

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Solemnity of Saint Benedict

- Sun. **The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
July 10 **WHY DO WE ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD'S COMMANDS?**
A reflection from The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Mon. **Solemnity, Saint Benedict**
11 **ST. BENEDICT AND HIS RULE**
Fr. Michael Casey OCSO
- Tues. **Tuesday of the 15th Week in Ordinary Time**
12 **WHY NOT BELIEVE AND LIVE IN JESUS?**
From Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini
- Wed. **Wednesday of the 15th Week in Ordinary Time**
13 **YOU ARE MY BELOVED, A COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 11:25**
By Abhishiktananda, a French Benedictine Monk in India
- Thurs. **Memorial, St. Kateri Tekakwitha**
14 **SAINT KATERI TEKAKWITHA**
- Fri. **Memorial, St. Bonaventure**
15 **THE JOURNEY OF THE MIND TO GOD**
By St. Bonaventure
- Sat. **Memorial, Our Lady of Mount Carmel**
16 **THE STORY OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL**

Sunday

WHY DO WE ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD'S COMMANDS?

A reflection from The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

There was a lawyer who stood up and to disconcert Jesus asked him: Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus replied: What is written in the Law? What do you read there? This led to a question: Who is my neighbor? Think how often this question has been asked in good faith and out of ignorance. Couldn't any reasonable seeker after truth ask it? Yes, but that isn't the way the lawyer asked it. Jesus treats his question as a temptation from the devil; in fact, that is the point of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Why is this the sort of question people can keep on asking without ever getting a final answer? The reply to this question is that people too often entertain themselves by wrangling over words. How often that leads to disputes that only corrupt people's hearts and confuse their minds! Such disputes lead to envy, strife, bad-mouthing others, and even attributing bad motives where there were none. It is the kind of question one can forever learn about without ever coming to know the truth. It is a way of looking godly but without letting God's power into one's life. The real problem is simply that of obeying God's word.

Who is my neighbor? Ask rather, when you meet people in real need who is the neighbor? It is the person who can help. It's not a matter of who is one's kin or compatriot or brother or sister in Christ, or even who is one's enemy. Each of these answers can be true or can be false. God has said we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to obey. If you stop to ask questions about who qualifies as your neighbor you make an excuse for your non-obedience. The question is easily an act of rebellion against God's command.

I want to do God's will. Hasn't God given me enough information to start doing it? The real question we are asking is: What should I do? God has told you what to do. Someone is right there with you and needs your help. Isn't that true of your next-door neighbor? You have as much reason to help the person next door, even those that person has no special title to claim your help, as you have to help any other person you encounter. Stopping to ask if that person has a special claim on you is throwing dust in your own eyes. That is what the lawyer did when he asked Jesus his question.

Didn't the lawyer know the commandments? Why would he hesitate to do what he was commanded? To ask what makes someone your neighbor amounts to an effort to excuse yourself from obeying. So get on with the job! It isn't a question of who is my neighbor but of whose neighbor am I? Neighborliness isn't a quality others have but one God commands me to show. Every moment of our lives is a challenge to obedience and action. If others are in need they have a claim on us. We must behave like a neighbor toward others. Do you have to pause and think out what to do? You have to do the good it is in your power to do. You learn how to obey by trying to obey in whatever circumstances you find yourself in.

Our consciences are distracted by sin. We are confronted by the call of Jesus to obey spontaneously. A rich young man came to Jesus and asked what to do to be perfect. He was called to discipleship. The lawyer came to tempt Jesus and was sent back to God's commandment. What is Jesus' response to you if you hesitate when he repeats God's command to you? What is the genuine cause of the hesitation that gets in the way of your obeying God's command?

