

THE SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

THE SEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

19-25 May Ordinary Time resumes

.....
Sun. **THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMING**
May 19 **LIVING IN THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT**
A reflection taken from a homily by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

Ordinary Time resumes

Mon. **Memorial of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Church**
20 **MARY'S VOICE INSPIRES THE CHURCH**
Fr. Basil Pennington, OCSO

Tues. **Tuesday of the 7th Week of Ordinary Time**
21 **THE HOLY SPIRIT STRENGTHENS THE "INNER MAN"**
From the Encyclical DOMINUM ET VIVIFICANTEM (no. 59)
by Pope John Paul II, Pentecost 1986

Wed. **Memorial of Saint Rita of Cascia**
22 **ST. RITA OF CASCIA, AUGUSTINIAN**
From the Vatican News

Thurs. **Monthly Remembrance of the Dead**
23 **A SCHOOL OF THE LORD'S SERVICE AND ITS TEACHERS**
A reflection from St. Bernard's third Pentecost Sermon

MONASTIC DESERT DAY

Fri. **Friday of the 7th Week of Ordinary Time**
24 **DAILY TRUST IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE**
A reflection taken from a sermon by Bl. Guerric of Igny

Sat. **The Memorial of St. Bede the Venerable**
25 **BEDE, THE VENERABLE**
From a General Audience Address by Pope Benedict XVI
18 February 2009

Sunday

LIVING IN THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

A reflection taken from a homily by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

The Holy Solemnity of the Spirit puts new heart into us. Not only do we experience the gift of the dignity of God's own children but we experience delight. On this feast it is love that we specially honor. Among human beings there is no word more pleasant to hear and no thought more delightful to dwell on than love. The love that we celebrate is nothing other than the goodness, kindness, and charity of God. God is personally goodness, kindness and charity. God's goodness, moreover, is identical with the Spirit, with God's very self.

In disposing all things, the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world from the beginning. The Spirit reaches from one end to the other of the world and delicately disposes everything to receive God's gifts. As sanctifier the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world. In a special way this was re-begun at Pentecost. On this day the gracious Spirit was itself sent by the Heavenly Father and the Only Son on a new mission, in a new way, and through a new manifestation of mighty power. The sending was for the sanctification of every creature. Before Jesus was glorified the Spirit had not been given, but today the Spirit came forth from the Heavenly Throne to give God's self in endlessly abundant richness to the human race. It was a divine outpouring that is to pervade the whole, wide world and be manifest in myriad spiritual endowments.

Where could such an overflowing of delight come from if not from heaven? Not many days previously heaven received from earth a fruit of wonderful sweetness and beauty. Did our land ever yield a fruit more pleasant than the Lord Jesus? He is sweeter, more pleasant, holier and most delectable. Indeed, faithfulness has sprung up from the earth! A few days ago, we sent Christ on ahead of us to the Heavenly Kingdom so we might have in return all that Heaven held that would be sweet to our longing.

The full sweetness of earth is Christ's humanity. The full sweetness of Heaven is Christ's Spirit. Christ's humanity ascended from us to heaven and Christ's Spirit has come down upon us. Now indeed does the Spirit of the Lord fill the whole world. All creation recognizes his voice. Everywhere the Spirit is at work, everywhere the Spirit speaks. The Lord said, "Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive anyone's sins they are forgiven". But before the day of Pentecost the Spirit's voice was, in a sense, still unheard. His power has not yet leaped forth, nor had the disciples come to know the Spirit truly. They were still in the grip of fear, cowering behind closed doors.

From Pentecost day onward, the voice of the Lord has resounded. The God of majesty has thundered and made his voice heard. The voice of the Lord strikes flaming fire, the voice of the Lord shakes the desert and stirs the wilderness, the voice of the Lord strips the forest bare and all cry glory. How do we join our voices to the Lord's? We cry out, as the Lord Jesus did from the cross, with words of mercy and love. That is what our lives must cry out each day and hour that we live. Glory to God forever!

