

THE TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

1-7 October 2023

Sun. **The Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Oct. 1 **THE PROCESS OF CHANGE OF HEART**
 From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis on September 27, 2000

Mon. **Memorial of the Guardian Angels**
2 **LEARNING MINISTRY FROM THE ANGELS**
 A reflection by St. Albert the Great

Tues. **Memorial of the Departed**
3 **THE EXAMPLES GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE**
 AND BY OUR DEPARTED
 A reflection taken from a homily by Basil of Seleucia

Wed. **Memorial of St. Francis Assisi**
4 **HOW WE MAY SERVE THE LORD IN JOY**
 A letter from St. Francis of Assisi

Thurs. **Memorial of St. Francis Xavier Seelos**
5 **GOING TWO BY TWO**
 From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis on July 3, 2022

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Fri. **Memorial of St. Bruno**
6 **THE BEAUTY OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE**
 From a letter by St. Bruno

Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary**
7 **MY PRAYER AND THE ROSARY**
 A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII

Sunday

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE OF HEART

From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis on September 27, 2000

With his preaching on the Kingdom of God, Jesus opposes a religiosity that does not involve human life, that does not question the conscience and its responsibility in the face of good and evil. He also demonstrates this with the parable of the two sons, which is offered to us in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 21:28-32). To the father's invitation to go and work in the vineyard, the first son impulsively responds "no, I'm not going", but then he repents and goes; instead the second son, who immediately replies "yes, yes dad", does not actually do so; he doesn't go. Obedience does not consist in saying "yes" or "no", but always in taking action, in cultivating the vineyard, in bringing about the Kingdom of God, in doing good. With this simple example, Jesus wants to go beyond a religion understood only as an external and habitual practice, which does not affect people's lives and attitudes, a superficial religiosity, merely "ritual", in the ugly sense of the word.

In today's Gospel, the one who makes the best impression is the first brother, not because he said "no" to his father, but because after his "no" he converted to "yes", he repented. God is patient with each of us: he does not tire, he does not desist after our "no"; he leaves us free even to distance ourselves from him and to make mistakes. Thinking about God's patience is wonderful! How the Lord always waits for us; he is always beside us to help us; but he respects our freedom. And he anxiously awaits our "yes", so as to welcome us anew in his fatherly arms and to fill us with his boundless mercy. Faith in God asks us to renew every day the choice of good over evil, the choice of the truth rather than lies, the choice of love for our neighbour over selfishness. Those who convert to this choice, after having experienced sin, will find the first places in the Kingdom of heaven, where there is greater joy for a single sinner who repents than for ninety-nine righteous people (cf. *Lk 15:7*).

But conversion, changing the heart, is a process, a process that purifies us from moral encrustations. And at times it is a painful process, because there is no path of holiness without some sacrifice and without a spiritual battle. Battling for good; battling so as not to fall into temptation; doing for our part what we can, to arrive at living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes. Today's Gospel passage calls into question the way of living a Christian life, which is not made up of dreams and beautiful aspirations, but of concrete commitments, in order to always open ourselves to God's will and to love for our brothers and sisters. But this, even the smallest concrete commitment, cannot be made without grace. Conversion is a grace we must always ask for: "Lord, give me the grace to improve. Give me the grace to be a good Christian".

May Mary Most Holy help us to be docile to the action of the Holy Spirit. He is the One who melts the hardness of hearts and disposes them to repentance, so we may obtain the life and salvation promised by Jesus.

Monday

LEARNING MINISTRY FROM THE ANGELS

A reflection by St. Albert the Great

The Lord himself says: "See to it that you do not treat one of these little ones with contempt; I tell you that their angels in heaven behold the face of my Heavenly Father continually." Christ means, more or less: Be attentive, watch that you look down on no one who is simple or weak or poor. He tells us that he holds them in such high esteem as to have placed angels at their service. And these angels are very great, like officers in the palace of God.

