

# **THE TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

---

- Sun. The Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Oct. 2 **PERFECT OUR IMPERFECT FAITH, LORD**  
A reflection from a sermon by St. Augustine
- Mon. Monday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
3 **ACCEPTING YOUR CALL TO OBEY**  
A reflection from The Call to Discipleship by D. Bonhoeffer
- Tues. Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi  
4 **THE CALL TO LIVE THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS**  
A Letter by St. Francis of Assisi
- Wed Wednesday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
5 **SURRENDERING TO GOD IN PRAYER**  
A reflection by St. Teresa of Avila
- Thurs. Memorial of St. Bruno  
6 **THE BEAUTY OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**  
From a letter by St. Bruno
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri. Memorial of our Lady of the Rosary  
7 **THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF PRAYING THE ROSARY**  
A reflection from a talk by St. Pope John XXIII
- Sat. Saturday of the 27<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time  
**HOW THE LORD TREATS SERVANTS**  
A reflection by Gunther Bornkamm

*Sunday*

## **PERFECT OUR IMPERFECT FAITH LORD**

### **A reflection from a sermon by St. Augustine**

Reading the Holy Gospels seriously and carefully nourishes prayer and prayer builds up faith and that disposes a person to trust and hope in the Lord rather than in oneself. Could we imagine a more powerful incentive to pray than this? Think, for instance, of the parable about the unjust judge. He was unprincipled and had neither fear of God nor regard for others. But a poor widow pestered him so constantly that he decided to grant her justice just to rid himself of her. Neither kindness nor concern for the right motivated the man but only self-interest.

If constant prayer can accomplish so much in the case of an odious person who won't listen carefully to anyone, what can it accomplish with God, who constantly invites us to pray and who is supremely good? A comparison of opposites, the Lord hopes will persuade us to pray frequently, even at all times. Listen to his words: "*We ought always to pray and never lose heart*". But what actually happens? Listen to these dark words: "*When the Son of Man comes, do you think he will find faith on the earth*"?

Where there is no faith there is no prayer. Who would pray to someone who isn't believed in? Who would pray for something if there is no one to answer the prayer? St. Paul recognized this: "*How can people call on the One in whom they don't believe?*" But if you do believe then you should trust your prayer will be answered superabundantly. St. Paul says it again: "*Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*"! Salvation is a response that goes beyond anything we can imagine.

So, then, we need to believe in order to pray, and we must ask God that the faith which enables us to pray will never fail. Faith gives rise to prayer, and prayer obtains an increase of faith; it is strengthened by prayer. It was to guard against our faith's failing in times of trial and temptation that the Lord said: "*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*".

Pause and ask yourself what it means to "enter into temptation". It means to turn your back on faith, We came to faith when we turned our face to God; that's what repentance is. In proportion to our turning away from God faith grows weaker and temptation is weakened as we turn our face toward God. When the Lord told his disciples to watch and pray he also said: "*This night Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat, Peter; but I have prayed for you so that your faith may not fail!*" It wouldn't make sense for the protector to pray and the one needing the protection not pray!

We know from Scripture, however, that there are different sorts of faith. There is, for instance, such a thing as "perfect faith". It is rarely found on earth. If faith as tiny as a mustard seed could move a mountain who would fail to move them with "perfect faith"? God's church buildings are full of people and no one could come to church if faith weren't existent. But if they had "perfect faith" who wouldn't be out moving mountains? The same is true of the apostles. They wouldn't have left everything to follow Jesus if they had no faith. Yet if they had "perfect faith" they wouldn't have asked him to increase their faith. That is what we need to pray for this very day. Use the faith you have to ask the Lord to perfect your faith. See if he doesn't begin by giving you the faith to believe that he will answer your prayer!

*Monday*

## **ACCEPTING YOUR CALL TO OBEY**

### **A reflection from The Call to Discipleship by D. Bonhoeffer**

Who is my neighbor? How many have asked this question in good faith and in ignorance? One who earnestly seeks the truth could reasonably ask it, but that is not how the scribe asked it. Jesus treats the question as a temptation of the devil, and this, in fact, is the point of the entire parable of the Good Samaritan. It is the kind of question you can keep asking without ever getting a “definitive” answer. It is a question for wranglers, corrupt in mind and concerned with disputes about words which lead people to act out of envy and strife, to speak or act abusively toward others, and to theorize rather than obey God. It is the sort of question people ask when they are always learning but never find the truth; they never simply believe but keep asking the same question because their consciences are seared, as though with a hot iron, by their refusal to obey the Word of God. Why do I say this?