Monday

MARY'S VOICE INSPIRES THE CHURCH

Fr. Basil Pennington, OCSO

Mary's Yes to God was so total that He formed in her, in very flesh and in her flesh, Christ the only Son, even as he made her to be the one of all creation to be most identified with Him. To the extent that we too, say Yes will the Father through the Spirit form His Son in us, form us into His Son. In this sense Mary is our mother and the mother of the Church.

Mary never rested on her newly acquired dignity. The Lord's message had indicated to her a need: your cousin Elizabeth has, in her old age herself conceived a son.....". One who in truth is the servant of the Lord is the servant of all the people of the Lord. With the fearlessness born of faith- even when knowing all the fears of the first hours of a first pregnancy-and impelled by love, the young woman from Nazareth sets out across the alien land of the Samaritans into the sophistication of suburbia to offer her humble service.

But see what happens: "As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child in her womb leapt for joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit". Mary had not come with a mind to fulfill an apostolic mission, to be the bearer of the Good News, of the living Word of God. She came but to render a simple human service, to do an act of kindness, to respond to a real human need. Yet her merest presence, her simple arrival, brought life and grace and the powerful presence of the Spirit.

And so, it us with us, the Church. If we but listen to the word and open ourselves in deep prayer, say our existential Yes and let the Most High form Christ in us, then as we go about our simple daily human duties we will be bringing Christ, His life, His love, His Spirit to each one we meet and greet. No one can give what they themselves do not have. But having, it is given, without our conscious effort or intent. For this is the Lord's doing -and it is wonderful in our sight.

May Mary, Mother of the Church inspire us to say the same Yes which she did.

Tuesday

THE HOLY SPIRIT STRENGTHENS THE "INNER MAN"

From the Encyclical DOMINUM ET VIVIFICANTEM (no. 59) by Pope John Paul II, Pentecost 1986

Man's intimate relationship with God in the Holy Spirit also enables him to understand himself, his own humanity, in a new way. Thus that image and likeness of God which man is from his very beginning is fully realized. This intimate truth of the human being has to be continually rediscovered in the light of Christ who is the prototype of the relationship with God. There also has to be rediscovered in Christ the reason for "full self-discovery through a sincere gift of himself" to others, as the Second Vatican Council writes: precisely by reason of this divine likeness which "shows that on earth man...is the only creature that God wishes for himself" in his dignity as a person, but as one open to integration and social communion. The effective knowledge and full implementation of this truth of his being come about only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Man learns this truth from Jesus Christ and puts it into practice in his own life by the power of the Spirit, whom Jesus himself has given to us.

Along this path—the path of such an inner maturity, which includes the full discovery of the meaning of humanity—God comes close to man, and permeates more and more completely the whole human world. The Triune God, who "exists" in himself as a transcendent reality of interpersonal gift, giving himself in the Holy Spirit as gift to man, transforms the human world from within, from inside hearts and minds. Along this path, the world, made to share in the divine gift, becomes—as the Council teaches—"ever more human, ever more profoundly human," while within the world, through people's hearts and minds, the Kingdom develops in which God will be definitively "all in all: as gift and love. Gift and love: this is the eternal power of the opening of the Triune God to an and the world, in the Holy Spirit.

