

THE THIRTIETH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

29 October – 4 November 2023

- Sun.
Oct. 29 **The Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT
From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis, 26 October 2014
- Mon.
30 **Monday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time**
LOVE AND CONTEMPLATION
A reflection excerpted from St. Irenaeus' "Against Heresies"
- Tues.
31 **Tuesday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time**
IF PASTORAL CARE LACKS COURAGE
From the Morning Meditation by Pope Francis, 31 October 2017
- Wed.
Nov. 1 **Solemnity of All the Saints**
CHRISTIANS ARE ALREADY SAINTS
From the Angelus Message of Pope BENEDICT XVI, 1 November 2007
- Thurs.
2 **Commemoration of the Faithful Departed**
THE PAPAL ANGELUS MESSAGE ON ALL SOULS DAY
Pope John Paul II, 2 November 1997
- Fri.
3 **MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
Memorial of St Martin de Porres
SEEING THE TRUTH OF GOD IN ALL THINGS
A Reflection developed from a text by Joseph Iraburu
- Sat.
4 **Memorial of St Charles Borromeo, Bp**
HOW DO YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE TO GOD?
A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Sunday

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis, 26 October 2014

Today's Gospel Reading reminds us that the whole of Divine Law can be summed up in our love for God and neighbor. Matthew the Evangelist recounts that several Pharisees colluded to put Jesus to the test (cf. 22: 34-35). One of them, a doctor of the law, asked him this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" (v. 36). Jesus, quoting the Book of Deuteronomy, answered: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment" (vv. 37-38). And he could have stopped there. Yet, Jesus adds something that was not asked by the doctor of the law. He says, in fact: "And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 39). And in this case too, Jesus does not invent the second commandment, but takes it from the Book of Leviticus. The novelty is in his placing these two commandments together — love for God and love for neighbor — revealing that they are in fact inseparable and complementary, two sides of the same coin. You cannot love God without loving your neighbor and you cannot love your neighbor without loving God. Pope Benedict gave us a beautiful commentary on this topic in his first Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (nn. 16-18).

In effect, the visible sign a Christian can show in order to witness to his love for God to the world and to others, to his family, is the love he bears for his brothers. The Commandment to love God and neighbor is the first, not because it is at the top of the list of Commandments. Jesus does not place it at the pinnacle but at the center, because it is from the heart that everything must go out and to which everything must return and refer.

In the Old Testament, the requirement to be holy, in the image of God who is holy, included the duty to care for the most vulnerable people, such as the stranger, the orphan and the widow (cf. Ex 22:20-26). Jesus brings this Covenant law to fulfillment; He who unites in himself, in his flesh, divinity and humanity, a single mystery of love.

Now, in the light of this Word of Jesus, love is the measure of faith, and faith is the soul of love. We can no longer separate a religious life, a pious life, from service to brothers and sisters, to the real brothers and sisters that we encounter. We can no longer divide prayer, the encounter with God in the Sacraments, from listening to the other, closeness to his life, especially to his wounds. Remember this: love is the measure of faith. How much do you love? Each one answer silently. How is your faith? My faith is as I love. And faith is the soul of love.

In the middle of the dense forest of rules and regulations — to the legalisms of past and present — Jesus makes an opening through which one can catch a glimpse of two faces: the face of the Father and the face of the brother. He does not give us two formulas or two precepts: there are no precepts nor formulas. He gives us two faces, actually only one real face, that of God reflected in many faces, because in the face of each brother, especially of the smallest, the most fragile, the defenseless and needy, there is God's own image. And we must ask ourselves: when we meet one of these brothers, are we able to recognize the face of God in him? Are we able to do this?

In this way, Jesus offers to all the fundamental criteria on which to base one's life. But, above all, He gave us the Holy Spirit, who allows us to love God and neighbor as He does, with a free and generous heart. With the intercession of Mary, our Mother, let us open ourselves to welcome this gift of love, to walk forever with this two-fold law, which really has only one facet: the law of love.

Monday

LOVE AND CONTEMPLATION

A reflection excerpted from St. Irenaeus' "Against Heresies"

Many Pharisees claimed that the traditions of the elders safeguarded the Law of God. In fact, some of them contravened the Law of God, as Moses had given it. By saying "Your merchants mix water with their wine"—i.e., dilute it fraudulently, Isaiah also shows the wrongness of mixing tradition with God's commandments so as to water them down. Pharisees enjoined adulterated law, as the Lord made clear when he asked, "Why do you transgress God's commandment for the sake of your tradition?" This not only falsified God's Law but set it against the purpose of the Law of Moses and tradition which was to ensure fulfillment of God's law.

