

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

15- 21 October 2023

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17 **Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch**
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18 **THE FEAST OF ST. LUKE, EVANGELIST**
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19 **SS. John de Brebeuf & Isaac Joques & Companions**
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29 October 2003

Sunday

PUT ON THE WEDDING GARMENT

From the Homily of Pope Benedict XVI, 9 October 2011

This Sunday's liturgy presents a parable to us that speaks of a wedding banquet to which many were invited. The First Reading, from the Book of Isaiah, prepares the ground for this theme, for it speaks about the banquet of God. It is an image often used in the Scriptures to indicate the joy in communion and in the abundance of the Lord's gifts, and it gives some idea of the celebration of God with humanity as Isaiah describes: "On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine... well refined" (Is 25:6). The Prophet adds that God's intention is to put an end to sadness and shame; he wants all people to live happily in love of him and in mutual communion. Therefore his plan is to eliminate death forever, to wipe away the tears from all faces, to take away once and for all the dishonorable condition of his people (vv. 7-8). All this awakens deep gratitude and hope: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (v. 9).

In the Gospel Jesus speaks to us of the answer that is given to the invitation of God — represented by a king — to take part in this marriage feast (cf. Mt 22:1-14). Many guests were invited but something unexpected happens: they refuse to take part in the celebration, they have other things to do; indeed, some of them show contempt for the invitation. God is generous to us, he offers us his friendship, his gifts, his joy, but often we do not welcome his words, we show greater interest in other things and put our own material concerns, our own interests, first. The king's invitation even meets with hostile and aggressive reactions. Yet this does not impede his generosity. He is not discouraged and sends his servants out to invite many other people. The refusal of those invited first causes the invitation to be extended to everyone, even the poorest, the abandoned and disinherited. The servants gather together those they find and the wedding hall is filled: the king's goodness knows no bounds and all are given the possibility of answering his call. However, there was one condition in order to attend this wedding feast: that the wedding garment be worn. And, on entering the hall, the king notices that someone has not wished to wear it and for this reason bars him from the banquet.

I would like to reflect for a moment on this point with a question: why did this man accept the king's invitation, enter the banquet hall, find the door opened to him but not put on the wedding garment? What is this wedding garment? There is a beautiful commentary on this parable by St Gregory the Great. He explains that the guest had accepted God's invitation to take part in his banquet, that in a certain way, he had faith which opened the door of the banquet hall to him, but he lacked something essential: the wedding garment, which is charity or love. And St Gregory adds: "Therefore each one of you in the Church who has faith in God has already taken part in the wedding feast, but cannot claim to wear the wedding garment unless he jealously guards the grace of love" (Homily 38, 9; PL 76, 1287). And this garment is woven symbolically on two looms of wood, one above and one below: love of God and love of neighbor (cf. *Ibid.*, 10; PL 76, 1288). We are all invited to be the Lord's guests, to enter his banquet with faith, but we must put on and take care of the wedding garment: charity, to live in the profound love of God and neighbor.

Monday

THE GOD OF SURPRISES

From the Morning Meditation of Pope Francis on 13 October 2014

Pope Francis reflected on the passage of the Gospel according to Luke (11:29-32), in which Jesus harshly criticizes the crowd gathered to hear him, as “an evil generation” because “it seeks a sign”. He said that “it is evident that Jesus is speaking to the doctors of the law”, who, “many times in the Gospel”, ask him for “a sign”. Indeed, they “do not see many of Jesus’ signs”. But this is precisely why “Jesus scolds them” on various occasions: “You are incapable of seeing the signs of the times”.

Pope Francis thus exhorted that we ask ourselves the reason that the doctors of the law did not understand the signs of the times and invoked an extraordinary sign. And he proposed several answers: the first was “because they were closed within their system, they had organized the law very well”. It was “a masterpiece. All of the Jews knew what one could and could not do, where one could go. It was all organized”. But Jesus caught them unprepared, by doing “curious things”, such as “going with the sinners”, and “eating with the publicans”. And the doctors of the law... found it “dangerous”, putting at risk “the doctrine which they, the theologians, had been making for centuries”.

...They “did not understand that God is always new; ... He always surprises. And they did not understand and they closed themselves within that system created with much goodwill; and they asked” that Jesus give them “a sign”, failing to understand “the many signs that Jesus made” and maintaining a completely “closed” attitude.

The second response to his initial question is attributable to the fact that they “had forgotten that they were a people on a journey. And when one is on a journey one always finds new things, things one does not know. And in the law, they had to accept these things in a heart faithful to the Lord”. But, also in this case, “a journey is not absolute in itself, it is a journey toward an endpoint: toward the definitive manifestation of the Lord”. All of “life is a journey toward the fullness of Jesus Christ when the second coming occurs”. It is a journey toward Jesus, who will come again in glory.

