

THE THIRTY-SECOND WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Sun. The Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Nov. 6 **BELIEVING IN GOD'S PROMISES**

A reflection from a sermon by St. John Henry Newman

Mon. Monday of the 32nd Week in Ordinary Time

Nov. 7 **KEEPING ONE ANOTHER FAITHFUL TO THE WAY OF LOVE**

A fraternal correction of Peter the Venerable to St. Bernard

Tues. Memorial of the Dead

8 **THE RADIANT WITNESS OF OUR DEAD**

A reflection developed from a text by St. Pope John XXIII

Wed. THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA

9 **WHAT DOES THE CHURCH MEAN TO YOU?**

A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant

Thurs. Memorial of St. Pope Leo the Great

10 **HOW WE MUST CELEBRATE GOD'S GRACE**

A reflection taken from a homily by St. Pope Leo the Great

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Fri. Memorial of St. Martin of Tours

11 **FEARLESSNESS IN PUTTING CHRIST FIRST**

A reflection from The Life of St. Martin by Septimus Severus

Sat. Memorial of Our Lady

12 **MARY, QUEEN OF SAINTS, LEADS US TO SANCTITY**

A reflection by St. John Paul II

Sunday

BELIEVING IN GOD'S PROMISES

A reflection taken from a sermon by St. John Henry Newman

God spoke to Moses in the burning bush. In speaking God identified himself as "*the God of Abraham*". Christ tells us that this simple announcement contained the promise that Abraham should rise again from the dead. In truth, if we may say it with reverence, the all-wise and all-knowing God cannot speak without meaning multiple things all at once. God sees the end and the beginning; God understands the numberless connections and relations of all things with one another.

When God called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob God implied that those holy patriarchs were still alive, though they were no longer seen on earth. This may seem evident at first sight, though one may still ask whether the saying proves that their bodies would live; for if their souls were still living that would be enough to account for their being still called in the Book of Exodus servants of God.

We are apt to talk about our bodies as if we knew how or what they really are. Actually, we only know what our eyes tell us. Our bodies seem to grow, to come to maturity, to decay; but after all, we know no more about them than our senses tell us. We have no direct knowledge of what may be called the substantive existence of the body but only of what we call its accidents.

Again, we are apt to speak of soul and body, as if we could distinguish between them and knew much about them. But for the most part, we use these words without meaning. It is useful to make the distinction and scripture makes it. But after all, the Gospel speaks of our nature, in a religious sense, as one reality. The soul and body make up one human being. This being is born once but never dies. Philosophers of old times thought the soul indeed might live forever, but that the body perished at death. Yet Christ tells us otherwise.

Now, look at Christ's words much as you look at God the Father's words. He means many things, not all of them clear to us, when he seems to say only one thing. Whatever he says is fruitful in multiple meanings and refers to many things. It is well to keep this in mind when we read Scripture. Christ tells us that the body will live forever. In the text he seems to imply that it never really dies, that we lose sight indeed of what we are accustomed to seeing, but that God still sees the elements we are made of all together even if they aren't seen by our senses.

Our Blessed Lord seems to tell us that in some sense or other Abraham's body might be considered still alive, as a pledge of his resurrection perhaps. Though it was dead in the common sense in which we use this word, Abraham shall rise from the dead because in truth he is still alive. He cannot in the end be held under the power of the grave, any more than a sleeping person can be kept from waking. Abraham is still alive in the dust, though not risen from it yet. He is alive because all God's saints live to him, though they seem to perish.

God graciously called himself the "*God of Abraham*". He did not say the God of Abraham's soul but simply "*of Abraham*". He blessed Abraham, and he gave him eternal life—not only to his soul without the body but to Abraham as to an integral human being. We believe in God's word even if we don't know how to translate it into our ordinary ways of thinking and speaking. Believing is not the same as understanding or knowing how to explain what God has shown us. That is part of the darkness that surrounds our faith and leads us to trust in our God.

Monday

KEEPING ONE ANOTHER FAITHFUL TO THE WAY OF LOVE

A fraternal correction of Peter the Venerable to St. Bernard

I notice some belonging to the Cluniac and Cistercian sheepfolds have declared war. Those dwelling in the Lord's house have fallen from mutual love! Perhaps the cause is the diversity of observances, but to let this cause such a great evil is unreasonable, childish and foolish. If differences in practices draw Christ's servants from mutual love we do not bear one another's burdens. The law of Christ is love. There will never be a time without different practices in different churches or nations, and yet all must be one in faith and charity.