Indeed, by placing an interpretation on God's law one can not only explain what it means practically but one can suppress some of God's commandments and add new ones, which too often serve only a human purpose. The desire to justify such handling of tradition kept some from submitting to what God's word taught about the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. Instead of submitting, they found fault—e.g., because the Lord healed on the Sabbath. But that was not forbidden by the Law, for in a sense the Law itself healed by causing circumcision to be performed on the Sabbath. Because they did not grasp the essence of all law that comes from God—which is love for God and neighbor—they excused themselves when they broke divine law replacing it with traditions.

Love of God is the first and greatest commandment. The second is love for our neighbor. The Lord taught this by saying that the whole of the Law and the Prophets depends on these two commandments. He brought us no greater commandment than these, and he renewed it by commanding his disciples to love God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves.

Thus Paul also says that love is the fulfillment of the Law. When all other spiritual gifts fail, faith and hope and love remain. But the greatest of these is love. Knowledge is of no use without the love of God, understanding of mysteries, or faith or prophecy are of no use either, without love of God. Without it all else is vain and profitless. Love, on the other hand, perfects a person. One who loves God is perfect, both in this world and in the next. We shall never stop loving God. To contemplate God well is to grow in love of God. One must not contemplate seeking a knowledge that puffs up, for to know God truly is to be built up in humility. Humility's foundation is truth—about God and about ourselves as creatures chosen to be children of God. True contemplation leads to salvation and heaven for it leads to the truth and to the humility born of it.

One who lives in the truth of God lives as loving God with the whole heart and mind and strength, and loving the neighbor even as Christ does. Imitate the Lord Jesus Christ! He is the teacher of the contemplation that leads to love.

Tuesday

IF PASTORAL CARE LACKS COURAGE

From the Morning Meditation by Pope Francis, 31 October 2017

Do Christians “truly believe” in the power of the Holy Spirit that is inside them? And do they have the courage to “sow the seed” and to become involved, or do they hide behind a “pastoral of preservation” that does not allow the Kingdom of God to flourish? Pope Francis took his cue from the day's Gospel reading (Luke 13: 18-21) in which Jesus uses “two simple examples from daily life” to explain the Kingdom of God: the mustard seed and leaven. Though they appear insignificant and innocuous when they begin to germinate, “they have a strength that grows within them” and that “goes beyond what we can imagine”. This is the “mystery of the Kingdom”. Pope Francis described the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God as the horizon of hope for all mankind and for the Church as a community, identifying as its two pillars: the explosive power of the Holy Spirit and the courage to allow this power to be unleashed. Both the seed and the yeast have power within them just as “the power of the Kingdom of God comes from within”.

Drawing a modern-day analogy, Pope Francis offered the following comparison: “a growth, for example, as occurs with a football team when its fan base increases and makes the team greater”. It is a strength that “comes from within”, a concept, which was also addressed by Paul in his Letter to the Romans (Rom 8: 18-25): “The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”. However, this waiting period is not a relaxed one as Paul talks about waiting “with eager longing”. Creation also experiences this time of waiting as it “reaches out towards the revelation of the Children of God”. In fact, “like us, creation too was subjected to transience”. It proceeds “in the hope of being set free from the bondage of corruption”. The Holy Father stressed that mankind and all of creation possess the first fruits of the Spirit: “the inner strength which moves forward and gives hope: for the “fulfillment of the Kingdom of God”.

This is the reality suggested by the parable: “Within us and in all creation, there is a strength which unleashes: there is the Holy Spirit which gives us hope”, that “living in hope means allowing the Holy Spirit's power to go forth and help us to grow towards this fullness”.

In the parable, the mustard seed is taken and sown and the leaven is taken and mixed with flour. It is understood that “if the seed is not taken and sown, if the leaven is not taken by the woman and mixed, they will remain there and that inner strength which they have will remain there”. In the same way, “if we want to store the seed for ourselves, it will only be a seed. If we do not mix the yeast with life, with the flour of life, it will just remain yeast”. It is therefore necessary to “sow, mix, that courage of hope”. Hope, he explained, “grows because the Kingdom of God grows from within [us] not from proselytism” but rather “with the strength of the Holy Spirit”.