Monday

ST. BENEDICT AND HIS RULE

Fr. Michael Casey OCSO

The Rule of St. Benedict is a rule-this is something we must never forget. It is concerned principally to outline the rudiments of a monastic way of life that is conducive to living in substantial fidelity to the Gospel. Benedict talks about ordinary things, food and drink, and clothing, about what the monks do at different seasons, how the liturgy is arranged, and the choreography of meals. He gives rules for governance and procedures for admitting newcomers to the community. There can be no doubt that this is a pragmatic document, designed to create an oasis of order and discipline in a century when Italian society was torn apart by serial wars and their consequences. The Rule is a how-to manual, on how to organize a community so that its members can realistically undertake the long journey of seeking and finding God.

The value, however, for the modern reader is less in its practical institutions than in the way these prescriptions embody beliefs and values that transcend the particular expressions that Benedict considered appropriate.

Benedict's Rule is a call to action. Just look at the Prologue and see the roll call of verbs directed to the reader "Listen...Fulfill...Labor...Fight...Rise up...Run...Do good... Seek...Pursue...Set out...Respond by deeds...Amend evil." It is clear that Benedict does not see the monastery as a pious country club in which the monks lounge around all day waiting to be sanctified. Rather, those who enter the monastery are turning their backs on an easygoing life and committing themselves to positive efforts to make possible their dream of spiritual advancement. Monastic life is like the humdrum daily activity of laboring in a workshop.

The first thing the monk is called to in the monastery is self-knowledge. We become aware of our unconscious resistance to the call of God, which expresses itself both at the level of thoughts and actions. Next comes the struggle against embedded tendencies, failing often, and learning to rely on the help of the grace of God than on our own desire for self-improvement. Our failures teach us to turn to God with a strong sense of urgency, recognizing that the only thing we can make of our lives is a mess and calling out to be saved.

In turning to St. Benedict and his Rule we enter the monastery and see it as a school of the Lord's service. Benedict is proposing to teach us to do what we have to do, and how to allow God to do what God has to do. It is an exciting and demanding challenge.

Tuesday

WHY NOT BELIEVE AND LIVE IN JESUS?

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Public opinion is generally favorable to the figure of Jesus. Everyone knows, at least vaguely, the nobility of his message, his preference for the poor and humble, the way his life matches his words, and this from the simplicity of the stable in Bethlehem to the drama of the cross. If you don't limit yourself to vague recollections of catechism classes but read and re-read the Gospels themselves, you meet an unforgettable person. He utters strong and profound words on some of life's most important problems, and beyond this, He reaches out to every man and woman in the world, from the greatest to the least. He does it with impressive authority, tenderness and clarity.

A careful reading of the Gospels, moreover, obliges us to go even further. Through many words and many incidents, Jesus openly allows us to grasp that special intensity with which he sees and lives his existence as one among others. And all this, we learn, flows from a profound relationship with God the Heavenly Father, who is his father in a very intimate way. More, he tells us this relationship can be ours as well.

Jesus said stupendous things about the love of his merciful and exacting Father in Heaven! Jesus proclaimed that he wanted nothing more intensely than to do what this Father wills. In the terrible moments of agony in Gethsemane Jesus asks the Father to give him the courage to give his all, his entire life, for the salvation of our race. Dying on the cross Jesus entrusted his life to the Heavenly Father and waited for the resurrection and the fullness of life and joy, but only as the Father might will to give all this to him.

Throughout his entire human life, Jesus revealed the mysterious unity existing between him and the Heavenly Father. Does this, and all the rest, provide us with good reasons to entrust ourselves to this honest, wise, and generous human being—rather in the way he entrusted himself to the Father in Heaven? He was able to heal the sick, and even to raise the dead!

Why shouldn't we believe that the totally human life Jesus who lived among us reveals the designs—the longings and projects—of God for all of us? Why should anyone hesitate to believe that God, in immense love, has come among us in Jesus and genuinely lived our life with us here on this earth?

Then why hesitate to believe that this God calls you to live forever with Him and the Risen Jesus? And if we believe it, why not live it day by day so that others may come to share that faith? Think of the kind of life Jesus lived. We can show that such a life is one every human person can live and that living in this way transforms us, personally, and transforms our world.