Who is my neighbor? How do you answer that question? Is it my kin, my compatriot, my brother or sister Christian, or even my enemy? There is an element of truth and falsehood in each of these answers. That is because the questioning itself lands one in rebellion against the commandment of God. “Love your neighbor as yourself” is what God commands. Well, of course, I want to do God’s will, but God hasn’t told me how to set about this and I need clear directions. The first question the scribe asked Jesus was, “What shall I do?” It was an attempt to throw dust in his own eyes, as Jesus’ answer shows. Don’t you know the commandments? Well, put them into practice! Stop asking questions and get on with the job. The question, “But who is my neighbor?” is the parting shot of despair or perhaps overconfidence.

The answer is, “You are the neighbor!” Go and obey God by loving others as neighbors. Neighborliness is not a quality in other people but a claim on yourself. Every moment and every situation challenges you to act and obey out of a kind of neighborliness. You have literally no need to sit down and ask yourself whether so and so is really your neighbor. You are a neighbor and must act like it. You obey by behaving like what you are.

But perhaps this shocks you. Maybe you still think you ought to figure out beforehand just what you ought to do in each situation. To that, there is only one answer. You can only act and then think about it. You learn obedience and neighborliness by obeying God’s command. It is not a matter of asking questions but only of the obedience through which you come to know the truth about what you, as neighbor, should do.

We are confronted by the call of Jesus to spontaneous obedience. The rich young man was called to the grace of discipleship, but the scribe was simply sent back to Scripture and the commandment. You have accepted the call to discipleship and now must live out the commandment and learn from your efforts. You must treat everyone as your neighbor, as one you care for in a special way day by day. Doing that as best you can is obedience.

*Tuesday*

## **THE CALL TO LIVE THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS**

### **A Letter by St. Francis of Assisi**

To all Christians—to religious, to the ordained, to lay people both men and women—to all who dwell in the entire world, Brother Francis, their servant and subject, offers his respect and reverence, wishing all the true peace of Heaven and sincere charity in the Lord.

As the servant of all, I have an obligation to serve everyone and to communicate the consoling words of our Lord. Since I am unable to visit all due to the weakness and infirmity of my body, I want to make this letter my messenger and so repeat to you once again the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who himself is the Word of the Father. I want to do this using the very words of the Holy Spirit. They are spirit and life.

God Most High, the Father so holy and great and glorious, announced to the blessed and glorious Virgin Mary the coming of the Word through the Archangel Gabriel. In her womb, the Son received the true flesh of our humanity and of our frailty. Rich beyond all others, He was willing to choose poverty along with his ever-blessed Mother.

When his passion was drawing near, he celebrated the Passover with his disciples. Invoking His Father, he uttered this prayer: “My father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me”. “And his sweat becomes as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.” But he resigned his will to the will of the Father, saying: “Father, your will be done; not as I will but as You will.” Now this will of the Father was that his blessed and glorious Son, whom he sent to be born among us and for us should offer Himself with his own Blood as sacrifice and victim on the altar of the Cross. He didn’t do this for Himself, by whom all things were made, but for our sins. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

He wishes us all to be saved by Him. He wishes that we should receive him with a pure heart and chaste body. Alas, there are very few who receive Him and wish to be saved by Him, although his yoke is sweet and his burden light.” Those who refuse to taste how sweet the Lord is, and prefer darkness to light, not wishing to fulfill the commandments of God, are cursed. It is of such that the Prophet says: “They are cursed who turn away from your commandments.”

By contrast, how happy and blessed are they who love the Lord and serve Him, as the Lord Jesus himself says in the Gospel: “Love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart and with your whole soul”, and “your neighbor as yourself”. Let us love God and worship Him with a pure heart and mind, offering our prayers of praise day and night. And may the Spirit of the Lord rest on all who shall act thus and persevere to the end. Amen!

*Wednesday*

## **SURRENDERING TO GOD IN PRAYER**

### **A reflection by St. Teresa of Avila**

“Once Jesus was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished one of his disciples said: Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.” In response, the Lord taught us to pray, “Your will be done”. We can easily enough promise to give up our own will, but when it comes to the test we find it the most difficult thing in the world, let alone when we try to do it perfectly. Yet God knows what each of us is able to bear; when God finds a valiant soul God does not hesitate to accomplish his will in that person. I want to warn you and help you understand what God’s will is. As the saying goes, you need to realize who you are dealing with when you pray to God.

