

# **Twenty-Third Week in Ordinary Time**

## **September 10 –16, 2023**

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**Cyprian, Bishop & Martyr**  
**POPE ST CORNELIUS AND ST CYPRIAN**  
From the *Catholic News Agency*

Sunday, September 10

## **ST JOHN CHYRSOSTOM COMMENTARY ON TODAY'S GOSPEL** **From St John Chrysostom – Homily 6, 18-20; SC 50, 224-225**

The Apostle says: *Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

You will be doing everything for the glory of God, if, when you leave this place, you make yourselves responsible for saving a brother or sister, not just by accusing and rebuking him or her, but also by advising and encouraging, and by pointing out the harm done by worldly amusements, and the profit and help that come from our instruction. You will also be preparing for yourself a double reward, since as well as greatly furthering your own salvation, you will be endeavoring to heal a fellow member of Christ's body. It is the Church's pride, it is the Savior's command, not to be concerned only about our own welfare, but about our neighbor's also.

Think to what high honor you raise yourself when you regard someone else's salvation as a matter of extreme importance. As far as is humanly possible you imitate God himself, for listen to what he says through the prophet: "Whoever leads another from wrong to right *will be as my own mouth.*" In other words, "Whoever tries to save those that are negligent, and to snatch them from the jaws of the devil, is imitating me as far as a human being can." What other work could equal this? Of all good deeds this is the greatest; of all virtue this is the summit.

And this is perfectly reasonable. Christ shed his own blood for our salvation; and Paul, speaking of those who give scandal and wound the consciences of people seeing them, cried out: *Because of your knowledge a weak brother or sister is destroyed – someone for whom Christ died!* So if your Lord shed his blood for that person, surely it is right for each of us to offer at least some words of encouragement and to extend a helping hand to those who through laxity have fallen into the snares of the devil.

But I am quite certain that you will do this out of the tender love you bear your own members, and that you will make every effort to bring your neighbors back to our common Mother, because I know that through the grace of God you are able to admonish others with wisdom.

*Monday, September 11*

## **POPE JOHN PAUL ON THE TRAGEDY OF 9/11**

### **From Pope John Paul's General Audience on September 12, 2001**

I cannot begin this audience without expressing my profound sorrow at the terrorist attacks which yesterday brought death and destruction to America, causing thousands of victims and injuring countless people. To the President of the United States and to all American citizens I express my heartfelt sorrow. In the face of such unspeakable horror we cannot but be deeply disturbed. I add my voice to all the voices raised in these hours to express indignant condemnation, and I strongly reiterate that the ways of violence will never lead to genuine solutions to humanity's problems.

Yesterday was a dark day in the history of humanity, a terrible affront to human dignity. After receiving the news, I followed with intense concern the developing situation, with heartfelt prayers to the Lord. How is it possible to commit acts of such savage cruelty? The human heart has depths from which schemes of unheard-of ferocity sometimes emerge, capable of destroying in a moment the normal daily life of a people. But faith comes to our aid at these times when words seem to fail. Christ's word is the only one that can give a response to the questions which trouble our spirit. Even if the forces of darkness appear to prevail, those who believe in God know that evil and death do not have the final say. Christian hope is based on this truth; at this time our prayerful trust draws strength from it.

With deeply felt sympathy I address myself to the beloved people of the United States in this moment of distress and consternation, when the courage of so many men and women of good will is being sorely tested. In a special way I reach out to the families of the dead and the injured, and assure them of my spiritual closeness. I entrust to the mercy of the Most High the helpless victims of this tragedy, for whom I offered Mass this morning, invoking upon them eternal rest. May God give courage to the survivors; may he sustain the rescue-workers and the many volunteers who are presently making an enormous effort to cope with such an immense emergency. I ask you, dear brothers and sisters, to join me in prayer for them. Let us beg the Lord that the spiral of hatred and violence will not prevail. May the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Mercy, fill the hearts of all with wise thoughts and peaceful intentions.

Today, my heartfelt sympathy is with the American people, subjected yesterday to inhuman terrorist attacks which have taken the lives of thousands of innocent human beings and caused unspeakable sorrow in the hearts of all men and women of good will. Yesterday was indeed a dark day in our history, an appalling offense against peace, a terrible assault against human dignity.

I invite you all to join me in commending the victims of this shocking tragedy to Almighty God's eternal love. Let us implore his comfort upon the injured, the families involved, all who are doing their utmost to rescue survivors and help those affected.