Through the action of the Spirit-Paraclete, may there be accomplished in our world a process of true growth in humanity, in both individual and community life. In this regard Jesus himself "when he prayed to the Father, 'that all may be one...as we are one' (Jn 17:21-22)...implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine persons and the union of the children of God in truth and charity." The Council repeats this truth about man, and the Church sees in it a particularly strong and conclusive indication of her own apostolic tasks. For if man is the way of the Church, this way passes through the whole mystery of Christ, as man's divine model. Along this way the Holy Spirit, strengthening in each of us "the inner man," enables man ever more "fully to find himself through a sincere gift of self." These words of the Pastoral Constitution of the Council can be said to sum up the whole of Christian anthropology: that theory and practice, based on the Gospel, in which man discovers himself as belonging to Christ and discovers that in Christ he is raised to the status of a child of God, and so understands better his own dignity as man, precisely because he is the subject of God's approach and presence, the subject of the divine condescension, which contains the prospect and the very root of definitive glorification. Thus it can truly be said that "the glory of God is the living man, yet man's life is the vision of God": man, living a divine life, is the glory of God, and the Holy Spirit is the hidden dispenser of this life and this glory. The Holy Spirit—says the great Basil— "while simple in essence and manifold in his virtues...extends himself without undergoing any diminishing, is present in each subject capable of receiving him as if he were the only one, and gives grace which is sufficient for all."

Wednesday

ST. RITA OF CASCIA, AUGUSTINIAN

From the Vatican News

Margherita Lotti - "Rita" for short - was born in the small township of Roccaporena in Umbria, probably in 1371. Her parents, poor farmers and peasants, made sure she had good schooling and religious education in the nearby Cascia, in the care of the Augustinian friars. From the friars, Rita learned devotion to St. Augustine, St. John the Baptist, and Nicholas of Tolentino, whom Rita chose as his patron saints.

Around 1385, she married Paolo di Ferdinando di Mancino. Society was rife with controversies and political rivalries, in which Rita's husband was involved. The young Rita, however, through prayer, patience, and the ability to pacify that she learned from his parents, helped her spouse slowly but surely to live a more authentically Christian way of life. With love, understanding and patience, the union of Rita and Paolo became fruitful, cheered by the arrival of two sons: Giangiacomo and Paolo Maria. Their domestic serenity would not last, however, owing to the implacable factional strife of the era, in which Rita's husband was involved owing to his kinship bonds, and was murdered. To avoid having the children seek revenge, Rita hid their father's bloody shirt. In her heart Rita forgives her husband's murderers, but not the Mancino family who pressed for revenge. Rita did not cease to pray that more bloodshed be spared, making of prayer her weapon and consolation. A disease caused the death of Giangiacomo and Paul Maria: her only comfort was to think of their souls, no longer in danger after escaping the climate of retaliation aroused by the murder of her spouse, their father.

Left alone in the world, Rita began a life of more intense prayer for her dear deceased family members, also for the di Mancino family, that they might forgive and find peace. At the age of 36, she asks to enter the Augustinian Monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena of Cascia, but is rejected: perhaps for fear that as a widow of a murdered man, her presence might jeopardize the security of the community. Rita's prayers and the intercessions of her patron saints instead lead to the peace between the families involved in the killing of Paolo di Mancino, and eventually, she was allowed to enter the monastery. It is reported that the Abbess, to try Rita's humility during her novitiate, asked her to water an arid wood, and that her obedience was rewarded by God with a lush growth that flourishes to this day. Rita distinguished herself as a humble, zealous religious woman in prayer and in all of her tasks, and as one capable of frequent fasting and penance. Her virtues were also known outside the monastery walls, due to her charitable works along with her sisters. She especially visited the elderly, cared for the sick, and assisted the poor.

More and more immersed in the contemplation of Christ, Rita eventually asked to participate in his Passion, and in 1432, in prayer, she discovered on her forehead a wound as from the thorny crown worn by the Christ, which would remain until her death 15 years later. In the winter before her death, ill and confined to her bed, Rita asked a cousin, visiting from Roccaporena, to bring her two figs and a rose from the garden of her father's house. It was January. Rita's visitor humored her, thinking of her as delirious. She, however, was astonished to find the rose and the figs, and brought them to Cascia. For Rita, they were a sign of the goodness of God, who welcomed her two sons and her husband into heaven. Rita died in the night between 21 and 22 May of 1447. Because of the great cult that grew up around her immediately afterwards, her body was never buried. Today, her earthly remains are housed in a glass casket. Rita was able to flourish despite the thorns that life reserved for her. She emanated the good perfume of Christ, and melted the frosty winter of so many hearts. For this reason, and in remembrance of the prodigy of Roccaporena, Rita's symbol *par excellence* is the rose.