These angels see the face of God for four reasons. The first is that it is their duty to present to God the good works people do. Raphael said to Tobiah: "I was all the time offering your prayer to the Lord". In Revelation we read: "There was another angel who came and stood by the altar with a golden censer with which he offered before God's throne the prayers of all the saints". The altar is the symbol of the heart of one who is faithful to God. We stand before God in this way and place in the censer our joys, our thoughts, our prayers and words and actions. We present them before God. It is well, then, to have something good always ready to put in the censer for the offering which rises toward the Son in the bosom of the Father. We learn this from the angels.

The angels, second, stand before the face of God to receive God's commands. They do them with alacrity, especially when given a mission for the salvation of someone. The angel said to Tobiah: "Now, for your healing, and the deliverance of your son's wife, Sarah from the fiend's attack, God has selected me as messenger". The text goes on to list the benefits received. The Psalm says: "God has entrusted you to the angles, to guard you in all your ways". We learn from these guardians and companions on the journey to do God's will right away and with joy and to devote ourselves, especially to the help and healing of others.

Now the third reason why the angels see the face of God the Father is that they praise God for the glory given by the conversion of sinners. They sing the joy that they themselves experience. So our Lord says in Luke's Gospel: "So it is, I tell you, that in heaven there will be more rejoicing over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine souls who are justified and have not need of repentance". This is our joy as much as it is the angels' joy.

The final reason which causes in the angels such a great desire and rejoicing is their contemplation of the face of the Father in heaven. Such contemplation is for them the source of a happiness which they taste but never get enough of. The Apostle Peter speaks to us of this as a deep mystery: "And now the angels can satisfy their eager gaze". We too are called to imitate their contemplation by our own, and by our insatiable desire to behold the Father's face.

Pray, then, and ask our Lord to grant to us also the grace of serving faithfully and to merit, one day, to be carried by the holy angels to eternal joy. Minister these gifts which the angels mirror for us and do so faithfully and to all, most especially to God's "little ones". Thus we too may stand among the angels serving and glorifying God in joy without end.

Tuesday

THE EXAMPLES GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE AND BY OUR DEPARTED **A reflection taken from a homily by Basil of Seleucia**

In the Second Book of Kings we are given the story of Elisha's raising of the dead son of a woman who had received the boy as a gift from God through Elisha's prayers. We can look at this story as a kind of parable of God's giving new life to Gentile peoples. God had given them natural life but through Christ God gave them in addition a super-natural life. The same is true for us. We were spiritually dead. Our mouth was dead in that it didn't praise God, our eyes were dead in that they never turned to the God of the universe but worshiped created things, our hands were dead in that they sought to make what would satisfy us and make our lives good when that was impossible, and our feet were dead in that we ran after things that could never give us real life. Then Christ came and gave us life.

We, as a whole, were like a corpse in need of a physician who could raise even the dead. That was the "spiritual Elisha", our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He found us thoroughly dead and did spiritually what Elisha had done physically. He placed his whole being over our entire dead body. In other words, the whole fullness of the Godhead was clothed in the whole of our human nature. In Christ, as St. Paul says, the whole fullness of the divine nature dwelt embodied. He had eyes and hands and feet and it was no illusion that we beheld when we looked at him. Life wore a dead garment so as to transform death into life, mortality into immortality. When the Godhead came down into the human body, all its members were sanctified and transformed.

But we had to learn how to live the new life we were given. Jesus taught his disciples and they taught disciples in turn, and finally, when we were born, some of his later disciple taught us. Think of how many there have been who have helped us learn to walk the way of Christ as far as the Kingdom of God. They taught us to accept the gift of faith. They taught us the commandments of the One God who has given us every good thing we have or can hope for. "Lord, open my lips and my mouth will proclaim your praise!" This is what we have learned to pray, and even more to live day by day. They have directed our eyes, outer and inner, toward Our God and Lord: "The eyes of all creatures look to you, and you give them their food in due time". Those who brought us to God and taught us to pray have also pointed to the signs of God's presence and care and led us to praise their giver. Their refrain was: "Lift up your hands in the holy place, and praise the Lord through the night." "Let the lifting up of my hands be like an evening sacrifice". Those who dedicated themselves to God led us in dedicating ourselves and in prayers of thanksgiving and praise. They have shown us the path that leads to God and to realize that we are in our God's presence every moment.