Perhaps it seems that diversity among churches is one thing and diversity among monks following the same Rule is another. But can't those who follow the Cluniac order come to the same Heavenly Jerusalem as those following the Cistercian order? Think of what St. Augustine says: "Have charity and then do as you like." Think of the writer of our Rule, or of the Holy Spirit its author. Benedict says: Let the abbot temper all things and so arrange them that souls are saved. The Master of all tells us to act with a "simple eye"—with purity of intention in all we do. As long as charity is preserved the abbot can do whatever saves souls and prevents murmuring. Can you fear different observances after hearing this?

You say you are the restorers of a dying Order and of lost religious observance, and we are tepid monks going blind, and so you distinguish yourselves by ways and usages, clothing and a manifestly new fervor. There you have it, the hidden cause offending charity and dividing minds and hearts and setting our houses against one another. The apostle Paul corrected another apostle; shouldn't one monk correct another? Let us all be disciples of Christ and avoid all opportunities for pride to lead us astray. Where charity is lacking humility is lacking and where humility is absent so is charity. I have striven always to commend you, brothers, to the charity of ours in all our gatherings. If humility fades then necessarily pride will take its place and no effort will protect charity where humility has departed. Pride brings envy and envy kills love. One who is envious can't love the one envied. We must preserve charity! It is what stores up treasures in Heaven.

It was out of excessive love, St. Paul tells us, that God sent the Only Son in the likeness of our sinful flesh. Such charity brings everlasting joy; it rejoices forever before our God and may that joy be yours. Let no one take it from you. When Christ comes we will be like God and we will be united to God forever by charity. I have written in reply to your letter and I assure you from the heart that I write only out of charity. You have been made a great supporting column for the Church and it remains for you to work to help eradicate this stain upon charity that has arisen between us. We have a great work to do together—restoring what is corrupt, reunifying what is divided and bringing all things together in charity. We have one faith, one baptism, one Lord, one Church and there remains for us a single everlasting and blessed life. Let us be of one heart and one mind.

Tuesday

THE RADIANT WITNESS OF OUR DEAD

A reflection developed from a text by St. Pope John XXIII

The Church is always called to bear witness to Jesus Christ. This is a call to help others become all that God would have them be for others, as well as for oneself. It is only in Christ that we discover ourselves fully and recognize what wonderful gifts God has given us. God has created us to become persons who will radiate the beauty and love he gives us continually.

Each Christian is called to share in this vocation of the Church. It is not a vocation that ends at death. Rather, it only begins to assume its true dimensions when one enters fully into the Kingdom of God. It is only then that we enter fully into the beauty and goodness that God wishes to share with each of us. Think of the flowering of the vocation of the Mother of God which began when Jesus gave her to us all on the Cross!

In the immense field of activities that opens before the Church, and all who are her members, all people are embraced. All are invited into God's redeeming and perfecting love. Do we want to persuade all to accept this message and the vocation that goes with it? If we do we have accepted a direction for our living and one which continues even beyond the grave.

You know how many gifts you received from your parents, and from your brothers and sisters, and from the many others who reached out to you over the years of your growth as your full humanity began to flower. These gifts have not ceased to form and enrich us. Their influence will continue as long as our life lasts! We have been created for everlasting life, so how long will these gifts continue to enrich us and shape our own sharing with others?

The Church doesn't claim that it daily brings about the sort of transformation that the apostles experienced after Christ's resurrection or on the day of Pentecost. But the Church doesn't deny that God continues to work such transformations in individuals, and does it through the love and kindness of every one of those Christ has called to redemption. This is what he has called our dead to do for us, not only before but after their deaths.

How long has it taken you to begin to appreciate the gift of life that you received so many years ago? Those who are with God in God's Kingdom are only now beginning to fully appreciate the wonderful things God means to do through them. That means we too have not yet fully appreciated or entered into the love and gentleness and kindness, and sternness, which have been part of our upbringing and our lives. Let us ask these friends who have gone before us to teach us more and more deeply the lessons our departed have given us. Let us ask God to fully open our hearts to the love of those who gave us life and taught us how to live it in Christ! What better way can we find to honor them and to work with them in loving and sharing Christ with others?

Wednesday

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH MEAN TO YOU?

A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant

Today we commemorate the dedication of the Lateran Basilica. It is the cathedral church of Rome, the official church of the pope, and so, in symbol, the “mother” of all the churches of the Church universal. The readings of the Eucharist are intended to remind us how important a church building and The Church have been for each of us.