“The Church has always had the courage to reap and sow, to reap and mix”, the Pope said. “Many times we see a preference for a pastoral of preservation”, rather than one which “allows the Kingdom to flourish”. “If I toss a seed, I lose it”, the Pope continued, but “there is always some loss in sowing the Kingdom of God. If I mix the yeast, I will dirty my hands!”, he said. “Woe to those who preach the Kingdom with the illusion of not soiling their hands. They are custodians of museums: they prefer beautiful things to the gesture of ‘tossing’ so that the strength may be unleashed, of ‘mixing’ so that the strength may grow”.

Wednesday

CHRISTIANS ARE ALREADY SAINTS

From the Angelus Message of Pope BENEDICT XVI, 1 November 2007

On today's Solemnity of All Saints, our hearts are dilated to the dimensions of Heaven, exceeding the limits of time and space. At the beginning of Christianity, the members of the Church were also called "saints". In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St Paul addresses "those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor 1: 2). Indeed, Christians are *already* saints because Baptism unites them to Jesus and to his Paschal Mystery, but at the same time they must *become* so by conforming themselves ever more closely to him. Sometimes, people think that holiness is a privileged condition reserved for the few elect. Actually, becoming holy is every Christian's task, indeed, we could say, every person's! The Apostle writes that God has always blessed us and has chosen us in Christ "that we should be holy and blameless before him... in love" (Eph 1: 3-5). All human beings are therefore called to holiness, which ultimately consists in living as children of God, in that "likeness" with him in accordance with which they were created. All human beings *are* children of God and all must *become* what they are by means of the demanding process of freedom. God invites everyone to belong to his holy people. The "Way" is Christ, the Son, the Holy One of God: "No one comes to the Father but by me [Jesus]" (cf. Jn 14: 6).

The Church has wisely placed in close succession the Feast of All Saints and All Souls' Day. Our prayer of praise to God and veneration of the blessed spirits which today's liturgy presents to us as "a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rv 7: 9), is united with prayers of suffrage for all who have preceded us in passing from this world to eternal life. Tomorrow, we shall be dedicating our prayers to them in a special way and we will celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice for them. To tell the truth, the Church invites us to pray for them every day, also offering our daily sufferings and efforts so that, completely purified, they may be admitted to the eternal joy of light and peace in the Lord.

The Virgin Mary is resplendent at the center of the Assembly of Saints, "created beings all in lowliness surpassing, as in height, above them all" (Dante, *Paradise*, Canto XXXIII, 2).

By putting our hand in hers, we feel encouraged to walk more enthusiastically on the path of holiness. Let us entrust to her our daily work and pray to her today for our dear departed, in the intimate hope of meeting one another all together one day in the glorious Communion of Saints.

Thursday

THE PAPAL ANGELUS MESSAGE ON ALL SOULS DAY

Pope John Paul II, 2 November 1997

1. Yesterday we celebrated the Solemnity of All Saints and today the liturgy invites us to commemorate the faithful departed. The Church links her contemplation of those who have already attained God's glory with her remembrance of those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith and who now sleep in peace (cf. *Roman Canon*).

I spiritually join all who in these days are visiting the graves of their departed ones in the cemeteries of Rome and the whole world. I go on spiritual pilgrimage, especially to where the victims of violence and war, of injustice and hunger are buried. May Jesus, who said: "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25), grant to all the departed the rest of the just and the fullness of eternal life.

2. The Church's tradition has always recommended prayers for the dead. The basis for this prayer of suffrage is found in the communion of the Mystical Body. As the Second Vatican Council stresses: "In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in her pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 50).

Therefore she encourages cemetery visits, the care of graves and prayers of suffrage as a witness of confident hope, amid the sorrow of being separated from one's loved ones. Death is not the last word on human fate, because man is destined for endless life, which finds its fulfillment in God.

For this reason, the Council emphasizes: "Faith, with its solidly based teaching, provides every thoughtful man with an answer to his anxious queries about his future lot. At the same time it makes him able to be united in Christ with his loved ones who have already died, and gives hope that they have found true life in God" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 18).