Thursday

A SCHOOL OF THE LORD'S SERVICE AND ITS TEACHERS

A reflection from St. Bernard's third Pentecost Sermon

We know that from the beginning of the human race there have been many who are weighed down by concern for the visible world and for themselves. They disregard the purpose for which we have all been made. Some philosophers, for instance, directed their greatest zeal to investigating the arrangement of created things and led many others to neglect the ways in which things are useful to leading us to God.

People more prudent than these followed them and learned to pass by things that are made and questions about how they were made. It wasn't hidden from them that God made everything for his own purpose and for the good of all who belong to God. He made everything with gratuitous goodness for the benefit of his chosen ones. Spiritual persons use this world as though they weren't using it and seek God in the simplicity of their hearts.

We have much reason to rejoice that such people have led us to give ourselves to the tasks of learning how to serve God and love each other. Fortunate is the one who remains in the dwelling place of wisdom and of the Holy Spirit. It is characteristic of those led by the Spirit to cast away sin and to hate it. Our teachers have been holy persons who showed us how to seek God in a House of the Lord's service. We are the children of these holy ones, especially of those who have walked the monastic way of learning to love God. They have passed on to us their love and dedication to God.

Do you know how to possess yourself in holiness and honor? Is it your will that whatever you want others to do to you, you will also do to them? Through whom did you receive a right spirit for serving your neighbor? The Holy Spirit is bestowed upon human beings for just such reasons. When we were helped to turn with our whole heart to God then the Spirit was given us to heal our weaknesses and give us consolation. The Spirit enkindled in us a mighty flame of love that we might glory only in the hope of being fully children of God. But all this was done by people who went before us in this monastic School of the Lord's service. We pray for them and pray with them so that the Spirit will draw us all together in his eternal Kingdom.

Let us pray that the days of Pentecost will be fulfilled in us as in them. Let us pray that these will be days of forgiveness and days of exultation. Let us pray most of all that these will be days filled with gratitude for those who have been our teachers by their example and manner of life in this our School of the Lord's service. By our oneness of heart may the Holy Spirit make us teachers like those who have now gone before us to God. This is the expression of our vowed stability to the praise and glory of the Church's bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Let's never depart from the way of walking in faith that we were shown by Jesus. Walk in faith and love. Follow those who first steadied your shaky feet so you could walk in this way. May he bring us all together to the House of our Heavenly Father and its eternal peace.

Friday

DAILY TRUST IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE

A reflection taken from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

“Father, while I was with them, I kept them in your name.” This was the Lord’s prayer on the eve of his passion. Does it imply that the Lord will withdraw his care when he has ascended and sent the Spirit as his own “paraclete”? Of course not. The name “paraclete” means “comforter at one’s side”. The Lord is with us always, especially after the Coming of the Spirit. He who in Heaven directs and governs the hosts of angels has chosen a small group to be his associates and representatives on earth. The Lord instructed them in person until the time when their hearts were sufficiently opened to be led by the Spirit. Christ loved these little ones with a love worthy of his greatness. Having called them away from secular pursuits and ambitions, they now rely on him alone.

But when the moment had come to leave the disciples, He was overwhelmed by the depth of his affection for them and unable to disguise his overflowing tenderness. Hence the Evangelist’s words: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” He laid bare the strength of his love for his friends before pouring himself out like water for them and also gave to them the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

It is difficult to say which is more wonderful, the power of his love in devising this new means for remaining with them, or his longing to console them. In spite of withdrawing his bodily presence he remained not only with them but in them. That is the power of this sacrament. He prayed, “Father, while I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name and none is lost except the one destined to be lost. And now I am coming to you, so keep those you have given me in your Name.” The whole of his prayer can be summarized under three heads. First, that the disciples are to be kept from evil. Second, that they are to be sanctified in the truth. Third, that they are to be glorified with Him. “Father, I long that those you have given me be with me where I am.”

