

# Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

## July 30 – August 5, 2023

- Sun**  
**30**      **Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**PATRISTIC THOUGHTS ON TODAY'S GOSPEL**  
From a *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel* by Origen
- Mon**  
**31**      **Memorial of St Ignatius of Loyola, Priest**  
**ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA & THE GOAL OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**  
From David Fleming, SJ in *What is Ignatian Spirituality?*
- Tue**  
**1**      **Memorial of St Alphonsus Liguori, Bishop, Doctor**  
**ST ALPHONSUS LIGUORI: DOCTOR MOST ZEALOUS**  
From Julian Paparella of *Salt and Light Media*
- Wed**  
**2**      **Weekday of 17<sup>th</sup> Week**  
**TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO POSSESS THE KINGDOM OF GOD**  
From St Bernard – Monastic Sermon 99
- Thu**  
**3**      **Memorial of the Dead**  
**OFFERING PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED**  
From Pope Francis in his *Angelus Message* on Nov. 2, 2014
- Fri**  
**4**      **Memorial of St John Vianney, Priest**  
**SAINT JOHN VIANNEY TEACHES US SACRIFICIAL LOVE**  
From Diana Ragsdale on *Catholic Stand*
- Sat**  
**5**      **Memorial of Our Lady**  
**MARY THE MOTHER OF ALL**  
From Raphael Simon, OCSO in *Hammer and Fire*

Sunday, July 30, 2023

## **PATRISTIC THOUGHTS ON TODAY'S GOSPEL**

### **From a *Commentary on Matthew's Gospel* by Origen**

To the seeker after fine pearls may be applied the words, *Seek and you will find*, and, *Everyone who seeks will find*. If you ask what is to be sought, and what will be found by everyone who seeks for it, I say with all confidence: pearls – especially that pearl which will be acquired by those who give their all, who sacrifice everything for it, the pearl Paul meant when he said: *I have accepted the loss of everything in order to gain Christ*. *Everything* means beautiful pearls; *to gain Christ* refers to the one pearl of great price.

Admittedly, a lamp is precious to people in darkness, and they need it until sunrise. Precious too was the radiance on the face of Moses – and I believe on the faces of the other prophets also. It was a sight of beauty leading us to the point of being able to see the glory of Christ, to whom the Father bore witness in the words: *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*. But *compared with this surpassing glory, what formerly was glorious now seems to have no glory at all*. We need at first a glory destined to be outshone by an all-surpassing glory, just as we need the partial knowledge which *will be superseded when that which is perfect has come*.

Thus everyone beginning to live a spiritual life and growing toward maturity needs tutors, guardians, and trustees until the fullness of time arrives for him, so that after all this, he who at first was *no different from a slave although he owned the whole estate*, may on his emancipation receive his patrimony from his tutors, guardians, and trustees.

This patrimony is the pearl of great price, and the coming of what is perfect to supersede what is imperfect, when, after acquiring the forms of knowledge, if we may call them so, which are inferior to knowledge of Christ, one becomes able to understand the supreme value of knowing Christ. The law and the prophets fully comprehended are the preparation for the full comprehension of the gospel and the complete understanding of the acts and words of Christ Jesus.

*Monday, July 31*

## **ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA AND THE GOAL OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE** **From David Fleming, SJ in *What is Ignatian Spirituality?***

The goal of the spiritual life, as St Ignatius Loyola conceived it, is to “choose what better leads to God’s deepening life in me.” This is a dynamic goal. We are to choose—to freely unite ourselves with God. Most of the time this means that we are to join with God in active work in the world.

This active life rests on a foundation of reflection. Ignatian spirituality teaches us to discern the footprints of God in our own experience. It shows us how to look back on our lives, to sift through our memories in order to see the way God has been dealing with us over the years. It teaches us how to find God in the present moment—in the relationships, challenges, frustrations, and feelings that we are experiencing today. The tools and methods of Ignatian spirituality instill in us habits of prayerful, thoughtful reflection.

Ignatius made this clear in the way he arranged the Spiritual Exercises. He begins the retreat with the Principle and Foundation, which states in concise form Ignatius’s vision of God’s purposes in creating (“to share life with us forever”), the purpose of the things he created (“presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more easily”), and the goal of the retreat (“to choose what better leads to God’s deepening life in me”). Ignatius then presents a method of reflective prayer that he calls “the particular and daily examen.” This surprises many who undertake the Exercises. The examen seems to be a digression from the real business of the retreat.

