

THE TENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

9-15 June 2024

Sun. **The Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
June 9 **TWO TYPES OF MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT JESUS**
From the Angelus Address by Pope Francis, 10 June 2018

Mon. **Monday of the Tenth Week in Ordinary Time**
10 **SERMON ON THE MOUNT**
From the Catechesis on the Beatitudes by Pope Francis, 9 January 2020

Tues. **Memorial of St. Barnabas**
11 **ENCOURAGING ALL TO LIVE THE BOND OF LOVE**
A Reflection taken from talks by St. Pope John XXIII

Wed. **Wednesday of the Tenth Week in Ordinary Time**
12 **THE PRAYER OF ELIJAH**
From the Angelus Address by Pope Benedict, Wednesday, 15 June 2011

Thurs. **Memorial of St. Anthony of Padua**
13 **THE APOSTOLATE OF GOOD EXAMPLE**
A Reflection by St. Pope John XXIII

Fri. **The Memorial of Bl. Gerard**
14 **THE CONTEMPLATIVE VOCATION**
A Reflection taken from texts by St. Bernard & St. Anselm

Sat. **A Memorial of Our Lady**
15 **LEARNING NEVER TO GIVE UP ON ANYONE**
A Reflection from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Sunday

TWO TYPES OF MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT JESUS

From the Angelus Address by Pope Francis, 10 June 2018

This Sunday's Gospel reading (Mk 3:20-35) shows us two types of misunderstanding that Jesus had to face: that of the scribes and that of his own brethren.

The first misunderstanding. The scribes were men educated in the Sacred Scriptures and charged with explaining them to the people. Some of them were sent from Jerusalem to Galilee, where Jesus' reputation was beginning to spread, to discredit him in the eyes of the people: to play the role of gossip, to discredit the other, to remove his authority, to do this awful thing. And they were sent to do this. And these scribes arrived with a specific and terrible accusation — they spared no means; they went straight to the point and said: "He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons" (v. 22). That is, the prince of demons is the one who drives Him, which is more or less tantamount to saying: "He is possessed by demons". In fact Jesus healed many sick people, and the scribes wanted to make others believe that he did so not with the Spirit of God — as Jesus did — but with that of the Evil One, with the power of the devil. Jesus reacted with firm and clear words; he did not tolerate this, because those scribes, perhaps without realizing it, were falling into the gravest sin: denying and blaspheming against God's Love which is present and active in Jesus. And blasphemy, the sin against the Holy Spirit, is the one unforgivable sin because it comes from closing the heart to God's mercy which acts in Jesus.

But this episode contains an admonishment that is useful to all of us. Indeed, it can happen that deep envy of a person's goodness and good works can drive one to falsely accuse him or her. Here there is true, lethal poison: the malice with which, in a premeditated manner, one wants to destroy the good reputation of the other. May God free us from this terrible temptation! And if, by examining our conscience, we realize that this weed is sprouting within us, let us go straight away to confess it in the Sacrament of Penance, before it grows and produces its evil effects, which are incurable. Be careful, because this attitude destroys families, friendships, communities, and even society.

Today's Gospel also speaks to us about another, very different misunderstanding with regard to Jesus: that of his brethren. They were worried because his new itinerant life seemed folly to them (cf. v. 21). In fact, he exhibited such openness toward the people, especially toward the sick and toward sinners, to the extent that he did not even have time to eat. Jesus was like that: people first; serving people; helping people; teaching people; and healing people. He was for the people. He did not even have time to eat. Thus, his brethren decided to take him back home to Nazareth. His brethren came to the place where Jesus was teaching and they sent to him and called him. He was told: "'Your mother and your brethren are outside, asking for you.' And he replied: 'Who are my mother and my brethren?'. And looking around at those who sat about him, he said 'Here are my mother and my brethren! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother'" (vv. 32-35).

Jesus formed a new family, no longer based on natural ties, but on faith in him, on his love which welcomes us and unites us to each other, in the Holy Spirit. All those who welcome Jesus' word are children of God and brothers and sisters among themselves. Welcoming the word of Jesus makes us brothers and sisters, makes us Jesus' family. Speaking ill of others, and destroying others' reputations, makes us the devil's family.

