

THIRTEENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

30 June – 6 July 2024

- Sun. **Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**
June 30 **GOD LOVES & BLESSES OUR ORDINARY LIFE**
A reflection by Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller
- Mon. **Monday in the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time**
July 1 **DEMANDS OF FOLLOWING CHRIST**
From the General Audience Address of Pope Francis, 27 March 2013
- Tues. **Tuesday in the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time**
2 **ARE WE AWAKE TO GOD'S PRESENCE WITHIN US?**
A Reflection taken from a sermon by St. Augustine
- Wed. **Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle**
3 **THE APOSTOLATE OF SHARING HOPE AND LOVE**
A Reflection adapted from Centuries on Charity by St. Maximus the Confessor
- Thurs. **Independence Day**
4 **LETTING GOD OPEN US TO LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS**
A Reflection developed from a mediation by Fr. A. DeMello, SJ
MONASTIC DESERT DAY
- Fri. **Friday of the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time**
5 **SOME REFLECTIONS OF THE CALL OF MATTHEW**
From the General Audience Address of Pope Benedict XVI, 30 August 2006
- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
6 **MARY SHARES HER VOCATION OF BEARING CHRIST**
A Reflection from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Sunday

GOD LOVES AND BLESSES OUR ORDINARY LIFE

A Reflection by Fr. Carroll Stuhmueller

In a passage from the opening chapters of the Book of Wisdom, we are told that God doesn't rejoice in the destruction of the living. The Gospels make this even clearer by showing us the tender and determined way Jesus went about restoring life and health, even under seemingly impossible circumstances. Think of this in relation to Sunday's Gospel reading.

We find Jesus claiming needy and sick people as his own. He went to the sick daughter of a synagogue official, and in the process healed a woman who had been sick for many years. The woman had a long-continuing hemorrhage and had come and touched him without saying anything. But Jesus was aware that power had gone out from him and so looked for her until she identified herself. This required that he ignore or overcome several customs and taboos in a way we could easily miss. You see, what she did, and what he did to the little girl, made him ceremonially "unclean". That meant he wasn't supposed to enter a synagogue or the Temple or to pray liturgically or publicly. It wasn't his purpose to fly in the face of tradition or Mosaic Law, he simply acted lovingly and spontaneously to help two women, and he was willing to defend what he did.

When the hemorrhaging woman touched him, she made him "unclean". When he touched the body of the dead girl he made himself "unclean". Twice over he became "unclean" in less than half an hour. That was why the woman was afraid when Jesus looked around to identify her. She had made a holy man "unclean" and was afraid of what would happen when Jesus drew public attention to it. But notice that Jesus didn't criticize her or "correct" her. He praised her faith! That, he said, was what cured her rather than merely touching his clothes.

Struggling against illness and working to get better are good actions. The Lord was happy to be involved in them. He is still pleased to be involved in our like efforts. We need to believe in the power of miracles.

Notice that as soon as Jesus raised the little girl to life he told her parents to give her something to eat. He thought of her human needs. Notice too, that once he had raised the girl, he wanted people to settle down and go on helping each other in their regular family life. Jesus was blessing our ordinary human existence in making it possible for two individuals to experience the normal joys of life. Recall what the Book of Wisdom told us: God loves life, ordinary life, and wants the creatures of his world to be healthy and wholesome.

To enjoy life we have to share, and Jesus shows us ways of doing that. A selfish person isn't a happy one. Such a person lacks a quality that is part of "wholeness" and of belonging to the human family as well as a particular family. This is essential to being one of God's People. Don't miss your opportunities to do this.

Monday

DEMANDS OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

From the General Audience Address of Pope Francis, 27 March 2013

Jesus lived the daily reality of the most ordinary people: he was moved as he faced the crowd that seemed like a flock without a shepherd; he wept before the sorrow that Martha and Mary felt at the death of their brother, Lazarus; he called a publican to be his disciple; he also suffered betrayal by a friend. In him God has given us the certitude that he is with us, he is among us. "Foxes", he, Jesus, said, "have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt 8:20). Jesus has no house, because his house is the people, it is we who are his dwelling place, his mission is to open God's doors to all, to be the presence of God's love.

Following and accompanying Christ, staying with him, demands "coming out of ourselves", and requires us to be outgoing; to come out of ourselves, out of a dreary way of living faith that has become a habit, out of the temptation to withdraw into our own plans which end by shutting out God's creative action.