Pope Francis emphasized, repeating the words from the Gospel passage, that this generation “seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah”: that is to say, the Pope clarified, “the sign of the Resurrection, of glory, of that eschatology we are journeying toward”. However, many of his contemporaries “were... not open to the God of surprises”; they ... “did not know the path or even this eschatology”.

Thus, the Pope explained, Jesus defined them as an “evil generation”, “they did not understand that the law they protected and loved was a pedagogy toward Jesus Christ”. “If the law does not lead to Jesus Christ, does not bring us close to Jesus Christ, it is dead”. And this is why Jesus scolds the members of that generation “for being closed, for being incapable of recognizing the signs of the times, for not being open to the God of surprises, for not being on a journey toward the Lord’s triumphant finale”.

The Pope then moved on to his final instruction, to ask oneself about these aspects: “Am I attached to my things, to my ideas, closed? Or am I open to the God of surprises?”. And also: “Am I a stationary person or a person on a journey?”. And finally, he concluded, “Do I believe in Jesus Christ and in what he has done?”, that is, “He died, rose again... do I believe that the journey goes forth toward maturity, toward the manifestation of the glory of the Lord? Am I capable of understanding the signs of the times and of being faithful to the voice of the Lord that is manifest in them?”

Tuesday

PERSEVERANCE AS A GIFT OF LOVE

From St. Ignatius' Letter to the Church of Antioch

The last era of our world has arrived. We must either fear it, as expressing a gathering storm of wrath or cherish it as a present time of grace. You must do one or the other, but, in any case, let's keep in union with Jesus Christ! That's how we come to possess the true life!

Apart from Christ, nothing should fascinate us. In union with Christ I carry about the chains I now bear and look at them as spiritual pearls of great price. May they be truly pearls! May I have the privilege to treat them so through your prayers. I hope that I will always have a share in the sufferings of Christ and in this way. I hope to wear these chains which I rise from the dead! Then I will be found in the ranks of the Christians of Ephesus. They have always been of one mind with the Apostles and they are that through the power of Jesus Christ.

Make the effort to meet more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to offer God praise. When you do this the forces of Satan are overthrown; Satan's baneful influences are neutralized precisely by the unanimity of your faith. This oneness brings peace and that is a precious reality. It puts an end to every war waged by heavenly or earthly enemies.

None of what I have said is strange to you. I only pray that you will persevere to the end. Faith is the beginning of true life and its end is love. When faith and love blend perfectly with one another we have God. Everything else that makes for right living comes from these two. No one who professes faith truly sins. No one who loves hates. The tree is known by its fruit, the Lord tells us.

Similarly, people who belong to Christ are known to belong by their conduct. Surely, what now matters isn't mere professing of faith but whether one is found to have lived it actually and to the end.

It is better to keep silence and be something truly than to talk about it and be nothing. Teaching is an excellent thing. But it is only if the speaker practices what is taught. There is one Teacher. He spoke and all was done. Yet even what that Teacher did silently is worthy of the Heavenly Father. God has made the words of Jesus really his own. God hears them even in his silence.

That shows that Jesus is perfect. Jesus acts through speech and is understood through silence. Nothing is hidden from our Lord. Even our secrets are known.

Let us, then, do everything in the conviction that God dwells in us. In that way, we will truly be God's temples. In that way God will truly be our God and within us. This is the truth. This will be made manifest before everyone's eyes. That is why we should love God and love as God deserves to be loved. May he grant this to us each day.

Wednesday

FROM THE MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II FOR THE FEAST OF THE EVANGELIST LUKE, Jubilee Year 2000

According to tradition, the relics of St. Luke are preserved in the splendid Basilica of St Justina: a precious treasure and truly remarkable gift that arrived there after a providential journey. For, according to ancient testimonies, St Luke died in Boeotia and was buried in Thebes. From there, as St Jerome relates (cf. *De vir. Ill.*, VI, I), his bones were brought to Constantinople, to the Basilica of the Holy Apostles. Subsequently, according to sources that historical research is still exploring, they were transferred to Padua.

As a minister of God's Word (cf. *Lk* 1: 2), Luke leads us to the knowledge of the discreet yet penetrating light that radiates from it while illustrating the reality and events of history. The theme of the Word of God, the golden thread woven through the two works that comprise Luke's writing, also unites the two periods treated by him: the time of Jesus and that of the Church. As if narrating the "history of the Word of God", Luke's story follows its advance from the Holy Land to the ends of the earth. The journey proposed by the third Gospel is profoundly marked by listening to this Word which, like a seed, must be received with goodness and promptness of heart, overcoming the obstacles that prevent it from taking root and bearing fruit (cf. *Lk* 8: 4-15).