And he promised them that the Spirit should be for them and see that his prayer would be fulfilled. Just what he has himself been for them so would the Spirit be. Happy are those who have the Spirit as their advocate, pleasing for them always. Yes, the Spirit must be adored with as much honor and love as the one to whom he prays on our behalf. The Father will not refuse him, even as he didn’t refuse the Only Son. The Spirit shares with Father and Son the single will and power that is God’s alone.

All is bound to be accomplished that is requested by Christ and the Spirit. Their word is all-powerful. Their will is wholly efficacious. We know that God spoke and everything came to exist; God spoke, and it was done, commanded and all existed. And Jesus has prayed: “I desire that where I am, they too may be!” What a certainty believers have! It is not a certain only for apostles or their companions. It is for all those who believe through their word. That is Jesus’ own prayer. Be assured and certain. The Spirit is caring for you.

Saturday

BEDE, THE VENERABLE

From a General Audience Address by Pope Benedict XVI, 18 February 2009

The Saint we are approaching today is called Bede and was born in the north-east of England, to be exact, Northumbria, in the year 672 or 673. He himself recounts that when he was seven years old his parents entrusted him to the Abbot of the neighboring Benedictine monastery to be educated: "spending all the remaining time of my life a dweller in that monastery". He recalls, "I wholly applied myself to the study of Scripture; and amidst the observance of the monastic Rule and the daily charge of singing in church, I always took delight in learning, or teaching, or writing" (*Historia eccl. Anglorum*, v, 24). In fact, Bede became one of the most outstanding erudite figures of the early Middle Ages since he was able to avail himself of many precious manuscripts that his Abbots would bring him on their return from frequent journeys to the continent and to Rome. His teaching and the fame of his writings occasioned his friendships with many of the most important figures of his time who encouraged him to persevere in his work from which so many were to benefit. When Bede fell ill, he did not stop working, always preserving an inner joy that he expressed in prayer and song. He ended his most important work, the *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, with this invocation: "I beseech you, O good Jesus, that to the one to whom you have graciously granted sweetly to drink in the words of your knowledge, you will also vouchsafe in your loving kindness that he may one day come to you, the Fountain of all wisdom, and appear forever before your face". Death took him on 26 May 737: it was the Ascension.

Sacred Scripture was the constant source of Bede's theological reflection. After a critical study of the text (a copy of the monumental *Codex Amiatinus* of the Vulgate on which Bede worked has come down to us), he comments on the Bible, interpreting it in a Christological key, that is, combining two things: on the one hand he listens to exactly what the text says, he really seeks to hear and understand the text itself; on the other, he is convinced that the key to understanding Sacred Scripture as the one word of God is Christ, and with Christ, in his light, one understands the Old and New Testaments as "one" Sacred Scripture. The events of the Old and New Testaments go together, they are the way to Christ, although expressed in different signs and institutions (this is what he calls the *concordia sacramentorum*). For example, the tent of the covenant that Moses pitched in the desert and the first and second temples of Jerusalem are images of the Church, the new temple built on Christ and on the Apostles with living stones, held together by the love of the Spirit. And just as pagan peoples also contributed to building the ancient temple by making available valuable materials and the technical experience of their master builders, so too contributing to the construction of the Church there were apostles and teachers, not only from ancient Jewish, Greek and Latin lineage, but also from the new peoples, among whom Bede was pleased to list the Irish Celts and Anglo-Saxons. St Bede saw the growth of the universal dimension of the Church which is not restricted to one specific culture but is comprised of all the cultures of the world that must be open to Christ and find in him their goal.