God came out of himself to come among us, he pitched his tent among us to bring to us his mercy that saves and gives hope. Nor must we be satisfied with staying in the pen of the 99 sheep if we want to follow him and to remain with him; we too must "go out" with him to seek the lost sheep, the one that has strayed the furthest. Be sure to remember: coming out of ourselves, just as Jesus, just as God came out of himself in Jesus and Jesus came out of himself for all of us.

Someone might say to me: "But Father, I don't have time", "I have so many things to do", "It's difficult", "What can I do with my feebleness and my sins, with so many things?". We are often satisfied with a few prayers, with a distracted and sporadic participation in Sunday Mass, with a few charitable acts; but we do not have the courage "to come out" to bring Christ to others. We are a bit like St Peter. As soon as Jesus speaks of his Passion, death and Resurrection, of the gift of himself, of love for all, the Apostle takes him aside and reproaches him. What Jesus says upsets his plans, seems unacceptable, threatens the security he had built for himself, his idea of the Messiah. And Jesus looks at his disciples and addresses to Peter what may possibly be the harshest words in the Gospels: "Get behind me Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Mk 8:33). God always thinks with mercy: do not forget this. God always thinks mercifully. He is the merciful Father! God thinks like the father waiting for the son and goes to meet him, he spots him coming when he is still far off...

What does this mean? That he went every day to see if his son was coming home: this is our merciful Father. It indicates that he was waiting for him with longing on the terrace of his house. God thinks like the Samaritan who did not pass by the unfortunate man, pitying him or looking at him from the other side of the road, but helped him without asking for anything in return; without asking whether he was a Jew, a pagan or a Samaritan, whether he was rich or poor: he asked for nothing. He went to help him: God is like this. God thinks like the shepherd who lays down his life in order to defend and save his sheep.

To come out always! And to do so with God's love and tenderness, with respect and with patience, knowing that God takes our hands, our feet, our heart, and guides them and makes all our actions fruitful.

Tuesday

ARE WE AWAKE TO GOD'S PRESENCE WITHIN US? **A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Augustine**

The Gospels have been given us so we will not let our faith lie dormant, so to speak. The Risen Lord Jesus never had to sleep, but even while he was with us and did sleep his bond with the Heavenly Father was always "awake". Recall the Gospel story of a time when Jesus was with his disciples in a boat and a storm came up. The disciples panicked and woke him up to save them. Where, he asked them, is your faith? When your faith is dormant, it is as if Jesus were asleep in your hearts—for he always lives within you giving you the gift of faith.

Think of that Gospel story as one about your own life. You are confronted by many challenges and troubles and only by turning to Jesus can you overcome them. Each of us, we believe, is a temple of God. Our hearts are like boats that are caught in a storm. The storm can't harm us as long as we cling to Jesus. Remember he is the source of every good we need and is always with us.

If you have to listen to abuse you are in a kind of storm. When you react by getting angry you seem to be on the point of drowning in it. Your heart is in danger. You hear yourself insulted or belittled and you want to retaliate. But if you indulge in revenge and counter-insults you are shipwrecked. That can only happen if you treat Jesus within you as though he were asleep and, in effect, forget his presence. Remember him and join him to keep watch within yourself.

Pay attention to what he says in dangerous circumstances. What did you want? You thought you wanted to get back at a person who hurt you? Have you forgotten how Jesus prayed when being crucified? "Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing!" Jesus had no room for revenge-seeking in his heart. So call him to mind. You do this when you remember his words and recall his commands. Then you will think: What am I doing, seeking revenge? What business have I to hurt this person or threaten or give in to rage? Do I really want to do what Christ never did?

Jesus says to you: "Give and it shall be given you; forgive and you will be forgiven." His words can restore peace to your heart. In effect, Jesus uses these recollections to rebuke the storm so all is calm again. This should be our way of reacting to any temptation. When you feel temptation's disturbance then you must turn to Jesus and awaken your heart to his presence. Don't even the winds and the sea obey him? Can't we imitate the winds and the sea in obeying the words of our Christ?

See what you can do when you are inwardly disturbed. Perhaps you can be a mouth through which Jesus speaks to others who are similarly disturbed. Never let despair reign within your mind or heart. With Jesus, we can pass through every sort of turmoil and reach our heavenly home and its peace. Leave the blustering and carrying on behind you and rest in Jesus' loving presence and his guiding and calming words. We have a sure refuge, an ever-present help in times of distress. Turn to Him.