Think of what the good Jesus is offering on your behalf to the Heavenly Father. Then ask whether you know what you are asking for when you say, “Your will be done”? You ask that God’s will, and nothing else, be done in you. You needn’t be afraid that God will give you wealth or honor because God’s love for you is not so weak as that. God sets a far greater value on your gift. Would you like to see how he treats those who make this prayer without reserve? Look at his glorious Son and how he made the prayer to do God’s will in the Garden. God’s will in him was accomplished through trials, sufferings, insults, and persecution until his life ended on the cross.

You see what God gave to the one he loved best of all. This shows you what God’s will is. These things are his gifts in this world, and God gives them in proportion to his love. Fervent love can suffer a great deal for God’s sake. I myself believe that love is the gauge of the crosses we are able to bear. So if you have such love, think of what you are doing when you pray the Lord’s Prayer. Do not let the promises you make to so great a Lord be no more than empty compliments. Brace yourself to suffer whatever God wishes.

Any other way of surrendering our will to God is like offering someone a precious stone and then withdrawing your hand. Such mockery is not for the one who bore so much mockery for us. Let us give God once and for all the precious stone we have offered so many times. Actually, he gave us what we are now giving back.

My whole aim in writing this is to encourage you to yield your entire self to your creator, to submit your will to God’s, and to detach yourself from created things. Why does our good Master want us to make this prayer? Because in a very short time we shall find ourselves at our journey’s end. We shall find ourselves drinking at the fountain of living water.

*Thursday*

## **THE BEAUTY OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**

### **From a letter by St. Bruno**

I am living in a wilderness in Calabria, sufficiently distant from any center of human population. I am with my religious brethren, some of whom are very learned. We persevere in our holy life, waiting for the return of the Master, ready to open the door for him as soon as he knocks.

How can I speak adequately about this solitude? It is in a wide and pleasant plain between mountains, with verdant meadows and pasturelands adorned with flowers. There are gently rolling hills and shaded valleys where there are rivers and brooks and springs. There are watered gardens and many fruit trees.

But why am I giving so much time to pleasantries? For a wise person, there are other attractions, even more, pleasant and useful. Nevertheless, scenes like these are relaxation and diversion for fragile spirits wearied by a strict rule and attention to spiritual things. If a bow is stretched for too long it becomes unfit for its purpose.

Only those who have experienced the solitude and silence of the wilderness can know what benefit and divine joy they bring to those who love them. There the strong can be recollected as often as they wish, abide within themselves, carefully cultivate the seeds of virtue and be nourished by the fruits of paradise. There, one can try to come to a clear vision of the divine Spouse who has been wounded by love. This pure vision permits them to see God.

You should always be aware of Scripture's words: "If anyone loves the world and what is in the world—the concupiscence of the flesh, the covetousness of the eyes and of pride—the love of God is not in that one". "Whoever wishes to be a friend of this world becomes an enemy of God." Is there any worse folly and downfall of spirit, anything more hurtful or unfortunate, than to wish to be at war against the one whose power cannot be resisted? Are you stronger than God? If, for the moment, God's patient goodness moves us to repentance, will God not, at last, punish the offense of those who disregard his call?

My dear friend, what do you intend to do? What—if not believe in God's counsels? This is God's counsel to you: "Come to me, you who are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you!" Isn't it a burden to be tormented by concupiscence, under attack by the cares, anxieties, fears and sorrows that are the result of those desires? Then flee all this agitation and misery! Go from the storm of this world to the cove where there is tranquility and certain rest.

You know what Wisdom says: "If you do not renounce all your possessions you cannot be my disciple"! Is there anyone who cannot see how beautiful and useful and pleasant it is to dwell in God's school under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and there to learn the divine philosophy, which alone can confer true happiness?

Do not disregard this admonition from your friend. At least come on a devotional pilgrimage. Together we will talk about what concerns the good of both of us. You will not regret the difficulty involved in the journey. By the way, please send me the Life of St. Remi, because it is impossible to find a copy where we are.

*Friday*

## **THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF PRAYING THE ROSARY**

### **A reflection taken from a talk by St. Pope John XXIII**

The real substance of a well-prayed and well-meditated rosary is three-dimensional.

Its first dimension is contemplation. We strive as we pray to contemplate as clearly and purely and directly as we can one of God's Mysteries. These are truths of faith that speak to us of Christ's redeeming mission and of the Divine Love which sent him on it. When we contemplate we enter into a communion of thought and feeling and will with the teaching and life of Jesus. He is the Son of God and Son of Mary. That is the Mystery of the Incarnation. The Son of God lived on earth, in Jesus the Christ, redeeming, sanctifying, teaching, and living the same sort of life we do. He did this in a hidden life for some thirty years. Those years were all prayer and work, as ours can be. He suffered the Passion, he triumphed in the Resurrection, he Ascended into the Glory of Heaven. He sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father. He ever assists us by sending us the Holy Spirit. He gives life to the Church he founded. These are all Mysteries for us to contemplate because as we do that in prayer we will be drawn more and more into participation in those mysteries, according to the Heavenly Father's will and grace.