Wednesday

YOU ARE MY BELOVED, A COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW 11:25

**By Abhishiktananda, a French Benedictine Monk in India,
a pioneer in Hindu-Christian dialogue**

“Jesus exclaimed, “I bless you, Father Lord of Heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and insightful and revealing them to children.” Yes, Father, for this is what it pleases you to do. The Kingdom of Heaven is actually hidden from the wise of this world, even from many who declare themselves spiritual. Many are too rich to accept the constant giving of God, too intelligent to say simply “Yes, Father” and say it with the same joy which was in the heart of Christ in finding in everything the love of the Father.

For one who has faith, everything comes from the Heavenly Father and everything leads to the Heavenly Father. Health, sickness, wealth, poverty, success, and failure — all manifest the holy will of God. After all, was the Father showing less love to the Beloved Son when he was condemned and crucified than when he gave him to Mary to be caressed and fed by her?

It is a prayer—it is contemplation—to look at the sun, the stars, and the sky as faith reveals in them the presence and love of the Creator. Through them God prepared the earth to be humankind’s cradle as well as the place of incarnation. Isn’t it through the sun, in particular through its light and heat, that life is made possible here on earth? It is life for God’s children, and especially for the First-Born, the Lord Jesus who blessed the sun forever simply by his divine glance. There is nothing in the world whose impact on our senses should not blossom into prayer—when it is seen through the eyes of faith, the eyes of Christ, the one who knows everything in the Heavenly Father. One could say that through our senses God looks at creation and takes delight in it.

To pray without ceasing is not so much a matter of consciously thinking of God as one of allowing Jesus to live freely in us the life of God’s Son. It is to be attentive to the Heavenly Father who comes to us by any path he may choose. It is to hear in all creatures and every event the call which comes to us from the eternity of God. The “you” which the Heavenly Father addresses mysteriously to each of us is spoken within the “you” he speaks to the Beloved Son. God says to each of us “You are my beloved!” To pray is simply to answer with Christ in the Holy Spirit, “Abba!”. This is the love of our hearts and it can express itself in every act and moment of conscious living. This is our prayer. To love in this way is to pray always.

Thursday

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

The blood of martyrs is the seed of saints. Nine years after the Jesuits Isaac Jogues and Jean de Lelande, were tormented by warriors a baby girl was born near the place of their martyrdom, Auriesville, New York.

Her mother was a Christian Algonquin, taken captive by the Iroquois and given as a wife to the chief of the Mohawk clan. When she was four, she lost her parents and little brother in a smallpox epidemic that left her disfigured and half-blind. She was adopted by her uncle, who succeeded her father as chief. He hated the coming of the Blackrobes - Jesuit missionaries - but could do nothing to them because a peace treaty with the French required their presence in the villages with Christian captives. She was moved by the words of three Blackrobes who lodged with her uncle, but fear of him kept her from seeking instruction. She refused to marry a Mohawk brave, and at the age of nineteen finally got the courage to take the step of converting. She was baptized with the name Kateri, Catherine, on Easter Sunday.

Now she would be treated as a slave. Because she would not work on Sunday, Kateri received no food on that day. Her life in grace grew rapidly. She told a missionary that she often meditated on the great dignity of being baptized. She was powerfully moved by the love of God for human beings and saw the dignity in each of her people.

She was always in danger, for her conversion and holy life created great opposition. On the advice of a priest, Kateri stole away one night and began a 200-mile walking journey to a Christian Indian village at Sault St. Louis, near Montreal.

For three years she grew in holiness under the direction of a priest and an older Iroquois woman, giving herself totally to God in long hours of prayer. At 23, she took a vow of virginity, an unprecedented act for an Indian woman whose future depended on being married. She found a place in the woods where she could pray for an hour a day and was accused of meeting a man there!

Going to Montreal she and 2 friends tried to start a community, but the local priest dissuaded her. She humbly accepted an "ordinary" life. Kateri died on the afternoon of Holy Thursday and witnesses said her emaciated face changed color and became the face of a healthy child. She was beatified in 1980 and canonized in 2012. St John Paul 2 made her a patron of World Youth Day. He called her "the best-known witness of Christian holiness among the native people of North America."