Those who taught us didn't do it only in words but by example. They prayed for us, and they continue to pray for us as they stand now before God in the Heavenly Temple. We pray for them too and this shared prayer binds us together as members of Christ, who himself ever stands before the Heavenly Father interceding for us. We lift up one another's hands in never-ceasing prayer. We never forget all we have received, nor do we forget those through whose hands we have received so much.

Wednesday

HOW WE MAY SERVE THE LORD IN JOY

A letter of St. Francis of Assisi

Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to carry to all the fragrant words of my Lord, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Word of the Heavenly Father. I must also bring to your attention the words of the Holy Spirit for they are spirit and life.

Although all the world's riches were his, Christ and his blessed mother chose poverty. He subjected his will to the will of the Father, saying: Father, your will be done; not as I will but as you will.

Now this was the will of the Father. His blessed Son whom he gave us and who was born for us should offer himself by shedding his blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the Cross. This sacrifice was not for himself, through whom all things were made, but for our sins. Thus, he left us an example so we would should follow in his footsteps.

Jesus wants us all to be saved through him and to receive him with pure heart and sinless body. How happy and blessed are those who love the Lord and do what he says in the Gospel: You shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart and your whole soul and your neighbor as yourself.

Let us therefore love God and adore him with pure heart and soul, since he says that he is especially seeking authentic worshippers who will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Let us sing his praises day and night. For we must pray always, without losing heart.

We must also fast and abstain from vices and sins and from excesses in food and drink. We must be Catholic. We must visit churches frequently and show reverence to clerics, not only for their own sake, even though they be sinners, but because of the office they hold and because of the ministry of the most holy body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which they offer on the altar and which they receive and administer to others.

Let us all firmly believe that no one can be saved except through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the Lord's holy words which they proclaim and administer. We must love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. We are to observe the commandments and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must also deny ourselves and submit our bodies to the yoke of service and of holy obedience, just as each of us has promised the Lord. We are not to be wise and prudent according to the flesh, but rather simple and humble and pure. We must never wish to lord it over others but must rather seek to be servants and subject to every human being for God's sake. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon all who have done this and persevered till the end. This Spirit will make its dwelling place in them and they shall be the children of the Father in Heaven, whose work they do. And they are the spouses and brothers and sisters and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

, Friar Francis, your least servant, by the love that is God beg and implore all whom this letter may reach to receive these fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love and to fulfill them with love and understand them and persevere to the end in putting them in practice.

Thursday

GOING TWO BY TWO

From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis on July 3, 2022

In the Gospel of today's liturgy, we read that “the Lord appointed seventy-two [disciples], and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come” (cf. *Lk* 10:1). The disciples were sent *two by two*, not individually. To go on a mission two by two, from a practical point of view, would seem to bring more disadvantages than advantages. There is the risk that the two would not get along, that they would go at different paces, that one would get tired or sick along the way, forcing the other to stop. When one is alone, on the other hand, it seems the journey would become swifter and smoother. However, Jesus does not think like this: he does not send people out alone before him, but disciples who go *two by two*. Let us ask ourselves a question: what is the reason for this choice of the Lord?

