

FOURTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

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- Sun. **The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
July 3 **LIVING IN THE JOY OF THE LORD**
 From Apostle & Apostolate by Fr. Lucien Cerfaux
- Mon. **Independence Day**
4 **LETTING GOD OPEN US TO LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS**
 A reflection developed from a mediation by Fr. A. DeMello
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 14th Week of Ordinary Time**
5 **REJOICING IN THE GIFTS GOD GIVES TO OTHERS**
 A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard
- Wed. **Wednesday of the 14th Week of Ordinary Time**
6 **BEARING THE BURDEN OF CHRIST'S WAY**
 A reflection adapted from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny
- Thurs. **Thursday of the 14th Week of Ordinary Time**
7 **EVANGELIZATION IS AN ART**
 From a Homily by Pope Francis
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri. **Memorial of Blessed Eugene III**
8 **TURNING OURSELVES TOWARD GOD**
 A reflection developed from a Scripture commentary
 by Abbot Rupert of Deutz
- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
9 **ASPIRING AFTER THE HEIGHTS OF LOVE FOR GOD**
 A reflection developed from On The Love of God
 by St. Francis deSales

Sunday

LIVING IN THE JOY OF THE LORD

A reflection from Apostle & Apostolate by Fr. Lucien Cerfaux

“The Lord appointed another 72 and sent them out, ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he planned to visit. He told them: The harvest is rich but the laborers are few.” When the disciples had completed the task Jesus gave them, they reported, filled with excitement, that even the devils had fled before them! His response was that he had indeed seen the reign of Satan crumbling but that they shouldn’t so much rejoice in this as in the fact that their names were written in Heaven. Those sent to bring the Good News to others first bring it to themselves. You can’t bring to others anything but what you have received. You benefit first, proclaiming to yourself first what you then proclaim to others.

An apostle of the Lord is chosen and saved because chosen to be an apostle; such a person is already established in Heaven. In the measure you share this mission worthily you are saved already. That God has called us to bring Good News to others is evidence that God has saved us. We can forget about our personal salvation and center our entire life on the one longing that God’s Kingdom be established fully. Our mission is to save as many as possible.

How does the Kingdom of God come? It is through work like that of those hired by a vineyard owner. He started in the early morning with a few but needed more. That’s why Jesus added 72 others to the 12. After Pentecost comes a great horde of workers into God’s vineyard—think of Peter and Paul and the whole history of the Church. God is calling people into the vineyard until the end of time. Our greatest joy is to be God’s hired hands. Many are unhappy because they don’t seem to have a task in life and search ceaselessly to find out what they are good at. They are terrified of being mediocre or useless. But not us!

There are many troubles in the world. Many of them are physical, and someday these may be overcome. Many are moral and some are deliberate denials of all ideals and the dreadful feeling that God is absent. But our job is not to wait for others to do something about all those problems, our task is to work for the Kingdom as though no one had ever done anything before us. Of course, in God’s Kingdom, you can never say nothing has yet been done, but the thing is to obey Jesus literally. Don’t stop for anything. He tells us not to stop to engage in elaborate greetings to those we meet along the way. Don’t listen to voices that would slow you down or fill you with doubts of the sort that weaken enthusiasm.

Are you worried that you haven’t fully accepted God’s grace, or have abused it? Are you concerned that you aren’t worthy of your call? Do you hesitate because you aren’t sure you’ll have the courage needed? Have you made lots of resolutions, and failed to carry through on them? Well, there is always time to begin again! Perhaps for half or more of a lifetime, we haven’t been faithful to the call. Maybe we only have five minutes of life left! Then it is for those five minutes that God chose you, for that one last moment. Rejoice! Your name is written in Heaven! Proclaim the Lord’s grace and love!

Monday

LETTING GOD OPEN US TO LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS

A reflection developed from a meditation by Fr. A. DeMello

God's Kingdom is love. What does it mean, fundamentally, to love? It means being practically sensitive to life, especially to persons; it means being sensitive to life and to all living things without exclusion. When the North American colonies rebelled against the English crown their accusation was that the king had refused to be sensitive to their concerns and to the things that would make their lives better or worse. Such exclusions harden a person so that sensitivity dies. Did you ever remove a piece of trash or a dangerous object from a road, even though it posed no danger to you personally? That is sensitivity to others and to their good. Have you ever gone to considerable trouble to help another, knowing that no recognition or benefit would ever come to you? In such acts and moments, love came to the surface signaling that it was there within and waiting to be released.

