake; he showed us how to feel no loss when we are scourged. It is a matter of imitating Christ. That is what a Christian is. A Christian is holy, innocent, undefiled and chaste. There is no place in the heart of a Christian for malice, but only for devotion and goodness.

A Christian is one who imitates the lifestyle of Christ. Christians are merciful to all and ignorant of injustice. Christians forbid that the poor be disparaged and help the unfortunate. Christians mourn with those who mourn, feel the pain of others as though it were their own, and are moved to tears by the tears of others. All are welcome at a Christian's table. Everyone knows Christians are genuinely good.

Are you, then, a Christian? Then you are seeking to serve God diligently day and night. Your soul is sincere and without stain. Your conscience is faithful and pure. Your mind is wholly focused on God. You devalue worldly possession precisely so you may acquire heavenly ones. If you are this kind of person then you know joy and peace of heart. God would give you every gift. Open your life to God and to God's gifts.

Tuesday

BELIEVING IN THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

A reflection derived from Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

We are Christ's members and we are nourished by God's creation. It is God's gift to us. The one who causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall has given us these things. God has also declared that the chalice we share, which comes from creation, contains Christ's blood and that this makes it the nourishment of our body. God affirms that the bread, which comes from his creation, is Christ's body, and that it is the nourishment of our bodies. When the chalice we mix and the bread we bake receive the word of God these created realities become the body and blood of Christ by which we live and grow.

So how could it be said that flesh which belongs to the Lord's own body and was nourished by his personal body and blood is incapable of receiving God's gift of eternal life? St. Paul speaks of this in his Letter to the Ephesians. He says we are members of Christ's Body and that this means we share in Christ's flesh and bones. Nor is Paul speaking of some spiritual and incorporeal kind of Christ. After all, spirits don't have flesh and bones. Paul is speaking of a real human body composed of flesh, sinews, and bones that is nourished by the chalice of Christ's blood and receives growth from the bread which is Christ's body.

A slip of a vine, planted in good ground, bears fruit at the proper time and after it has grown. A grain of wheat that has fallen into the ground, and seems to decay, nevertheless is raised up again and multiplied. This is accomplished by the Spirit of God. The Spirit sustains all things. The wisdom of God places these realities at our service. When they receive God's word they become our Eucharist. It is the body and blood of Christ. In the same way, our bodies, which have been nourished by the Eucharist, will be buried in the earth and will decay but will then rise again at the appointed time.

If one claims that our flesh is not saved, then such a one claims that the Lord has not redeemed us with his blood and that the Eucharistic chalice doesn't make us sharers in Christ's own body. There can be no blood without veins, flesh, and the rest of a human being. The Word of God actually became a human. Then with his own blood, he redeemed us. As St. Paul says, "*In him, through his blood, we have been redeemed, and our sins have been forgiven*". The Word of God will raise us, and our human bodies, and share with us the glory of God the Heavenly Father. Then God will clothe our mortal nature in immortality. God will freely endow our corruptible nature with incorruptibility. God's power is shown most perfectly in weakness. Believe and be freed from anxiety and fear; enter into joy!

Wednesday

LETTING GOD RAISE US ABOVE OURSELVES

A reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

A glorious, solemn feast has dawned, that of the martyrs and foremost of martyrs, made sacred by their deaths, Peter and Paul. They are two great lamps that God has set up in his Church like two wondrous eyes in Christ's Body. They are given us as teachers to whom we can safely commit ourselves. They show us the path to life and bring us to that one Mediator who has made peace between heaven and earth by his blood and who "*committed no sin, nor was guile in his mouth*". But how, then, can I possibly approach Jesus? He is the purest one and I am so sinful! For this very reason, God gave me two great sinners. If I feel I am the greatest of sinners, yet I think I may be able to approach two who were themselves such great sinners and still found grace with God.