An important aspect that Luke highlights is the fact that the Word of God mysteriously grows and spreads even through suffering and in a context of opposition and persecution (cf. *Acts* 4: 1-31; 5: 17-42; *passim*). The Word that St Luke points to is called to become for each generation a spiritual event capable of renewing life. Christian life, instilled and sustained by the Spirit, is an interpersonal dialogue that is based precisely on the Word which the living God addresses to us, asking us to receive it without reservation in mind and heart. In short, it means becoming disciples who are willing to listen to the Lord with sincerity and openness, following the example of Mary of Bethany, who "had chosen the better portion", because she "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching" (cf. *Lk* 10: 38-42).

Another essential dimension of Christian and Church life, on which Luke's account throws vivid light, is that of the *evangelizing mission*. Luke indicates the permanent foundation of this mission, that is, the uniqueness and universality of the salvation wrought by Christ (cf. *Acts* 4: 12). The saving event of Christ's death and resurrection does not close the history of salvation, but marks the beginning of a new phase, characterized by the mission of the Church, which is called to communicate the fruits of the salvation achieved by Christ to all nations. For this reason, Luke's Gospel is followed, as its logical consequence, by the history of the mission. It is the Risen One himself who gives the missionary "mandate" to the Apostles: "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (*Lk* 24: 45-49). The Church's mission begins at Pentecost "from Jerusalem" to expand "to the ends of the earth". Jerusalem does not mean just a geographical point. Rather it signifies a *focal point* of salvation history. The Church does not leave Jerusalem to abandon her, but to graft the pagan nations onto the olive tree of Israel (cf. *Rom* 11: 17).

Thursday

THE HUMILITY OF A MARTYR

A reflection from one of St. Isaac's letters to his Provincial

During my captivity I often recalled my past life, so blameworthy because of my sins and infidelity to God. I groaned at being stopped in the middle of my course, and because I had no good works to send before me to God. I felt rejected by God and was without the sacraments. In this situation, I wanted to live but dreaded death, and I moaned in my distress: "*When shall there be an end to this misery and grief?*" I wanted God to bring calm after the storm and fill us with joy and exultation instead of tears. If those days hadn't been shortened, I would have perished.

I turned to Holy Scripture, my usual refuge. I kept certain passages in memory. These taught me to "*think of the Lord's goodness*" (Wisdom 1:1). Even if I felt no sensible devotion, I could recall that "*the holy one shall live by faith*" (Heb. 10:38). I would explore these passages and prob for the smallest streams of devotion in my efforts to quench my constant spiritual thirst. I would "*consider God's law by day and by night*" and remind myself "*Were it not that your law is my great delight I should by now have perished in my grief*". I spent two months in that quasi-retreat and became, like St. Bernard, the disciple of the beech trees; I thought of nothing but God.

Because the natives hated me and could no longer stand me, they sent me back to my village before the usual time. The trip took eight days and I was loaded with the enormous weight of the food that I had to carry. I had become a beast of burden before my God. Still, I tried to remain with God always, not knowing what awaited me in the next village. Some who had preceded us spread all sorts of rumors. On the road, I was almost naked and spent most of the night outdoors. I suffered very much from the cold. The wounds on my fingers which had only closed up toward the middle of January weren't yet completely healed.

In the village, they gave me a thin skin to use in addition to the old coat I was wearing. In these clothes, I went through the streets begging our Lord to let me join the saints who had served him "*dressed in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, distressed, mistreated*". Every day I observed the natives wearing the woolens and vestments that had been in our baggage, while day and night I was stiff from cold. That was not as important as was seeing them use vestments for secular purposes. One had taken to humeral veils and fashioned leg coverings, a sort of stocking.

Throughout the entire period, which lasted until about the middle of January, I could say before God: "*To this very hour we are victims of hunger and thirst; we are poorly clad and knocked around; we are vagabonds and wear ourselves out with manual labor. When they call us ugly names, we speak well of them. When they persecute us, we bear it with patience; when they insult us, we speak gently. We have practically become the world's scum, the scapegoat of society.*"

Friday

THE SEDUCTION OF CHIAROSCURO

From the Morning Meditation of Pope Francis on 16 October 2015

There is a strong and dangerous “virus” that threatens us, but there is also a Father “who loves us so much” and protects us.

Pope Francis refers to the day’s Gospel passage (Luke 12:1-7) where “Jesus was in the midst of thousands of people” — such a multitude had gathered around him and before “speaking to people, to teach them” as he normally did, Jesus turned “to the disciples. He spoke to them about a very small thing: leaven”.

The Pope likened the Lord’s warning — “Beware the leaven of the Pharisees” — to that of “a doctor who tells his staff: ‘Watch carefully so that all these people are not infected by the virus’”. The “leaven of the Pharisees”, Francis said, is “hypocrisy”. Jesus always spoke very frankly to them about this hypocrisy, saying “to their faces”: “Hypocrites. Hypocrites: you are hypocrites!”.