Jesus' response was not a lack of respect for his mother and his brethren. Rather, for Mary it is the greatest recognition, precisely because she herself is the perfect disciple who completely obeyed God's will. May the Virgin Mother help us to live always in communion with Jesus, recognizing the work of the Holy Spirit who acts in him and in the Church, regenerating the world to new life.

Monday

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

From the Catechesis on the Beatitudes by Pope Francis, 9 January 2020

This passage, which starts the “Sermon on the Mount”, illuminated the lives of believers and also that of many non-believers. It is difficult not to be touched by these words of Jesus, and the desire to understand them and welcome them ever more fully is righteous. The Beatitudes provide the “identity card” of Christians — this is our identity card — because they outline the face of Jesus himself, his style of living.

Let us now frame Jesus’ words within a wider context.

First of all, *how* the proclamation of this message occurred, is important: seeing the multitude that followed him, Jesus scaled the gentle slope overlooking the Sea of Galilee, sat down and, turning to the disciples, announced the Beatitudes. His message was thus addressed to his *disciples*. However, the multitude, that is, all of humanity, was on the horizon. It is a message for all of humanity.

Moreover, the “mount” recalls Sinai, where God gave Moses the Commandments. Jesus begins to teach a new law: to be poor, to be meek, to be merciful.... These “new commandments” are much more than a set of rules. Indeed, Jesus does not impose anything but reveals the way of happiness — *his way* — by repeating the word “blessed” eight times.

Each Beatitude is composed of three parts. Firstly, there is always the word “blessed”. Then there is the *situation* in which the blessed find themselves: poverty of spirit, affliction, hunger and thirst for justice, and so on. Lastly, there is the *reason* for the beatitude, introduced by the conjunction “because”: “Blessed are they because, blessed are those because...”. The eight Beatitudes are like this and it would be good to learn them off by heart so as to repeat them, to have this law that Jesus gave us, precisely in our minds and hearts.

Let us pay attention to this fact: the reason behind the Beatitudes is not a current situation, but rather the new condition that the blessed receive as a gift from God: because “theirs is the Kingdom of heaven”, because “they shall be comforted”, because “they shall inherit the earth” and so on.

In the third element which is the reason for happiness, Jesus often uses the future passive voice: “they shall be comforted”, “they shall be satisfied”, “they shall be forgiven”, “they shall be called children of God”.

But what does the word “*blessed*” mean? Because each of the eight Beatitudes begins with the word “*blessed*”. The original term does not mean one with a full belly or one who is doing well, but rather it is a person who is in a condition of grace, who progresses in God’s grace and progresses on God’s path: patience, poverty, service to others, comfort... Those who advance in these things are happy and shall be blessed.

In order to give himself to us, God often chooses unthinkable paths, perhaps the path of our limitations, of our tears, of our defeats. It is the paschal joy of which our Oriental brothers and sisters speak, the one that has the stigmata but is alive, has been through death and has experienced the Power of God. The Beatitudes always bring you to joy. They are the paths to reach joy. It will do us good to take Matthew’s Gospel today, chapter 5, verses 1-11, and to read the Beatitudes — perhaps a few more times throughout the week — in order to understand this very beautiful path, so sure of the happiness the Lord offers us.

Tuesday

ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO LIVE THE BOND OF LOVE

A Reflection taken from talks by St. Pope John XXIII

Even among spiritual people, there are many opinions and views. The challenge is to see that this doesn't harm charity and peace. We have to act and speak in the sort of moderation of manner that encourages harmony in the service of the Gospel and of all that is good. I will add that the Lord makes use even of misunderstandings among us to bring about some great good in ways far from what we might expect.

Take the instance of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over the inclusion of young John Mark in their company as they set out again on an evangelical mission. He had been with them before and, in the midst of things, had quit and gone home. Now Paul refused to trust him to be a faithful part of this new venture in the apostolate. Barnabas, however, insisted on trusting him. The disagreement got so strong that Paul and Barnabas themselves separated and went on two different missionary ventures.