3. With this belief in man's ultimate destiny, we now turn to Mary, who experienced the drama of Christ's death at the foot of the Cross and then shared in the joy of his Resurrection. May she, *the Gate of Heaven*, help us more and more to understand the value of praying for our departed loved ones. May she sustain us each day on our earthly pilgrimage and help us never to lose sight of the ultimate goal of life, which is paradise.

Friday

SEEING THE TRUTH OF GOD IN ALL THINGS

A Reflection developed from a text by Joseph Iraburu

What most people remembered about Martin de Porres was humility. He was mulato (a “black” in U.S. categories) and so despised and often insulted, even by other Dominicans. When angry they called him “mulato dog” or “mulato trash”. A combination of racism and anti-Semitism was dominant in the culture of his place and time. But he insisted on re-interpreting insults so as to focus attention on the truth that we are nothing apart from God and of ourselves can do nothing good. We depend wholly on God’s grace. This transformed untruths into truths. It was a matter of viewing everything in terms of our relationship with God in Christ. He simply refocused attention and so corrected the insults without saying it out loud.

He had only two years of formal education but had been apprenticed to a “barber”, not only shaving people (as Martin shaved the tonsures of the roughly 300 Dominicans living in his monastery) but caring for them when they were ill. He came to be in charge of the monastery infirmary where he used prayer as much as as genuine concern and herbal remedies. He permeated all he did with prayer and a habit of seeing everything as a way of serving and loving God.

He himself was often sick, and probably suffered from malaria, but when sent to a country estate owned by his monastery, instead of resting he used the time to to teach catechism and provide medical care to the poor who did the work of the estate. All this was filled with constant talk of God and of Jesus, teaching the practice of the presence of God. He had a firm grasp of principles. When accused of disobedience for bringing a homeless sick person into his cell to care for him he replied that he had not sinned because charity was the greatest commandment and more important than obedience.

Martin seemed not to do anything unless it had to do with God and the loving mercy God commands. He was always showing compassion and mercy to the poor, sacrificing himself to help them. He thought of himself as one of them and as undeserving of anything special. He turned everything he did or was given into an opportunity to help those who had nothing and could not help themselves. Thus he prayed continually, never ceased doing charity and showing mercy and compassion, and brought it about that what he said always revealed a way of seeing God’s presence in what he was doing or what was happening around him. In God’s grace, we can do the same.

Saturday

HOW DO YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE TO GOD?

A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

What did St. Charles Borromeo do? He took risks. When he did that he gave his life to God. For example, at one time a plague was devouring the people of his city. He threw himself at this scourge, not isolating himself from the plague-stricken like a hired hand but like a good shepherd he remained with his flock without fear of death.

This is a sample of a thousand other things that Charles Borromeo did as signs of his tireless gift of self to his people. Charles left no autobiography, no spiritual writings telling us his "secret". He had no secret; his inner life and his prayer were visible to all in his gift of self.

As witness to the intensity of his prayer, we have only a few pictures showing him in ecstasy or in tears while he venerated the crucifix. Apart from these, his swiftness in grasping the meaning of the Madonna's tears he saw at the Shrine of Rho gives a confirmation of the faith he lived by.

St. Charles moved in an atmosphere of intense awareness not only of disasters like the plague but of all the wounds in the living flesh of his city and saw them as the same as the wound on the side of Christ. He was intensely aware of Christ's suffering and Christ's sorrows. God isn't recognized as God, or loved, by people who are lazy as Christians and deaf to God's Word.

If St. Charles lived his inner life in an inexhaustible capacity for praise and for sharing suffering, he was only living what the Psalmist says are the two basic aspects of human praying. It was probably his capacity for sharing suffering that primarily manifested itself exteriorly.

St. Charles was a person of prayer, of tears, and of penance. He understood this last not as something heroic but as a mysterious and even impassioned sharing in the sufferings of Christ himself. He saw this as a path by which Christ enters into the depths of the world's sin and finds there the absurdity of refusing God. Christ lived this until his heart almost broke and his soul was torn open.

Today we celebrate one of the great witnesses who have penetrated to the very depths of the mystery of divine sharing in human suffering. Christ drank the last drops of this bitter cup and so was capable of understanding very lucidly his age and ours. This was true also of Charles. He understood the deep meaning of the events and history of his times, as we are called to do in our times. He understood and he loved. This is our call as well.