Perhaps they learned from the forgiveness they received how to forgive others as well as forgive themselves. They were great sinners and didn't forget their sins because they were so readily forgiven. They constantly proclaim themselves sinners and never minimize their sinfulness. Perhaps there is no sin greater than Peter's, and Paul certainly thought himself the greatest of sinners. They teach us how much in need we are of forgiveness, and what great things

God's love can do with repentant sinners. Notice that Peter's sin didn't take away his call to lead others to Christ and even to call the other apostles to unity in Christ. Paul was forgiven for the sin he committed perhaps out of pride and all the learning he was so proud of became a reason to turn from reliance on himself to reliance on God and on Jesus Christ. He had been a violent person and worked horrible deeds of violence on innocent people simply because they believed in Jesus as the Messiah and were made a chosen vessel, leading others to that very faith.

It was only fitting that such people should be appointed as pastors for others and taught how to be mild and gentle pastors as well. They were strong to defend and protect but they were gentle in receiving and forgiving those who turned to God. They both understood the great tragedy of those who have sinned but can't accept the grace of forgiving themselves.

Peter and Paul are our masters. They learned the paths of life from the Master of all. They teach us still. What have they most especially taught us? It wasn't the skill of catching fish or making tents. It wasn't skill in reading learned writers or thinking subtly. They certainly didn't teach us to go on and on learning but never coming to the truth. What they taught us and still teach us was how to live. Is that a minor matter? It is perhaps the greatest matter of all. A person swollen with pride doesn't really live. One who is infested with such disorders simply disfigures self rather than living.

One lives well who lives in an orderly, friendly and humble way. One lives always paying heed to one's ways. One guards oneself against sinning and giving scandal. One strives to love and be loved and to show oneself gentle and friendly, to endure and to help. I thank you, Lord Jesus who has revealed these things to little children and to sinners. Let us ever follow you and leave everything for your sake.

Thursday

THE EXISTENTIAL CHRIST **from In My Own Words by St. Mother Teresa**

It is very possible that you will find human beings, surely very near you, needing affection and love. Do not deny them these. Show them, above all, that you sincerely recognize that they are human beings, that they are important to you. Who is that someone? That person is Jesus himself: Jesus who is hidden under the guise of suffering.

Jesus continues to live his passion. He continues to fall, poor and hungry, just like he fell on the way to Calvary. Are we not at his side to offer to help him? Do we walk next to him to give him a piece of bread, our piece of bread, real bread, to help him get over his weakness?

When we are caring for the sick and the needy, we are touching the body of the suffering Christ. That touch helps us overcome the repugnance and the natural reaction that is in all of us. This is the eye of faith and of love, to see Christ in the sick and the poor and to serve him, sharing their suffering, sharing everything. By standing beside the suffering of the world, we share in the cross and death of Jesus and we arrive at life, the Resurrection.

If our sisters do not see the face of Jesus in the poor, our work is impossible. We want them to know that there are people who really love them, and even more that God loves them so much.

All my time belongs to others, because in dedicating myself with all my heart to the suffering, it is Jesus whom we serve in his disfigured face, for he himself has said "As often as you did it to one of the least of my sisters and brothers, you did it to me."

Our criterion for helping is not one's belief, but one's need. All are the body of Christ, all are Christ under the appearance of those in need of care and of love. They have a right to receive it.

All that we do then we do for Jesus, with Jesus and offered to Jesus. We are all called then: serve Jesus in our neighbor, serve him in the poor, care for him in the sick, comfort him in our brothers and sisters who suffer.

Friday

PUTTING GOD FIRST IN ALL THINGS

A reflection developed from the writings of St. Junipero Serra

Father Junipero Serra was wholeheartedly dedicated to seeking God and helping others do the same. At the age of 17, he joined a group of reformed Franciscans, dedicated to penance and fasting and living the Gospel as literally as they could manage. Born and raised in a family of peasant farmers, he was a brilliant student and earned a doctorate in theology. He held the Chair dedicated to teaching the theology of Duns Scotus in the university on his native island of Majorca.