Think of Ezekiel’s vision of water flowing from the Temple to bring life to the dead places of the Holy Land. Jesus has told us, in telling it to the woman he met at a well in Samaritan territory, that a spring of living water will spring up in each of us and give life to all that is dead or dying in us and our lives. Our church is every place where we received Christ’s life-giving water flowing forth, so we might never again thirst in a way that would lead us away from God. We turn our minds and memories to the special experiences of God’s presence which released that spring and made us the persons we are.

During Jesus’ lifetime, the Jerusalem Temple was the center of his People’s religious life. In it perpetual worship and turning to God enacted Israel’s covenant. Observant Jews traveled great distances to the “pilgrim feasts”, especially the Passover. Jesus wouldn’t allow that Temple to be used even to sell pilgrims what they needed for sacrifice. God’s temple should be a house of prayer and nothing more. In prayer, we receive God’s living water.

Think of the Church you knew as a child growing up in faith. Think of what you learned from the ways of worship you experienced during those years. What has happened to that Church and to those ways of worship? How have you had to change inwardly as a result of those changes? You probably no longer worship in that church, and where and how you now worship reflects the experiences of God that the passing years have brought you. The one thing that hasn’t changed is God’s call to let yourself be made into a place where people can taste love and mercy. That “place” isn’t just a building but a construct of living stones—a Christian community. It draws us ever more deeply into the gift of self that makes us God’s temples for others. It is “ours” precisely to the degree it is for others as well as us. The construction of this temple should never cease. Daily we labor with God to build a fitting and beautiful dwelling place for his spring of life-giving water.

Thursday

HOW WE MUST CELEBRATE GOD'S GRACE & GIFTS

A reflection taken from a homily by St. Pope Leo the Great

The sublimity of God's grace lies in this, that daily in our hearts all our longings are transferred from what is earthbound to what is heavenly. And yet it remains true that our present life is part of God's providence and bounty and is lived only with our Creator's help and care. It is one and the same Lord who gives us present blessings and who promises eternal life. There is a bond and a unity between what we do here and what we are invited to do forever with God. The mere fact that we are promised such a fulfillment of life carries us along. Hope gives speed and fervor to what we do, both for God and for one another. Clearly, we must honor and praise God for all the good things we are given through the fruitfulness with which he has endowed our earth.

Whatever benefits flow from the harvests are for the use and benefit of all. Everything flows to us from God's goodness. In his delicate way God helps the hesitant and the bold, God encourages the farmers and enables them to sustain us all. He does the like for everyone in whatever occupation they contribute to building up their community. The wind and rain, the cold and heat, day and night, all these serve our needs. If the Lord doesn't give growth by divine planting and watering human effort and forethought wouldn't be able to care for each and all. That is why it is so right and just that we help one another, and do it using the things our Heavenly Father mercifully bestows on us.

There are many who have no share in fields, vines, olive groves and much else. It is worth remembering the poverty of these people so that out of the plenty God gives those who have such goods the poor too may bless God. All are intended to rejoice at having been given a share of what God has given for the good of all. These things are the common good that God has designed for rich and poor, for pilgrims and for the sick so that all may have what they need and be satisfied.

God's justice arranges for those who labor under various disabilities to find what they need through the love and generosity of others. God blesses them through their patient and trusting hope, and blesses those who help them through their very kindness and mercy. God blesses all by their contribution to the common well-being, and for the way each helps build up a community of mutual love and concern.

The most effective way of praying for forgiveness is sharing. Almsgiving and fasting and prayer must be united. What we ask of God in these ways is certainly heard, especially if we ask only that all be blessed and come to the eternal joy and life God calls us and try to help this happen. As it is written: The merciful do good to themselves. Nothing does greater good than the good of sharing with neighbors in need. That transfers what was only earthly into heaven and makes it an eternal wealth. The merciful, as the Lord teaches, have mercy shown them by God. God is the highest of all rewards and God's gift of self is for those who give themselves as God does.

Friday

FEARLESSNESS IN PUTTING CHRIST FIRST

A reflection from The Life of St. Martin by Septimus Severus

The barbarians were making incursions into Gaul and the Caesar Julian concentrated his army at Worms. There he began to distribute a bonus to the soldiers. They were called up one by one in the usual way. When Martin's turn came he decided it would be a good time to apply for his discharge, for he didn't think it would be honest to take the bonus if he wasn't going to fight.