Beware of misunderstandings! They arise, they present challenges and may even lead to fighting. We must be on our guard against this. If we can't avoid such disagreements, at least let's not cultivate them. Don't let them get blown up in your imagination. Let's always try to explain them away or heal them in a peaceful way. Let's work especially hard to keep ourselves free of resentment.

Barnabas and Paul were both righteous and holy. We know that Barnabas took John Mark with him and by his trust and confidence in him encouraged him to become a good and effective evangelist. Perhaps it was this example that led Paul to work with him later, and consider him an especially fine and loved collaborator in the work of leading non-Jews to Jesus and the Heavenly Father. In other words, Barnabas was better at clearing away misunderstandings. He showed that Paul's original mistrust was a misunderstanding.

We should never forget the teaching of our Lord that believing and renouncing one's own ways brings more joy and peace than demanding and receiving what we may want. The New Testament tells us that Barnabas' name means "person who encourages" and that he found ways to encourage the early Jerusalem Christian community but selling some land and giving the sale price to the apostles for use in helping the community's poor. Was it due to him that the practice of giving away one's possessions became established in the Church?

Charity is like precious gold, refined in the fire and enriching all who possess it. It spreads love not only among those who receive but among all who observe charity in action. Whatever one offers, if it is offered without charity, is neither pleasing to God nor profitable to self or others. But if we know this, we know also how to encourage others and that the best way is by deeds of charity and love. Every community needs its Barnabas if it is to live in a genuinely Christian way, and if its members are to love each other, and all, as Christ loves us. Each of us has received the call to love one another as Barnabas did. We start by encouraging one another by showing what such love can accomplish, even using deeds that seem little and of little importance.

Wednesday

THE PRAYER OF ELIJAH

From the Angelus Address by Pope Benedict, Wednesday, 15 June 2011

Elijah's prayerful attitude was entirely different (from that of the prophets of Baal). He asked the people to draw close, thereby involving it in his action and his supplication. The purpose of the challenge he addressed to the prophets of Baal was to restore to God the people who had strayed, following idols; therefore he wanted Israel to be united with him, to become a participator in and a protagonist of his prayer and of everything that was happening. Then the prophet built an altar, using, as the text says, "twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying: 'Israel shall be your name'" (v. 31). Those stones represented the whole of Israel and are the tangible memorial of the story of the choice, predilection and salvation of which the people had been the object. The liturgical gesture of Elijah had crucial importance; the altar was a sacred place that indicated the Lord's presence, but those stones of which it was made represented the people which now, through the prophet's mediation was symbolically placed before God, it had become an "altar", a place of offering and sacrifice.

Yet the symbol needed to become reality, for Israel to recognize the true God and to rediscover its own identity as the Lord's People. Elijah therefore asked God to show himself, and those twelve stones that were to remind Israel of its truth also served to remind the Lord of his fidelity, for which the prophet appealed in prayer. The words of his invocation are full of meaning and faith: "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back" (vv. 36-37). Elijah turned to the Lord, calling him the God of the Fathers, thus implicitly calling to mind the divine promises and the story of the choosing and Covenant that bound the Lord indissolubly to his people. The involvement of God in human history is such that his name was inseparably connected with that of the patriarchs and the prophet spoke that holy Name so that God might remember and show himself to be faithful, but also so that Israel might feel called by name and rediscover its faithfulness. In fact, the divine title spoken by Elijah seems somewhat surprising. Instead of using the customary formula, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", he used a less-known title: "God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel". The replacement of the name "Jacob" with "Israel" calls to mind Jacob's struggle at the ford of the Jabbok, with the change of name to which the narrator explicitly refers (cf. Gen 32:31). The substitution acquires a pregnant meaning in Elijah's invocation. The prophet is praying for the people of the kingdom of the north which was called, precisely, Israel, as distinct from Judah, which indicated the kingdom of the south. And now, these people, who seemed to have forgotten their own origins and privileged relationship with the Lord, heard themselves called by name while the name of God, God of the Patriarch and God of the People, was spoken: "O Lord, God... of Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel".