I ask God to grant the American people the strength and courage they need at this time of sorrow and trial.

*Tuesday, September 12*

## **A CALL WITHIN A CALL**

**From Fr. Warner D'Souza of the Archdiocese of Bombay**

For Luke, the call of the disciple to be sent out as apostles is an important moment in the life of Jesus. We know this because Luke precedes this narration with a detail that might miss our eye. Jesus went up the mountain to pray and He spent the night in prayer to God. It is wonderful to see how Jesus is in communion with His Father every step of the way but even more at crucial moments of His ministry. We see this at the transfiguration, the multiplication of loaves, the night at Gethsemane and on the cross when he is in agony, to state a few. It is no wonder that Jesus, in the Gospel of John proclaims, "I and the Father are one."

The Gospel of Luke has Jesus calling Simon and his companions and Levi to follow Him. However up to this point they are called to be disciples. The Greek word for a disciple is μαθητής (mathetes), which translated means, 'one who thinks things through.' Mathetes is the same root word for MATHEmatics. Just as one has to think things through with a math problem one has to think discipleship through before saying yes.

Having accepted to follow Jesus, the many disciples of Jesus are now filtered for a specific ministry and not for some singular honor. The word for apostle in Greek (the language in which the NT was written) is απόστολος (apóstolos) and translates as, 'one who is sent'. Jesus is clear that these are not honorific titles but commissions to carry out specific work. Incidentally the Holy Father and the Cardinals in the Catholic Church are not some honorific titles but they are primarily Bishops 'set apart with a specific commission or task'. The Holy Father is primarily the 'Bishop of Rome' with a task of being the Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church. The Cardinals are Bishops with the calling to be the first ones to shed their blood for Christ (that is why they wear red cassocks) and not merely to be elected or elect the next Pope.

Luke depicts Jesus' choice of the twelve as a symbol of the reconstructed Israel. The twelve now symbolize continuity with Israel. In Acts 1 the number twelve must be completed after the death of Judas, so that the twelve, thus reconstituted might be present to receive the promised Holy Spirit and begin preaching to the ends of the earth. For Luke, this is the mission of the apostles, to preach the 'Word of God'. Among the other evangelist this is a rare word but in Luke-Acts it appears thirty times, for this is the mission for the apostles as mandated by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

Having now appointed the twelve, Jesus brings them down from the mountain to the plain. Mountains are the place where traditionally religious people commune with God. Now, back on the plain He is met by the large crowds of disciples and a great multitude of people drawn from not only the provinces of Israel but also from Tyre and Sidon, people who were considered hated enemies of the Jews. Luke wants to reiterate again and again the universal calling and appeal of Jesus. And as verse 19 indicates, He taught all and healed all.

With this, the stage is set for the Lucan 'Sermon on the plain' which will parallel Matthew's 'Sermon on the Mount.'

Wednesday, September 13

## **THE GOLDEN MESSAGE OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

### **From a sermon on *The Armenian Prelacy* website**

John Chrysostom was converted to Christianity and was baptized in 361 at the age of 21. As a true follower of Christ, literally interpreting the instruction of our Lord, he gave up his paternal inheritance and prominent career as a lawyer, isolated himself in a cave, and devoted himself to study the Scriptures. In 381, he was ordained a celibate priest. His sermons attracted large crowds, and soon he was honored by the believers with the Greek title of “Chrysostom” which means “Golden-mouthed.”

In 397, he was elected the Patriarch of Constantinople, which, unfortunately, as the capital of the Byzantium Empire, was witnessing a sharp decline in moral and social values. His criticism was not welcomed by the nobles, most especially by the Empress whom he identified with Herodias, by saying, “Once again Herodias is razing, once again Salome is dancing and asking for the beheading of John.” The verdict was not delayed and the Empress dethroned and exiled him.

The patriarch marched under the severe summer heat toward the last station of his exile in Comana, in Pontus. In 407, on September 14, on the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, he celebrated the Holy Eucharist in the Chapel of Saint Basilus, who had appeared to him in a dream the previous night. Before he expired, John Chrysostom offered a thanksgiving praise: “Glory to you, O God, glory to you! For the sake of all things, O Lord, glory to you!”

The renouncement by Saint John Chrysostom of his inheritance and career, then devoting himself to the study of the Bible, reflect his deeper conviction that the word of God meets all the requirements of our needs.