It was the disciples' task to go ahead into the villages to prepare the people to receive Jesus; and the instructions he gives them are not so much about what they should say, but *how they should be*: that is, not on the “phrasebook” of what they should say, no; on the witness of life, the witness to give rather than the words to say. Indeed, he defines them as *workers*: in other words, they are called to *work*, to evangelize through their behavior. And the first practical action with which the disciples carry out their mission is precisely that of going *two by two*. The disciples are not “free agents”, preachers who do not know how to yield the word to another. It is primarily the very life of the disciples that announces the Gospel: their knowing how to be together, their mutual respect, their not wanting to prove that they are more capable than the other, their concordant reference to the one Master.

Perfect pastoral plans can be drawn up, and well-designed projects implemented, organized down to the last detail; one can summon crowds and have many means; but if there is no openness to fraternity, the evangelical mission cannot advance. Once, a missionary recounted how he left for Africa with a confrère. However, after some time he separated from him, stopping in a village where he successfully implemented a series of building projects for the good of the community. Everything was working well. But one day he had a jolt: he realized that his life was that of a good entrepreneur, always in the midst of building sites and paperwork! But... and that “but” remained there. So, he left the management to others, to the laypeople, and joined his confrère. He thus understood why the Lord had sent the disciples “two by two”: the evangelizing mission is not based on personal activism, that is, on “doing”, but on the witness of brotherly love, even amid the difficulties that living together entails.

So, we might wonder: how do we take the good news of the Gospel to others? Do we do so with a fraternal spirit and style, or in the manner of the world, with self-promotion, competitiveness and efficiency? Let us ask ourselves whether we have the capacity to collaborate; whether we know how to make decisions together, sincerely respecting those who are alongside us and taking into account their point of view; whether we do so in community, not by ourselves. Indeed, it is above all in this way that the life of the disciple allows that of the Master to shine through, truly announcing it to others.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, teach us to prepare the way for the Lord with the witness of fraternity.

Friday

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 a 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.

Saturday

MY PRAYER AND THE ROSARY

A reflection from a homily by St. Pope John XXIII

The substance of a well-meditated rosary is a three-note chord. It sounds a music in our heart and soul that raises us to God's love and its delight.

The first note is contemplation, pure and clear and immediate. Each mystery focuses us on a truth of faith that speaks about the redeeming mission of Christ and reminds us that we share it.

As we contemplate this we find ourselves in close communion of thought and feeling with Jesus in his life and teaching. He is Son of God and son of Mary. He lived on this earth. He redeemed and taught and sanctified. In the silence of his "hidden life" everything was prayer and work. But the same thing was true of his passion and its suffering, and of the triumph of his resurrection, and in the glory of Heaven.

The Risen Jesus sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father. He is constantly helping and sending us the Holy Spirit. He is always giving life to us and to the Church which he founded. It walks his way through the centuries in prayer and work; it must follow his example.

The second note is reflection. It diffuses a kind of radiance over everything and everyone. This comes from the mysteries of Christ's life and their fullness. It is prayer that is responsible for this.

In each mystery, each praying person finds the right teaching for that time and place. We find sanctification through the Holy Spirit as it guides our hearts and minds. It dwells within us and from our depths intercedes with sighs too deep for words, as St. Paul reminds us.

Each one of us is offered the opportunity to confront our own life and all its weaknesses with the strength that comes from God in prayer. In this we find an inexhaustible grace for our own spiritual struggles and the needs of those we will meet during the day.

Finally, the third note of our cord of love is our intention. Why do we pray? We intercede for individuals of all sorts. We pray for various institutions and the needs of the institutions in which individuals live and work. We pray for needs that are personal and needs that are institutional. We practice charity towards these neighbors God has given us in both ways.

What is more important than that charity should fill our hearts and everything that issues forth from them. We want all that comes forth from us to be a sharing in the charity of Christ and a labor on behalf of the Mystical Body of Christ and the healing of its wounds.

Think of God's intention in our regard. God seeks only our salvation and that of all. What does our prayer inspire us to do? We are moved from within to reach out and share our faith and our hope, and share them in love. If you daily pray the Rosary you daily renew your own determination to share in this loving and saving intention of our loving and saving God.