You don't have to struggle to possess this sort of love. It's already there within you. All you have to do is remove the blocks that you, or your past experience, have placed to deprive you of sensitivity. For the most part, these are of two kinds.

You become fixated on a certain belief about a person or place or situation and you can't be sensitive to reality as a consequence. You are like an airplane pilot who insists on planning a flight by last month's weather report. You have hardened your perceptions and become prejudiced. If you look at such convictions carefully you will see their defects and let them go.

The same thing can happen as a result of attachments. In this case, you find that something or someone gives you pleasure or contentment and you want to hang onto that feeling. You want more of the gratification. You think you won't really be happy otherwise. You are so tied up in the past that you can't go on. It's like being stuck on a few bars of a song so that you turn a tiny part of the music into the whole reality of the music. The symphony of life goes on but you stay clinging to just a few bars of the music. No one can love in that way, in such circumstances.

Both of these blocks make one insensitive to the fullness of life and its beauty. Trying to limit yourself to a fragment of God's world and its riches creates tensions and conflicts, just as in the case of the American Revolution. We mustn't let ourselves be trapped in the narrowness our ancestors rejected and rebelled against. We do that if we close ourselves off from others out of fear or attachment. God never does this, and never blesses our doing it. If we want to celebrate God's gifts of life and freedom and joy and creativity and love we have to let God destroy our inner blocks and attachments. That's why he calls us to celebrate the reality of our civic freedom and let it flower into genuine inner freedom in the love that is sensitive to all life and its riches.

Tuesday

REJOICING IN THE GIFTS GOD GIVES TO OTHERS

A reflection from a sermon by St. Bernard

You know that in a community of many it is impossible for all to be equally strong, either in body or in character. Our Rule advises us to bear weaknesses with patience and charity requires that we stoop down to each of those who are weak. Suppose another sees this happening and begins to envy the one who receives help or is given some exception to a requirement. The person who is envious ought to feel compassion for the one who is weak but thinks rather that the other has received special care and would like to experience it too.

Sometimes we think others are happy when we ought rather to count them unfortunate and vice versa. The person who is envious of the charity shown another is revealed by this reaction to be trapped in concerns for worldly affection and for being treated specially. He wants to feel special. This may even lead one to grumbling that another has received something denied to oneself. The result is that charity is lessened and people begin to compete with one another rather than support and help each other.

I am not saying this to you because I have anything against any one of you. What I consider necessary is that you be forewarned so that you can strengthen yourselves against what may weaken our mutual charity. There are many who are weak, or who are very sensitive and delicate. This may require special consideration to be shown to them; that can lead, as described, to a weakening of charity. We need to give thanks for the strength of one who can work especially hard, as we give thanks for those who can spend more hours in meditation and prayer, but do we give thanks for those who are weaker and can do fewer things and need more help in doing their work? Do we give thanks for the opportunities of showing charity by helping others?

What kind of people do we take as models for ourselves and try to imitate? Do we make ideals of persons who are strong only? I remember that a monk once took me aside in the speaking room only to fall at my feet and confess that he had reflected on the virtues of another monk and been overwhelmed by the fact that he counted thirty virtues in that other and they seemed wholly lacking in himself. Was he displaying great humility or only an attitude of holy rivalry? He was most mindful of higher things, but very much cast down by his weakness. Suppose you are able to fast more than another but the other surpasses you in patience. Shouldn't you give thanks for both gifts? Yes, you want to reflect on what you lack and pray to God that the lack may be corrected, but you have to give thanks both for your strength and your weakness. Both show dependence on the Lord and neither should fall into self-depreciation or jealousy. Indeed, we have a duty to vanquish evil with good, and to desire to realize all that is good more and more fully. We might wish for all to be equal, but end up desiring what proves destructive rather than good. Don't long for good like a miser longs for more money. It is not what we have that is most important but our dependence on God. What we give thanks for is God's great mercy toward each one of us. Could we receive more mercy than we do? Truly, we received such marvelous gifts and if others remind us of it daily, give thanks for that.

Wednesday

BEARING THE BURDEN OF CHRIST'S WAY

A reflection adapted from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Do you find the way of faith difficult? Recall Christ's words to his disciples calling them to eat his body and drink his blood, and then remember that many found these words too hard to bear. Christ turned to those who remained and asked: "Will you too leave me?" How will you respond to the rough and hard things of the life of discipleship? Will you imitate Simon Peter: "Lord, you have the words of eternal life! To whom else can we go?" If you do respond in this way why do you find weariness in Christ's teachings?

"O Lord, we pray, that you will grant abundantly to those who hope in you what seems hidden from us! Let us always hope in you, even if we are killed. Grant that I may hope even more if scourged, lashed, burned and killed! Only live in me, Lord!"