Thursday

THE APOSTOLATE OF GOOD EXAMPLE

A reflection by St. Pope John XXIII

The seed we call grace is planted in baptism and flowers in a life given to God. This seed in the life of St. Anthony of Padua bore wonderful fruits in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and in the virtues. They made him not only a great preacher but a person who drew others with a charm that flowed from utter dedication to God in Christ. This expressed itself in the love of the neighbor.

The seed of grace planted in Anthony was the seed that is planted in each of us. This seed is meant to transform us, in Scripture's words, from one degree of glory to another". This comes from the one Holy Spirit. A kind of by-product is what St. Paul calls its aroma: "*We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved*" (II Cor. 2:15). It is a marvelous aroma and those who sense it are drawn to the one from whom it comes. That was how it was with St. Anthony.

There is, then, for each of us an essential duty. We are to live according to the promises made when we were baptized. On our part, it is a promise of willing fidelity to divine grace, including the practice of that which draws people to Christ. He is the source of goodness and beauty, of truth and of purification and perfection. This is a perfection in beauty and loveliness.

Everyone is to act according to the promptings of grace and it is through one's own personal call that these come. All must share in the same firm determination to bear witness to the Divine Founder of Christianity. This is the essential expression of the life of God in us; it is the source of our hope for life in heaven.

Anthony's way of living of his vocation and mission was very pleasing to God. The proof was seen in special displays of divine power. These didn't make him holy but came from the holiness God gave him as he struggled to remain faithful to his baptismal vows. We do not need to ask God to work wonders through us but we know that we have a share in the work of bringing in God's Kingdom. That is already a great privilege and even a miracle. It is what God and the Church expect of each of us. Know that God can make you a person who will be a good odor of Christ for all who come near to you.

You and I will always be able to carry on the apostolate of good example. We live in a world that is not even ashamed of bad examples but for the very reason has the greater need for good ones—indeed, for very good ones! This is the call given to all who received the gift of Christian faith. Do it without fear or anxiety. Do it graciously. Spread around you the warmth of God's love and of your convictions about that love's saving and healing power. Live in a serenity that is born of such faith.

It is very pleasant to refresh oneself, to renew our minds and hearts, in the work of those who have left behind them such wonderful proofs of the fruits of directing all one's self to God. It isn't some personal achievement of extraordinary people. It is the fruit of God's free gift. Open yourself wide to receive, and live, that gift and let others be refreshed by the goodness and joy God will give to you.

Friday

THE CONTEMPLATIVE VOCATION

A Reflection taken from texts by St. Bernard & St. Anselm

Citeaux was founded from a reform monastery by members who wanted even more reform. Their ideal was a full contemplative life. Yet the contemplative ideal presented by St. Benedict calls for monks to live by the work of their own hands. It is never easy to contemplate while working hard at a task that requires attention to detail and thought. Blessed Gerard possessed great work skills and St. Bernard depended on him to make the monastery and its business affairs work well—so that the labor of all the monks would provide enough to support their contemplation. He took care of the practicalities of St. Bernard's journeyings and walked with him (e.g.) all the way to Rome and back. He freed Bernard to do the many things an abbot must do, and those that Bernard's special talents enabled only him to do for the Church.

When it came Gerard's time to die he began to pray: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!" But then he got stuck, in the way contemplatives do, on the word "Father". He simply repeated this word, wrapped in a wonderful smile, until the Lord took him. Though, Bernard tells us, he never admitted to having any real spiritual wisdom, yet he was always insightful in seeing the spiritual meaning and implications of whatever was going on. Bernard says he was one of his finest advisors in things of the Spirit. How could he see himself so humbly, while his brother said he was holy? It could be because he had learned contemplation. The following prayer of another very active contemplative, St. Anselm, can help us understand.