Friday

THE JOURNEY OF THE MIND TO GOD

By St. Bonaventure

Christ is both the way and the door. Christ is the staircase and the one who carries us up it. He is like the throne of mercy over the Ark of the Covenant, a mystery hidden through the ages. One should turn one's full attention to this throne of mercy; one should gaze at Him hanging on the cross, one should be filled with faith, hope and charity, devoted and full of wonder and joy, marked by gratefulness and open to praise and jubilation. Such a person will make with Christ a "pasch"; i.e., a passing-over. By means of the branches of the cross, one will pass over the Red Sea, leaving Egypt and entering the desert. There, one will taste the hidden manna and rest with Christ as in the tomb, as if one were dead to things outside. One will experience as much as is possible for those who are still living on earth what was promised to the thief who hung beside Christ: "Today you will be with me in paradise!"

For this passing over to be perfect we must suspend all the operations of the mind and transform our highest affections, directing them to God alone. This is a sacred mystical experience. It cannot be comprehended by anyone unless one surrenders self to it. Nor can one surrender oneself to it unless one longs for it. Nor can one long for it unless the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sent into the world, should come and inflame one's innermost soul. Thus the Apostle says that this mystical wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit.

If you ask how such things can occur, seek the answer in God's grace rather than in doctrine. Seek it in the longing of the will and not in the understanding. Seek it in the sighs of prayer not in research. Seek the bridegroom, not the teacher. Seek God, and not human resources. Seek darkness, not daylight! And look not to the light but rather to the raging fire that carries the soul to God with intense fervor and glowing love. The fire is God, and the furnace is in Jerusalem—fired by Christ in the ardor of his loving passion. Only that one understood who said: "My soul chose hanging and my bones death". Anyone who cherishes this kind of death can see God. It is certainly true that "No one can look upon me and live".

Then let us die, and so enter into darkness, silencing our anxieties, our passions, and all our fantasies of the imagination. Let us pass over with the crucified Christ from this world to the Father, so that when the Father has shown himself to us we can say with Philip: "It is enough." May we hear with Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you". May we rejoice with David, saying "My flesh and my heart fail me, but God is the strength of my heart and my heritage forever". Blessed by the Lord forever! Let everyone say: Amen! Amen!

Saturday

THE STORY OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

Hermits lived on Mount Carmel near the fountain of Elijah in Northern Israel in the 12th century. They had a special chapel dedicated to our Lady. By the 13th century, they became known as “Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel”. They soon celebrated a special Mass and Office in honor of Mary. In 1726, it became a celebration of the universal Church under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. For centuries the Carmelites have seen themselves as specially related to Mary. Their great saints and theologians have promoted devotion to her and often championed the mystery of her Immaculate Conception.

Saint Teresa of Avila called Carmel “the Order of the Virgin”. Saint John of the Cross credited Mary with saving him from drowning as a child, thus leading him to Carmel, and helping him escape from prison. Saint Therese of the Child Jesus believed that Mary cured her of illness. On her First Communion day, Therese dedicated her life to Mary. During the last days of her life, she frequently spoke to Mary.

There is a tradition that Mary appeared to Saint Simon Stock, a leader of the Carmelites, and gave him a scapular, telling him to promote devotion to it. The scapular is a modified version of Mary’s own garment. It symbolizes her special protection and calls the wearers to consecrate themselves to her in a special way. The scapular reminds us of the Gospel call to prayer and penance—a call that Mary models in a splendid way.

The Carmelites were known from early on as “Brothers of our Lady of Mount Carmel”. The title suggests that they saw Mary as Mother and as a sister. The word “sister” is a reminder that Mary is very close to us. She is the daughter of God and therefore can help us to be authentic daughters and sons of God. She also helps us to grow in appreciation of being sisters and brothers to one another. She leads us to a new realization that all human beings belong to the family of God. When such a conviction grows, there is hope that the human race can find its way to peace.