Blessed is the one who continues in the way of wisdom and with steadfast faith, and who bears trials patiently and with confidence, obedient unto death. Such a person knows that the labors of discipleship will heal the deepest wounds of sin and sorrow. But to achieve this wisdom we mustn't let anything lead us away from the exercises of wisdom. We must never stop praying—whether we pray the divine office or pray privately or pray in "divine reading". We must never turn away from the silence in which we find God no matter how hard such daily labor may seem. Then one must continue with Scripture. Without perseverance in study, how should the Scriptures open themselves to you? Then there is the work of our hands and the many times it seems unrewarding. But don't we realize that the consolation and satisfaction we seek are often reserved for the end of labor? Recall what Isaiah said: "In silence and in hope is our strength!"

Meditate on such things. Wait in silence for the salvation of the Lord. Let the waters of Siloe, as Scripture says, flow silently but inundate the dryness you experience. You will experience this not once but many times, if only your silence is the cultivation of holiness. Meditate and continue in this exercise so that your progress may be revealed to you. The Book of Wisdom says: "You have desired wisdom, keep holiness and God will give both to you".

What horrible thoughts rush in upon you? Fear God and examine carefully whatever thoughts want to enter your heart. You can only do this in the fear of God. Fear of the Lord runs away from evil, both in deed and in thought. It is ever aware of God's eternal eye—to whom the entire wheel of time, as well as its moving finger, is always present. One who at first is restrained by fear is afterward upheld by love and meditates on holiness and so finds rest and delight in the embrace of wisdom. The outpouring of love casts out weariness and distress with an inpouring of gladness. God wishes to make us partakers of all these things, and even of his own nature. Look to the wisdom of God, to Jesus Christ who lives and reigns in love forever and ever.

Thursday

EVANGELIZATION IS AN ART

From a Homily by Pope Francis

Evangelization is an art and never “a walk in the park,” Pope Francis said during a morning Mass at the Casa Santa Marta. “Evangelization is witnessing to Christ with one’s whole life.”

There are some Christians today, who live their lives of service as though they were mere functionaries – priests and lay people who boast of what they do. This reduces the Gospel to a function or even a source of pride. Therefore, neither coast along, nor reduce the Gospel to rote work, nor to proselytize. This is what Paul says in the 1st Letter to the Corinthians (9:16-19, 22b-27): “For me, it is not a boast. For me, it is a necessity, one that is laid on me.” A Christian has an obligation, the force of which is such as to make it like a heartfelt necessity to carry the name of Jesus.”

And what, then, ought to be the “style” by which we evangelize? By “becoming all things to all people. Go and share in the lives of others: accompany them on their journey of faith, that they might grow in faith along their way.”

We must put ourselves in the other’s condition: not to get in others’ way, but to be on the way with them. During lunch with young people at the World Youth Day in Krakow, a boy what he should say to a close friend who was an atheist:

“It’s a good question. We all know people far from the Church: what should we tell them? I said: ‘Look, the last thing you need to do is say something! Begin to do, and he will see what you are doing and ask you about it; and when he asks you, then tell him. To evangelize is to give this testimony: I live the way I do because I believe in Jesus Christ; I awaken in you a curiosity, so you ask me, ‘But why are you doing these things?’ The answer: ‘Because I believe in Jesus Christ and preach Jesus Christ and not just with the Word’ – you must proclaim the Word – but with your life.”

This is to evangelize, he said, “and this is done free of charge,” because, “we have freely received the Gospel.” Grace, salvation, can be neither bought nor sold: it is free. “We have to give it for free.”

Look at St. Peter Claver: a missionary who went off to preach the Gospel. Perhaps, he thought his future would be devoted to preaching. The Lord, however, asked him to be close to those, who had been ‘discarded’ at that time: the slaves, the black people who arrived there from Africa, to be sold.”

“This man did not stroll along saying he evangelized: he did not reduce evangelism to a rote task, and even to a proselytizing; he proclaimed Jesus Christ with his actions, speaking to the slaves, living with them, living like them – and there are many like him in the Church – many people who annihilate themselves to proclaim Jesus Christ – and all of us, brothers and sisters, have an obligation to evangelize – and that does not mean a knock on the neighbor’s door to say: ‘Christ is risen!’ – it is living the faith, talking about it with meekness, with love, with no desire to win an argument, but to give it away for free: giving away freely that, which God has given to me – that is what it means to evangelize.”