But Ignatius deliberately put the examen at the beginning. The examen is an indispensable tool to realize the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises—to detect God’s presence and to discern his will through close attention to the subtle interior movements of God’s spirit. It is the cornerstone of Ignatian prayer.

Ignatius wanted his Jesuits to make the examen a daily habit. He understood that the press of work or illness might sometimes make it impossible for Jesuits to have an extended time of daily prayer. But he insisted that they never omit the examen. Twice a day, about midday and again before retiring, Jesuits were to pause for a while and review the events of the day in a spirit of prayerful reflection. This is one of the few rules Ignatius laid down for prayer.

The examen that Ignatius outlined in the Spiritual Exercises has five points: 1) be grateful for God’s blessings; 2) ask the help of the Spirit; 3) review the day, looking for times when God has been present and times when you have left him out; 4) express sorrow for sin and ask for God’s forgiving love; 5) pray for the grace to be more totally available to God who loves you so totally. Over the years, Jesuits and others have developed many versions of the examen. They are like successive editions of a great textbook. They are based on the same insight and ideas, but they differ in order to emphasize certain things and to adapt to diverse audiences.

Because the word examen seems to indicate a kind of introspection, probably the greatest emphasis should be placed on the examen as praying. Ignatius tries to emphasize this point by making his first point of the examen prayer one about gratitude to God.

*Tuesday, August 1*

## **ST ALPHONSUS LIGUORI: DOCTOR MOST ZEALOUS**

**From Julian Paparella of *Salt and Light Media***

Founding an influential religious order, championing devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Mother, and the Sacred Heart, and mastering Catholic Moral Theology: these are but a few of the achievements that make the life and ministry of St. Alphonsus Liguori a true gift to the Church, both for his time and ours. St. Alphonsus was born on September 27, 1696 and died August 1, in 1787. In the intervening years, his life was spent as a prolific spiritual writer, a renowned philosopher and theologian of the Scholastic tradition, a zealous pastor, and a man of deep personal holiness and prayer.

Born to a wealthy Neapolitan family, St. Alphonsus's brilliant mind earned him degrees in both canon and civil law by the age of sixteen. To the satisfaction of his affluent family, he practiced law as a respected lawyer until the age of 27, when he suffered a disappointing loss in court. His disappointment prompted him to seek the meaning he longed for elsewhere, and so he entered the seminary and after three years of formation was ordained a priest at the age of 30.

In response to the pastoral needs of the impoverished farming families that inhabited the hillside surrounding his native Naples, St. Alphonsus established the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in 1732. In his 1748 petition to have the congregation formally recognized canonically, St. Alphonsus told Pope Benedict XIV of the state of those he sought to serve. They are, he articulated, "the most in need of spiritual help, as frequently they have no one to administer to them the Holy Sacrament or the Word of God; their plight is such that many, for lack of (apostolic) laborers, reach death's door without knowing anything at all of the necessary truths of the faith. This is because the number of priests...is few."

The following year, the Holy Father granted his wish to establish the missionary congregation, whose purpose was to cater to the needs of those least fortunate, and imbue their lives with the flavor of the Gospel message. Since then, the Redemptorists have grown to a membership of over five thousand, and their missionary activity has extended into seventy-eight countries where they persevere in the charism of their visionary founder: to bring the Good News of Christ the Redeemer to those most desperate and abandoned.

In 1762 St. Alphonsus was named Bishop of Sant'Agata dei Goti, an appointment he unsuccessfully attempted to refuse. During his episcopate he intensified his intellectual pursuits and pedagogical efforts, penning his seminal work Moral Theology, re-articulating and defending a robust, authentic Catholic Mariology, and encouraging devotions to the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Mother, the Sacred Heart, and the Way of the Cross.

Recognizing the depth and authenticity of his holiness, Pope Gregory XVI canonized St. Alphonsus in 1839, and in 1871 St. Alphonsus was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius IX, under the title "Doctor Most Zealous." St. Alphonsus with his great intelligence was able to perceive with clarity the needs of his day, and address them effectively with pastoral charity and spiritual profundity.

Wednesday, August 2

## **TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO POSSESS THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

### **From St Bernard – Monastic Sermon 99**

There are four types of people who possess the Kingdom of heaven. Some snatch it away with violence, others purchase it, others steal, and others are forced to it. Those who disregard all things and follow Christ snatch it away; concerning these it is said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*"

There are others at a lower stage, by whom carnal things are harvested while spiritual things are sown for them, and to these the Lord says in the gospel, *Make friends for yourselves from the wealth of iniquity so that when you fail, they might receive you into everlasting dwellings.* These types are called merchants, because, in the present they give away whatever temporal good they possess so that they may receive eternal goods from them in the future, which they would not possess at all if not through them. In fact, it is necessary for all who are to be tried in the future Judgment either to be friends of the Judge or to have friends as intercessors before the Judge. Therefore, those who intercede have the first place of blessedness; those for whom they intercede have second place.