The second dimension of rosary prayer is reflection. This is what makes it possible for the fullness of the light that shines from the Divine Mysteries to enter into our minds and hearts. When you reflect carefully, you find in each of the mysteries you contemplate a teaching that is especially given to you. You hear a message for your sanctification that is adapted in a special way to the circumstances of your unique life. This is due to the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit which is always interceding for you from within the very depths of your individual soul. What comes from the Holy Spirit is grace, a special gift from God. We are told that even when we are not sure how to pray the Spirit is there "interceding for us with sighs too deep for words".

Each of the Divine Mysteries contains a word to strengthen you in your particular trials and joys. We need this help in order to confront our life in the way Jesus confronted his. We may find ourselves asking God whether a particular trial is really his will for us. If we hear God say that it is we can be sure that with that answer comes a grace to respond, just as it did to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Each time we reflect on a given mystery the Spirit will draw a new and richer lesson in grace and support from it.

That brings us to the third dimension of this prayer. It is what we call its intention. When we pray we pray for people, for institutions and for all sorts of good purposes. We pray for necessities and we pray for personal and social benefits and gifts. This is an integral part of our charity towards our neighbors. We allow God's grace to insert us in a great net that is drawing everyone out of this world and into God's kingdom. We are one of the knots that create this great web of Divine Love. The more deeply we enter into the prayer of the rosary, the more deeply we contemplate and the more richly we reflect, the broader becomes our love for all our brothers and sisters, and, indeed, for all that is the earth and that fills it. This means that the rosary prayer binds us more tightly and wonderfully into the Mystical Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints. It is by our intentions that we begin to share in all this. As our intentions are more and more suffused by charity they become like the very heart of Christ, itself perfectly one with the heart of the Heavenly Father. We celebrate all this today. Today our prayer helps us live the charity which makes us one with God and each other a little more deeply and fully.

*Saturday*

## **HOW THE LORD TREATS SERVANTS**

**A reflection by Gunther Bornkamm**

Jesus promises to those who do God's will a reward in the form of a Kingdom of Heaven. Innumerable sayings and parables contain this idea. They have to do with the status of human persons before God. God is Lord and we are God's "servants". In human terms, the relation of a servant, a slave, to a lord excludes the thought of a reward given for good service. A slave is the property of a human lord and master and belongs to this lord body and soul. There is no place for a reward or even a claim for one.

This perspective is summed up in one of Jesus' sayings: "*We are unworthy slaves, we have only done what was our duty*". A master is entitled to claim the entirety of a slave. Further, from the slave's perspective, the work assigned is not the slave's own any more than it lies with the slave to decide what service to render. The slave of a human being is required to be faithful in the face of the master's will, and without knowing what the master is trying to accomplish.

Our efforts to picture our relation to God are made even more complicated by the fact that the reward Jesus promises isn't a payment that is owed us but is the free gift of a distinction bestowed on trusted servants and indicating that an even greater trust is placed in them. Think of the parable of the servants who received talents when their master went on a journey. Jesus pictures the master saying to the servants who have gained much for him, "*I will place you over much! Enter into your Master's joy!*"

A servant who has done well isn't paid and sent away but is invited into a kind of special fellowship with his very master.

A wise and faithful servant of God is one who is "faithful". Faithfulness is shown in the way the servant has done an assigned task. In the parable, the servant managed the resources given in such a way as to increase the master's estate and its value. We know that this actually involves being faithful in showing love to the least of Jesus' brothers and sisters.

Being "faithful" means being constantly ready for action and, like the wise virgins, with one's torch alight. This torch casts the light of love and one is rather to help those in need than send them away to take care of their own needs. All the human comparisons between how we should think of our relation to God and of how ordinary servants think of their relation to their masters fail.

Listen to the Lord: "*I will gird myself and have them sit at table and serve them*". That is the way the Lord treats and will treat us. We are more friends than servants, and yet friendship doesn't describe exactly our relationship with our Lord and God. Our waiting is not for nothingness, for the end of everything. Our waiting is not for the silence of death. We wait for our Lord, one who has chosen us to be with him and done that personally. He will serve us even more than we serve him. What will it be like? It won't be like anything we have experienced. We simply must trust.