Amazingly, people have a natural intuition to recognize the authentic messenger of God. Thus they gave the eloquent title of “Chrysostom,” a Greek word that means “golden-mouthed,” to this humble servant of God, for he spread the word of God, as did the Prophets.

The best sign of being a messenger of God is what Saint Paul, through his own experience, conveys to us, by saying, “If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

John Chrysostom chose to be a faithful servant, and while knowing the consequences to his outspokenness, he continued to emphasize to the people, and especially those in authority, that they should turn from their evil ways and live in Godly virtue.

The life of this servant of Christ is a great example, starting with his conversion and baptism, and then his renunciation of the world to his commendable reputation and golden orations. Yet, it is John Chrysostom’s concluding prayer, “Glory to you, O God, glory to you! For the sake of all things, O Lord, glory to you,” which typifies his absolute Christian conviction. This was not the thankful exclamation of an individual showered by success, honor, glory, and joy, but the humble prayer from a man who was subdued by unrighteous fate and had crossed the painful valley of persecution and death, yet had always enjoyed the presence of God, as St Paul would have confirmed: “Nothing could separate him from the love of God.”

Saint John Chrysostom today conveys to us through his experience, that according to the golden message of our Lord we can all be His brothers and sisters through our own life path if we hear and do the word of God. Therefore, let us all, with the ever-generating power of the Holy Spirit, hear the Word of God, actualize the Word in our lives, and praise the All-Holy Trinity. Amen.

*Thursday, September 14*

## **THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS**

### **From Pope Francis' homily on this feast day in 2021**

On the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Pope Francis celebrated the Byzantine Divine Liturgy and called Christianity without the Cross worldly and sterile.

“Crucifixes are found all around us: on necks, in homes, in cars, in pockets. What good is this, unless we stop to look at the crucified Jesus and open our hearts to him, unless we let ourselves be struck by the wounds he bears for our sake, unless our hearts swell with emotion and we weep before the God wounded for love of us,” Pope Francis said in Slovakia on Sept. 14.

“Witnesses of the Cross have but one strategy, that of the Master: humble love. They do not look for triumphs here below, because they know that the love of Christ bears fruit in the events of daily life, renewing all things from within, like the seed that falls to the ground, dies and produces much fruit,” he said.

The pope delivered a homily in which he posed the question: Why did Jesus die on the Cross?

“Why did he do this? He could have saved his life, he could have kept his distance from the misery and brutality of human history,” Pope Francis said.

“Instead, he chose to enter into that history, to immerse himself in it. That is why he chose the most difficult way possible: the Cross. So that no one on earth should ever be so desperate as not to be able to find him, even there, in the midst of anguish, darkness, abandonment, the scandal of his or her own misery and mistakes.”

“There, to the very place we think God cannot be present, there he came. To save those who despair, he himself chose to taste despair; taking upon himself our most bitter anguish.”

Pope Francis said that Jesus even experienced abandonment so that no one would ever be alone in their trials.

“We proclaim Christ crucified ... the power of God and the wisdom of God.” So St. Paul tells us, but he does not hide the fact that, in terms of human wisdom, the Cross appears as something completely different: it is ‘scandal’ and ‘foolishness,’” the pope said in his homily.

“The cross was an instrument of death, yet it became the source of life. It was a horrendous sight, yet it revealed to us the beauty of God’s love. That is why, in today’s feast, the people of God venerate the Cross and the Liturgy celebrates it.”

“We can fail to accept, except perhaps in words, a weak and crucified God, and prefer instead to dream of a God who is powerful and triumphant. This is a great temptation,” Pope Francis said.

“How often do we long for a Christianity of winners, a triumphalist Christianity that is important and influential, that receives glory and honor? Yet a Christianity without a cross is a worldly Christianity, and shows itself to be sterile.”

Friday, September 15

## OUR LADY OF SORROWS

### From Pope Benedict's homily on this feast day in 2008

Today, as we celebrate the memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows, we contemplate Mary sharing her Son's compassion for sinners. As Saint Bernard declares, the Mother of Christ entered into the Passion of her Son through her compassion. At the foot of the Cross, the prophecy of Simeon is fulfilled: her mother's heart is pierced through by the torment inflicted on the Innocent One born of her flesh. Just as Jesus cried, so too Mary certainly cried over the tortured body of her Son. Her self-restraint, however, prevents us from plumbing the depths of her grief; the full extent of her suffering is merely suggested by the traditional symbol of the seven swords. As in the case of her Son Jesus, one might say that she too was led to perfection through this suffering, so as to make her capable of receiving the new spiritual mission that her Son entrusts to her immediately before "giving up his spirit": that of becoming the mother of Christ in his members. In that hour, through the figure of the beloved disciple, Jesus presents each of his disciples to his Mother when he says to her: Behold your Son.