In this period of Church history almost all orders required their members obedience to seek to understand their faith using the theological methods of a famous past member of their order or institute. For Franciscans that was Duns Scotus. Serra could have made a career of this. Perhaps he had an inkling that theology isn't faith or the Gospel itself. So he got permission to go to "New Spain" as a teacher at the new university at Mexico City and then got himself assigned as a missionary to a Native American community in Baja California. Except for a few years at Mexico City, he served always as a founder and administrator of missions to the Native Americans.

Serra was very hard on himself. He was compassionate to those who admitted the need to repent. He preached in a way designed to inspire very emotional repentance and turning to God. His age wrestled unsuccessfully with an inability to distinguish clearly between faith and culture, Church and national ways of being church, cultural customs and essential ways of expressing one's faith. He avoided these traps by insisting on the necessity of always keeping one's attention fixed on God and on imitation of Jesus.

He was a literalist about his Order's observances. He walked everywhere because riding was forbidden except to the ill and he travel without taking provisions because Jesus said to. He would only use medicines available to the poor—e.g., only letting a veterinarian treat a badly injured leg.

His unshakable focus on Jesus, caused him to oppose local Spanish authorities in California who treated Native Americans like Spanish peasants. He cared only about leading people to Jesus. That was why he founded nine missions on the California coast and brought in others to serve them. He found learning Native American languages very difficult and so left preaching to others. He served as a facilitator of the missionary work.

He sought to care for those who had not yet heard Christ's call. His success was modest—for instance, he had the faculty to confirm because there were no bishops in California and was able to confirm only about 5500 Native Americans during his missionary years. But he didn't let his work in supervising missions get in the way of prayer or personal efforts to conform his inner and outer life to Christ. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all else that is needful will be given you; that was the motto that guided him. When in doubt look to the Jesus of the Gospels and imitate him. We too can do this in every situation and every day.

Saturday

SHARING MARY'S NEVER-ENDING THANKSGIVING

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. John Chrysostom

The fact that a child was born of a Virgin is a great miracle. The evangelist, Luke, was amazed by everything that preceded and followed Jesus' birth and offered to all of us the Virgin Mary as a model and example to follow. After all, it was not simply the birth of our savior of which he spoke but his ministry and teaching of the Gospel and his passion and death and resurrection. What did all these mean to Mary? They were opportunities for continual thanksgiving. She didn't remain preoccupied with herself, much less with the trial and difficulties and suffering that she had to bear. She was wholly caught up in gratitude to God, as is shown in her Magnificat prayer.

Let's give thanks to God throughout our lives. That is what Mary calls us to do. How wrong it would be if we enjoyed God's blessings in deed and every day while making no return for such gifts. An offering of gratitude only increases the blessing we receive. God needs nothing from us, but we need everything from God. Our thanks only make us more worthy of the good things with which God showers us continually. The memory of these gifts and loving kindness deepens our love for God. That is what happened to Mary too.

What is the most awe-inspiring and life-giving thing we celebrate? It is called the Eucharist. It is the commemoration of all the many blessings as well as the culmination of the gifts of Divine Providence. It teaches us to give thanks always. Who was ever better aware of God's Providence than Mary? Who was more richly filled with the gifts of God's grace? Who had more reason to trust in God? Can we suffer anything that causes greater anguish than what Mary felt? But her every reaction was a continuation of the trust that she expressed in her surrender to God's word and will, and that brought about the Savior's conception. What have we to fear if she isn't to be afraid?

When the sacrifice of Christ is set before us, in words or in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we are called to give thanks for the entire world and its history. We give thanks for the old dispensation and for the new. We give thanks for all that was done before our times and all that will come later. We rejoice in all that God has done and made and, wonder of wonders, this sets us free from earth and turns us toward Heaven. *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of God's goodwill"*.

We see the fullness of what this means, however, because we are being set free to love more fully our fellow servants. We rejoice as much in their blessings and good fortune as in our own. Let's join with Mary in giving thanks, everlasting thanks, for all these gifts, large or small, given to us and to everyone!