There are others who do some good secretly for which they merit the Kingdom of Heaven, but still they are said to steal it because, avoiding human praise, they are content with the divine witness alone. The woman in the gospel held the example of these; she, who suffered from a flow of blood, thought within herself, saying, *If I shall touch the hem of his garment, I shall be healed.* Having said this, she approached secretly and touched, and she became saved.

There are others who are forced: for example, those who are poor by necessity, who are indeed tested in this fire of poverty by God's arrangement, lest in the future the fire of Judgment punish them for their guilt. Concerning them it is written, *Compel them to come in so that my house may be filled.* For many are compelled when they are afflicted by various privations and oppressions; by God's wonderful providence, while they flee temporal death, once turned to God, they obtain eternal life.

Thursday, August 3

## **OFFERING PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED**

**From Pope Francis in his *Angelus Message* on Nov. 2, 2014**

Church Tradition has always urged prayer for the deceased, in particular by offering the Eucharistic Celebration for them: it is the best spiritual help that we can give to their souls, particularly to those who are the most forsaken. The foundation of prayer in suffrage lies in the communion of the Mystical Body.

As the Second Vatican Council repeats in *Lumen Gentium*, “fully conscious of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the pilgrim Church from the very first ages of the Christian religion has cultivated with great piety the memory of the dead.”

Remembering the dead, caring for their graves and prayers of suffrage, are the testimony of confident hope, rooted in the certainty that death does not have the last word on human existence, for man is destined to a life without limits, which has its roots and its fulfillment in God. Let us raise this prayer to God: “God of infinite mercy, we entrust to your immense goodness all those who have left this world for eternity, where you wait for all humanity, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ your Son, who died as a ransom for our sins. Look not, O Lord, on our poverty, our suffering, our human weakness, when we appear before you to be judged for joy or for condemnation. Look upon us with mercy, born of the tenderness of your heart, and help us to walk in the ways of complete purification. Let none of your children be lost in the eternal fire, where there can be no repentance. We entrust to you, O Lord, the souls of our beloved dead, of those who have died without the comfort of the sacraments, or who have not had an opportunity to repent, even at the end of their lives. May none of them be afraid to meet You, after their earthly pilgrimage, but may they always hope to be welcomed in the embrace of your infinite mercy. May our Sister, corporal death find us always vigilant in prayer and filled with the goodness done in the course of our short or long lives. Lord, may no earthly thing ever separate us from You, but may everyone and everything support us with a burning desire to rest peacefully and eternally in You. Amen.”

With this faith in man’s supreme destiny, we now turn to Our Lady, who suffered the tragedy of Christ’s death beneath the Cross and took part in the joy of his Resurrection. May She, the Gate of Heaven, help us to understand more and more the value of prayer in suffrage for the souls of the dead. They are close to us! May She support us on our daily pilgrimage on earth and help us to never lose sight of life’s ultimate goal which is Heaven. And may we go forth with this hope that never disappoints!

*Friday, August 4*

## **SAINT JOHN VIANNEY TEACHES US SACRIFICIAL LOVE**

**From Diana Ragsdale on *Catholic Stand***

Saint John Vianney is known for leading the village of Ars from corruption to holiness, and the path he took to change the hearts of many was not an easy one. Through constant prayer, extreme penances, fasting, and preaching from the soul, he conquered the evils that he faced in his life. This saintly priest was able to transform a village of sin into a place where thousands of repentant souls would come on pilgrimage to confess their sins.

The year was 1818, and Saint John Vianney became the parish priest of the small village in France known as Ars. On his journey to the town, he needed help finding his way. He stopped a boy that he encountered and said, "Show me the way to Ars and I will show you the way to Heaven." Saint John Vianney was indeed a blessing for the village of Ars since it was totally engulfed in sin. Taverns were packed. Constant sinful dancing was taking place. Overall among the people there was a complete lack of faith. However, burning in the heart of this new priest was a zeal to convert his whole parish.

To change the hearts of his parishioners, Saint John Vianney used a variety of different heavenly methods. One approach was through deep prayer. A prayer he would say is, "I love You, O my God, and my only desire is to love You until the last breath of my life. I love You, O my infinitely lovable God, and I would rather die loving You, than live without loving You. I love You, Lord and the only grace I ask is to love You eternally... My God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love You, I want my heart to repeat it to You as often as I draw breath."