Friday

TURNING OURSELVES TOWARD GOD

A reflection developed from a Scripture commentary by Abbot Rupert of Deutz

“Israel, come back to the Lord, your God; you have fallen on your face in your sin!” This is not simply the word of Hosea, the prophet. It is Christ himself who speaks in this way. Christ, the goal of all achievement, who has been sent to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” and who began his preaching with the words: *“Repent! The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”*

Some may hear this and reply just as did those to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. *“What shall we do, brethren?”* was their question, and it should be ours. To all who are frightened by their own sin and who feel contrition and want forgiveness and help, we can reply using the words of Hosea. *“Take words with you! Return to the Lord and say to him: Take away all our iniquity, accept what is good, and let us offer the fruit of our lips.”* But how can words be enough?

Why should we go to the Lord with words rather than with gifts, especially the gift of good deeds? First, we are to confess that God is not one to make things difficult for us. God doesn’t require things you might find hard to come by. So we aren’t told to take gold or silver or goats and calves or things of these sorts. But mere words seem to cost us nothing! They are words of confession and supplication and all that is required is that you take these for in God’s eyes they will suffice—supposing, of course, that they come from the heart, the whole heart.

So provided with these words of the heart, of the depths of the heart, return to the Lord God. God has no need for goods. All God wants is that we sincerely ask that our iniquity be taken away and that what is good in us be accepted. You can’t say, “I have no iniquity”. That would be a lie. If you said that you would be deceiving yourself. Our sins are many but ask with confidence that God accepts what is good and we will offer our praise and love—what was called the “fruit of our lips”. God has no need for the blood of animals. God asks only our love expressed in praise and gratitude. We are to offer a “sacrifice of praise”, as Scripture calls it. Why does this please God? Because it is the evidence of goodwill. What is that? It is the love of what is good just because it is good; it is perfectly free love. Share the good God has placed within your heart, and give what you share in perfectly free love and praise of God. That is all God asks.

Saturday

ASPIRING AFTER THE HEIGHTS OF LOVE FOR GOD

Reflections developed from On the Love of God by St. Francis deSales

How do you imagine Mary's love for God? Think, for instance, of her sleep. How would you imagine sleep being a way of loving God? Did Mary give rest to her body except that she might regain strength to serve God better as a result? Doing that is assuredly a wonderful act of charity. As St. Augustine says, "Charity places upon us an obligation to love our bodies properly". They are necessary for doing good works for God. Indeed, Christians must love their bodies as living images of the incarnate savior, as though they had been raised with Jesus from the same stock and belonging to him by blood as well as free choice. Above all, this holds if we have renewed our alliance with Him by the real reception of the divine body of our Redeemer in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

What devotion Mary must have shown in loving her own body, not only because of its humble goodness but because it was the living source of our Savior's body and belonged to him in the strictest sense with such marvelous closeness. She might have said to herself as she went to bed: "Take your rest now, ark of the covenant and vessel of sanctity in which God finds a throne".

And think of the dreams she might have had! Did she dream that she still held you, our Savior, in her womb, as she actually had for nine months? Did she dream that Jesus was nursing at her breast? Did she dream he was sleeping on her breast as he once had? In saying this we notice that sleep can be a kind of ecstasy. It needn't be filled with evil imaginings. Perhaps like Joseph of old Mary dreamed of the future joy and greatness of heaven. Perhaps she saw herself clothed with the sun and having the moon under her feet, as Scripture pictures her. Perhaps she dreamed herself totally encompassed by her Son's glory and crowned with the life that belongs to God's saints. Or perhaps like Jacob, she saw the progress and the fruit of the redemption brought about by her Son.

How can anyone picture the immense wonders and delights of Heaven? Could Mary have dreamed of conversations she would have with that dear child of hers in glory? Perhaps she dreamed as Solomon did when the Lord came to ask him what he sought. Solomon made such a marvelous declaration that he seemed to speak as though awake. Perhaps her heart was watchful in just this way as she slept. Perhaps she was simply "awake to Christ", rather as St. John the Baptist was when Mary brought Jesus to him and Elizabeth and he leaped for joy. We can't know what she dreamed nor can we limit what God can do for those He loves and chooses.

I like to think of the heart of the Virgin as though it were made of asbestos. It was perpetually on fire with the love of God and yet was never burnt up, so to speak, or damaged. The sacred flames of Divine Love need never perish nor go out, and they only make hearts more perfect because they burn within. We can imagine ourselves loving our God and our Savior as Mary loved. We long to be beloved of God just as she was, and we long to use all that we are and have in loving our God, as we may believe Mary did. To think of her is to think only of ways in which we too may love our God with all our heart.