Today Mary dwells in the joy and the glory of the Resurrection. The tears shed at the foot of the Cross have been transformed into a smile which nothing can wipe away, even as her maternal compassion towards us remains unchanged. The intervention of the Virgin Mary in offering succor throughout history testifies to this, and does not cease to call forth, in the people of God, an unshakable confidence in her: the *Memorare* prayer expresses this sentiment very well. Mary loves each of her children, giving particular attention to those who, like her Son at the hour of his Passion, are prey to suffering; she loves them quite simply because they are her children, according to the will of Christ on the Cross.

The psalmist, seeing from afar this maternal bond which unites the Mother of Christ with the people of faith, prophesies regarding the Virgin Mary that "the richest of the people ... will seek your smile." In this way, prompted by the inspired word of Scripture, Christians have always sought the smile of Our Lady, this smile which medieval artists were able to represent with such marvelous skill and to show to advantage. This smile of Mary is for all; but it is directed quite particularly to those who suffer, so that they can find comfort and solace therein. To seek Mary's smile is not an act of devotional or outmoded sentimentality, but rather the proper expression of the living and profoundly human relationship which binds us to her whom Christ gave us as our Mother.

To wish to contemplate this smile of the Virgin, does not mean letting oneself be led by an uncontrolled imagination. Scripture itself discloses it to us through the lips of Mary when she sings the Magnificat: "My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit exults in God my Savior." When the Virgin Mary gives thanks to the Lord, she calls us to witness. Mary shares, as if by anticipation, with us, her future children, the joy that dwells in her heart, so that it can become ours. Every time we recite the Magnificat, we become witnesses of her smile.

Here in Lourdes, in the course of the apparition of Wednesday, March 3, 1858, Bernadette contemplated this smile of Mary in a most particular way. It was the first response that the Beautiful Lady gave to the young visionary who wanted to know who she was. Before introducing herself, some days later, as "the Immaculate Conception", Mary first taught Bernadette to know her smile, this being the most appropriate point of entry into the revelation of her mystery.

*Saturday, September 16*

## **POPE ST CORNELIUS AND ST CYPRIAN** **From the *Catholic News Agency***

Saint Cornelius was elected Pope in 251 during the persecutions of the Emperor Decius. His first challenge, besides the ever-present threat of the Roman authorities, was to bring an end to the schism brought on by his rival, the first anti-pope Novatian. He convened a synod of bishops to confirm him as the rightful successor of Peter.

The great controversy that arose as a result of the Decian persecution was whether or not the Church could pardon and receive back into the Church those who had apostacized in the face of martyrdom.

Against both the bishops who argued that the Church could not welcome back apostates, and those who argued that they should be welcomed back but did not demand a heavy penance of the penitent, Cornelius decreed that they must be welcomed back and insisted that they perform an adequate penance.

In 253 Cornelius was exiled by the emperor Gallus and died of the hardships he endured in exile. He is venerated as a martyr.

Saint Cyprian of Carthage is second in importance only to the great Saint Augustine as a figure and Father of the African church. He was a close friend of Pope Cornelius, and supported him both against the anti-pope Novatian and in his views concerning the re-admittance of apostates into the Church.

Saint Cyprian was born to wealthy pagans around the year 190, and was educated in the classics and in rhetoric. He converted at the age of 56, was ordained a priest a year later, and made bishop two years after that.

His writings are of great importance, especially his treatise on The Unity of the Catholic Church, in which he argues that unity is grounded in the authority of the bishop, and among the bishops, in the primacy of the See of Rome.

In "The Unity of the Catholic Church," St. Cyprian writes, "You cannot have God for your Father if you do not have the Church for your mother.... God is one and Christ is one, and his Church is one; one is the faith, and one is the people cemented together by harmony into the strong unity of a body.... If we are the heirs of Christ, let us abide in the peace of Christ; if we are the sons of God, let us be lovers of peace."

During the Decian persecutions Cyprian considered it wiser to go into hiding and guide his flock covertly rather than seek the glorious crown of martyrdom, a decision that his enemies attacked him for.

On September 14, 258, however, he was martyred during the persecutions of the emperor Valerian.