But what, essentially, is the virus that Jesus is referring to? It is “hypocrisy - that way of living, acting, and speaking that is not clear” and that is presented in an ambiguous way: “Maybe smiling, perhaps serious ... it is not light, it is not darkness”. It is a bit like a serpent: “it moves in a way that doesn’t seem to threaten anyone”, and it has “the charm of chiaroscuro”. Hypocrisy indeed has a charm to it, “that of not saying things clearly; the charm of lies, of appearances”. In the Gospels, Jesus makes some points on the behavior of the “hypocritical Pharisees who are full of themselves, of vanity” and that they like to “stroll through the town square” to show that they are important.

Jesus warns about them saying: “Do not fear. Beware of the leaven of these people, all that is hidden will be brought to the light. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops”. Hiding does not help because in the end, “everything will be clear”. The leaven of the Pharisees brought people to love the darkness more than the light”.

Furthermore, the Pope added that Jesus “draws attention to trusting in God”. If it is true that this leaven is a virus that sickens and kills, Jesus warns: “Beware! This leaven brings darkness. Beware!” — then it is also true that there is someone “greater”. It is “the Father in heaven”. When describing the Father’s caring presence, Jesus said: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God”. Then as final admonition, Jesus said: ‘Fear not; You are of more value than many sparrows!’”

The Pope added. “In the face of all of these fears”, which are instilled by the “virus”, by the “leaven of Pharisee-like hypocrisy”, we should be comforted by what Jesus tells us: “There is a Father who loves you, who cares for you”. In the face of the “seduction of chiaroscuro, the serpent’s seduction”, Jesus reassures us, saying: “Do not worry, the Father loves you, he defends you. Trust in him. Do not be afraid of these things”. Thus, the Pope explained, Jesus “began with the littlest in the midst of the multitude, and concluded with the greatest, with the Father who takes care of everything, even the littlest, so they do not get sick, and so they do not spread this disease”. Pope Francis highlighted that: “When Jesus tells us this, he invites us to pray that we will not fall into this Pharisee-like attitude that is neither light nor darkness”, that is always just halfway and “never reaches the light of God”.

Saturday

FROM THE GENERAL AUDIENCE MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II 29 October 2003

I am deeply grateful to God for this period of grace, in which the entire Ecclesial Community has been able to deepen the value and importance of the Rosary as a Christological and contemplative prayer.

"To contemplate with Mary the face of Christ" (Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n.3). These recurring words in the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* have become, as it were, the "motto" of the Year of the Rosary. They sum up the authentic meaning of this prayer that is both simple and profound. At the same time, they emphasize the continuity between what the Rosary proposes and the path pointed out to the People of God in my previous Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.

If, in fact, Christians at the beginning of the third millennium are called to grow as "contemplators of the face of Christ" (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n.16), and Ecclesial Communities are asked to become "genuine 'schools' of prayer" (*ibid.*, n.33), the Rosary constitutes the "Marian Way", hence, a privileged means of achieving this twofold goal. Wishing to be more and more transparent to the "mystery" of Christ in order to meditate on the "mysteries" of his Gospel, the Church learns at the school of Mary. This is "Mary's Way" (cf. *ibid.*, n.24), the one she took on her exemplary pilgrimage of faith as the first disciple of the Incarnate Word. At the same time, it is the way of genuine Marian devotion, totally centered on the bond that exists between Christ and his Blessed Mother (cf. *ibid.*).

I wanted to entrust two important prayer intentions to the People of God: *peace and the family*.

The 21st century, born under the banner of the Great Jubilee of Reconciliation, unfortunately, inherited many smoldering hotbeds of war and violence from the past. The alarming attacks of 11 September 2001 and its repercussions in the world have built up tension on a global level. In the face of this disturbing situation, the recitation of the Rosary is not a passive withdrawal but a conscious choice of faith: as we contemplate the Face of Christ, our Peace, and our Reconciliation, let us implore God for *the gift of peace* through the intercession of Mary Most Holy. Let us ask her for the necessary strength to be builders of peace, starting with daily life in the family.

The family! The family nucleus must be the very first place in which Christ's peace is welcomed, fostered, and safeguarded. In our day, however, without prayer, it becomes more and more difficult for families to fulfill this vocation of theirs. This is why it would be truly helpful to return to the beautiful custom of reciting the Rosary at home, as was the practice of past generations. "The family that prays together stays together" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n.41).

I entrust these intentions to Our Lady, so that she may protect families and obtain peace for individuals and for the whole world.

I hope that all believers, together with the Virgin, may start out with determination on the path of holiness, keeping their gaze fixed on Jesus and meditating, with the Rosary, on the mysteries of salvation. This will be the most precious fruit of... praying the Rosary.