He said to Julian: *"I have been your soldier up to now. Let me now be God's soldier. Let someone who is going to fight have your bonus. I am Christ's soldier; I am not allowed to fight."* These words put Julian in a rage and he said that it was fear of the battle to be fought the next day that Martin wanted to quit the service, not from religious motives.

Martin was undaunted. In fact, he stood all the firmer because of this effort to frighten him. *"If it is put down to cowardice and not o faith, I will stand unarmed in the front of the battle line tomorrow and I will walk unharmed through the enemy's columns in the name of the Lord Jesus, protected by the sign of the Cross instead of by shield and helmet"*.

So he was ordered to be placed in custody so that he could prove his words and face the barbarians unarmed. The next day the enemy sent envoys to ask for peace, surrendering themselves and all they had. Who could doubt that this victory was due to Martin's blessing and granted so he would not be sent unarmed into a battle! Christ could not have granted any victory for the benefit of his own soldier greater than one in which the enemy was beaten bloodlessly and no one had to die.

On another occasion, many years later, bishops from various parts of the world had been assembled to meet the Emperor Maximus. Many were fawning at him, lowering the dignity of their priesthood. Martin alone retained his Apostolic authority.

Invitations had been sent to a great feast and to persons of the very highest rank. Martin himself occupied a stool next to the emperor and one of his priests was placed nearby, between two very important counts. Toward the middle of the meal a servant, as was customary, offered a cup to the emperor. He ordered it to be given instead to Martin first and waited, expecting that Bishop Martin would then hand it to him. But after drinking, martin passed the cup to his priest, affirming that no one had a better right to drink after him and that it would be dishonest to give preference to any other than the Lord's priest, even to the emperor.

The emperor, and all who were present, were so struck by this action that the very gesture by which they had been humbled became for them a source of good feeling. The news went around the palace that Martin had done at the emperor's table what no other bishop had dared to do even when eating with the least of the dedication emperor's magistrates. Martin never hesitated to put Christ and Christ's honor above every human rank and sign of prestige.

Saturday

MARY, QUEEN OF SAINTS, LEADS US TO SANCTITY

A reflection by St. John Paul II

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Mother of God is the Christian's model in faith, love and perfect union with Christ. In a special way, she is the Mother and model of those who live the consecrated life.

In order to live for Christ, and no longer for ourselves, in order to collaborate in the ministry of reconciliation and build up the Kingdom of God, we must bear the cross and follow Christ. We must not be afraid to be "signs of contradiction" but embrace the cross, confident that it is a "tree of eternal life". We thus trust in the firm promise of resurrection.

Mary is the radiant sign and inviting model of a holy life, especially in a world filled with moral confusion. As St. Ambrose put it, "The life of this one person can serve as a model for everyone". He was speaking specifically to virgins but in a way that applies to all. He says, "The first stimulus to learning is the nobility of the teacher; who can be more noble than the Mother of God? Who can be more glorious than the one chosen by Glory Itself?"

Mary lived and exercised her human freedom precisely by giving herself to God and accepting God's gift within herself. Until the time of Jesus' birth, she sheltered in her womb the Son of God become human. She raised him and enabled him to grow, and she accompanied him in that supreme act of freedom which is the complete sacrifice of one's own life. By the gift of herself Mary, entered fully into the plan of God, who gives Himself to the world.

By accepting and pondering in her heart events that she did not always understand she became the model of all those who hear the word of God and keep it. This gained her the title "Seat of Wisdom". She teaches us where to turn in every difficulty! In an apparition to St. Catherine Laboure, she counsels her to bring her fears and anxieties about the mission entrusted to her to Jesus. She said, "It is here, before the tabernacle, that you must seek strength and consolation". Mary addresses the same words to each of us. With the Eucharist, before the tabernacle, each of us can find holiness and even fearlessness today, and for the rest of our lives!

As we pursue every day the justice and holiness born of truth, we look to Mary, Mother of Jesus, Queen of Saints and especially Apostles. How many saints were called to serve in holiness and truth and in the unity which is given us in Christ and his Church? For how many in the history of the Church has the Eucharist been the source of spiritual strength!

Our communion is a communion of prayer, in which we all draw strength from the whole praying Body of Christ. The saints are saints through prayer. Your prayers are of the greatest importance for the Gospel of Christ. Mary shows us the way to prayer, and so to Christ, and so to holiness.