"O Lord, how long? How long, O Lord, will you forget us; how long will you turn your face from us? When will you look upon us and hear us? When will you enlighten our eyes and show us your face? When will you draw near to us? Look upon us, O Lord, hear us and enlighten us; reveal yourself to us that it may be well with us. You invite us and help us and so I plead with you Lord that I may not lose hope but find new breath. Lord my heart is bitter from its desolation; sweeten it I beseech you and grant your consolation! Lord, in hunger I began to seek you. May I never cease to hunger for you.

Let me not go away unfed. I have come in poverty to your riches and in misery to your compassion. Let me not go away empty. Lord, I am bowed down and can only look downward so raise me up and help me look always upward. My sins seem to overwhelm me and weigh me down. Free me from them; unburden me; let the pit of hell not close over me.

"May it be my part to look upward toward your light, even from the depths. Teach me to seek you and reveal yourself to me when I seek you. I cannot even seek you unless you teach me, nor can I find you unless you reveal yourself. Let me seek you in longing, let me long for you in seeking, let me find You in love and love You in finding You. Lord, I thank You that you created me in Your image so that I may be mindful of You and so may love You. That image has been tarnished and spoiled by my sins and bad habits and it cannot by itself achieve that for which it was made. You will have to renew it and recreate it. I am not trying to penetrate your sublimity but I long to understand just a little what my heart believes and loves. And so Lord, give me understanding even as you give me faith."

This was the sort of prayer we can imagine Gerard praying. The gift of walking in faith and without understanding, and all through a lifetime, brought him to contemplation's goal, the vision of God. It can bring us there as well.

Saturday

LEARNING NEVER TO GIVE UP ON ANYONE

A Reflection from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Of all the human weaknesses that God has born for us I think the greatest was also the first in time—it was that God lay concealed in the Virgin's womb for nine months. A majesty that knows no bounds was so deeply humble as to remain silent and hidden like this for such a long time. Divine Wisdom says nothing and Divine Power works nothing and these realities' presence is not betrayed by any visible sign. God was not seen in such weakness even on the Cross. There, what seemed weak was seen to be strong beyond imagining when he blessed with paradise the thief dying with him and when his last breath drew a centurion to confess him as Son of God. But in the womb, it is as if he did not exist. The Eternal Word constrained itself to be utterly silent. To us who have faith, the silence of the Word cries out. It calls us too to take up the discipline of silence. This nourishes, forms and strengthens the human spirit in a marvelous inner growth which is more wholesome for being more hidden. If this were not true Solomon would not have said: "Like an open city without any encompassing walls, so is the person who can't restrain the tongue from speaking".

Consider now the meal in which we are partaking. We are to eat the one who is the Bread of Life, the Bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Every word that comes forth from the mouth of God is the Bread of Life, the Only-Begotten Son. And he comes forth from a virgin's womb, from one silence into the silence of a loving heart which receives him wholly and willingly. If you are wise your occupation will be to eat this bread in the presence of the Lord God, preserving like Mary all you hear from or about God and pondering it in your heart. We have been made members of Christ's Body and, precisely as that Body, we eat Christ's Body as the Bread of our lives. Grace is not lessened by use. So the more you eat the more this food will abound for you.

Recall what Scripture tells us about Rebecca when she was carrying both Jacob and Esau in her womb. It is a great lesson that the Word of God gives us as we eat him and ponder on what he has done by giving us the sign of a virgin who conceived. The two children seemed to Rebecca to be struggling in her womb, and she found this very painful. She almost wished that she had not conceived them. Now Mary's womb foreshadows that which is the Church and in whose womb there are the good and well-behaved plus the ill-tempered and undisciplined.

All are called into the Body of Christ. Do the ill-disciplined and ill-tempered annoy you so that you wish they had not been brought to term? But God can soften stony hearts to make them the hearts of children of Abraham. God softens the heart of the Church, and your own heart, so that the ache felt is born as long as it takes to re-form the two into one Christ-likeness. Those God has called are never cast away. Never despair of others, or of yourself. God will continue to work until all are beloved children of the Heavenly Father. Do not grow weary of bearing with those who cause you pain. Love them as our Heavenly Father and pray that God, and Mary mother of all who are in Christ, will lead them to the joy of God's heavenly banquet. Pray and love and trust in God, always.