Another way Saint John Vianney won souls for the Lord was through harsh penances that would leave his body drained but his heart nonetheless on fire for Christ and souls. Furthermore, he would fast by only eating a few potatoes a day, making him very thin. He knew fasting was a sure way to lead other souls to Jesus. In this extreme daily fast, he placed his focus on the needs of his people instead of on bodily nourishment.

One of the most powerful ways Saint John Vianney would convert his parish was through his zealous sermons. He would preach from the soul and truly bring about the conversion of many by his inspiring words from the pulpit. By all these means, Saint John Vianney worked tirelessly for God and his people until he saw the conversion of his parish. His heart truly wanted to see the change, and he would persevere until he saw the effects of his works of God come to fruition.

Not only did Saint John Vianney pray fervently, do penances, fast by only eating a few potatoes, and preach about the Faith, but he would go above and beyond these actions by listening to confessions twelve to eighteen hours a day. He could read the souls of men and women, reminding them of sins they had forgotten or did not want to confess. By this, Saint John Vianney was truly able to convert his parish as well as all the people who traversed to Ars and wanted him to hear their confessions.

It is also worth mentioning that Saint John Vianney fought the Devil's attacks. He knew that the more the Devil would attack him at night, the more a sinner would repent the next day. Saint John Vianney was on God's side, so he knew he would win these battles.

Saint John Vianney once said, "Do not try to please everybody. Try to please God, the angels, and the saints – they are your public."

Saturday, August 5

## MARY THE MOTHER OF ALL

From Raphael Simon, OCSO in *Hammer and Fire*

Among creatures Mary was the most perfect reflection of the Father. His stars and earth, His plants and animals are all conformed to His will by their very natures according to which He moves them to their acts. They are in His hands, fulfilling the purpose for which they were created. But they bear only the traces, the vestiges, of His infinite perfections. He wished to have in His creation a mirror of Himself, a pure reflection of the divine beauty: Mary. Her faith, in its firm adherence to His truth, reflected the brilliance of His intelligence. She is the image of His love, goodness and mercy. All the bent of her will was directed to the doing of His good pleasure. She was His friend and companion, and called herself His handmaid, His slave.

Mary never failed in the fulfillment of the divine will. Her obedience flows from her humility which kept her soul empty of itself and of creatures, of attachment to her own opinions and will.

God made this maiden worthy to be His Mother. At the moment of her conception when her soul was infused into her body in the womb of her mother, Anne, He prevented original sin from being transmitted to her in view of the foreseen merits of her divine Son, Jesus. Thus He made her conception immaculate and preserved her from the wounds of original sin. Already, through the Precious Blood of Jesus, the devil was vanquished in God's creation, which he had desired to dominate completely. For from the first Mary belonged to God in mind and heart. She lived the life of a pious girl of her age and time while remaining true to her divine Love. Her unmarried intelligence searched deep into the hidden meanings of the prophets, and her loving heart offered itself to the service of the Messiah.

It is easy enough for us to accept honor. We naturally desire to be elevated in the eyes of men. Mary treasured humiliation, humble situation and poverty. She was troubled, then, when the Archangel Gabriel told her that she was called to be the Mother of the Messiah. Acceptance was a sacrifice; yet more than humiliation and poverty, she loved the will of the Father. The story of her life is condensed into her response: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say."

"Let it be done to me as you say," that is, "You, O Lord have your plan for me and for my life. I am your Servant. I have no other will but to fulfill Your will. I do not ask the details of Your plan. I know what You want now; that is enough. I shall do that. I accept Your will for me in its entirety, with all its consequences."

God, who calls us to be His children, would have us be the children of Mary, whom *He* did not disdain to have as His mother. He would have us imitate her; accept the divine plan as she accepted it; be His sons and daughters; do now what He asks us now to do; conform our will to His, fulfilling His will as well as we can.

Mary knew that Christ, the Messiah, was the Redeemer of all. "You shall ... give him the name Jesus," that is to say, Savior. She understood that He was the Head of the human race. If she was to be the Mother of Christ, she would be the Mother of the whole Christ, head and members. She would be the Mother of all human beings, our Mother.

That is what she accepted in her fiat. This relationship of people to Mary was confirmed by Jesus on the Cross when He said to Mary, who stood there with St John, our representative, "There is your son," and to St John, "There is your mother." We are the brothers and sisters of Christ because He died on the Cross to redeem us from our sins and to make us His members, and so it was fitting that this mystery of our relationship to Mary should be announced from the Cross.