Wednesday

THE APOSTOLATE OF SHARING HOPE AND LOVE

A Reflection adapted from Centuries on Charity by St. Maximus the Confessor

The apostle we know as “saint” Thomas once tried to shut himself away from Christ and Christ’s love by refusing to believe he had risen. How did Christ react to this refusal? How do we act when we encounter such refusals? We are commanded to do all we can to love everyone. If you aren’t yet able to do that, then can you manage not to hate anyone? What makes us able to do such things, and for people who knowingly refuse what we would share with them? Think of St. Thomas.

I think that a precondition for loving as Christ loves is detachment from the things of the world. To love everyone, and with all your strength, you have to hope only in God. Who else can you hope in? The other apostles weren’t able to share their joy in the resurrection of Christ with Thomas, a brother apostle. He was afraid to hope fully and only in Christ. But Christ never shut Thomas out of his love. We are reminded today that we are called to do likewise. Christ did it by showing Thomas he could hope for what he had thought he couldn’t hope for.

Christ’s friends are not universally loved, and, unfortunately, they don’t always love universally. Those who least love Christ and his friends are those who love the world. That means putting one’s hope in what the world has to give. You can’t love all because others are in competition with you for the world’s goods that you hope for. Christ’s friends cease to put their hope in the world and its goods and put all their hope in Christ’s love. He puts this hope in them and so is able to share his love with them. He loves perfectly, and right to the end! We have to learn to persevere in this sort of hope so we can love as Christ does.

Christ loved Thomas right to the uttermost end. His goal was simply to open Thomas to that love. He had to lead him to trust in him, and in God’s loving mercy shown through him, and he had to do it in a way Thomas couldn’t deny. He knew the way to do it and he loved Thomas so as to reorient his hopes.

A faithful friend can be many things. A friend can be a protector, a sympathetic advisor, a practical helper, and, most of all, can be one who loves you unselfishly and is deeply committed to you and your well-being. Christ found a way to show this to Thomas and so open him to faith and the loving that flows from faith. We are called to do the same for one another when anyone gets trapped by shutting the door to hope and love.

Many people have said many things about love. But we can only find the whole truth in Christ. People can only see this truth through us and our Christ-like love. Only those who cling to Christ have true love itself as their teacher. We see what that means in the story of Christ’s coming to the unbelieving Thomas. Here we see the meaning of St. Paul’s saying: *“If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge, but don’t have love, I am nothing”*. Whoever has love has God because God is love. Love never shuts the door on anyone but always reaches out to help and to heal and to share hope and even joy.

Thursday

LETTING GOD OPEN US TO LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS

A Reflection developed from a meditation by Fr. A. DeMello, SJ

God's Kingdom is love. What does it mean, fundamentally, to love? It means being practically sensitive to life, especially to persons; it means being sensitive to life and to all living things without exclusion. When the North American colonies rebelled against the English crown their accusation was that the king had refused to be sensitive to their concerns and to the things that would make their lives better or worse. Such exclusions harden a person so that sensitivity dies. Did you ever remove a piece of trash or a dangerous object from a road, even though it posed no danger to you personally? That is sensitivity to others and to their good. Have you ever gone to considerable trouble to help another, knowing that no recognition or benefit would ever come to you? In such acts and moments, love came to the surface signaling that it was there within and waiting to be released.

You don't have to struggle to possess this sort of love. It's already there within you. All you have to do is remove the blocks that you, or your past experience, have placed to deprive you of sensitivity. For the most part, these are of two kinds.

You become fixated on a certain belief about a person or place or situation and you can't be sensitive to reality in consequence. You are like an airplane pilot who insists on planning a flight by last month's weather report. You have hardened your perceptions and become prejudiced. If you look at such convictions carefully you will see their defects and let them go.

The same thing can happen as a result of attachments. In this case, you find that something or someone gives you pleasure or contentment and you want to hang onto that feeling. You want more of the gratification. You think you won't really be happy otherwise. You are so tied up in the past that you can't go on. It is like being stuck on a few bars of a song so that you turn a tiny part of the music into the whole reality of the music. The symphony of life goes on but you stay clinging to just a few bars of the music. No one can love in that way, in such circumstances.

Both of these blocks make one insensitive to the fullness of life and its beauty. Trying to limit yourself to a fragment of God's world and its riches creates tensions and conflicts, just as in the case of the American Revolution. We mustn't let ourselves be trapped in the narrowness our ancestors rejected and rebelled against. We do that if we close ourselves off from others out of fear or attachment. God never does this, and never blesses our doing it. If we want to celebrate God's gifts of life and freedom and joy and creativity and love we have to let God destroy our inner blocks and attachments. That's why he calls us to celebrate the reality of our civic freedom and let it flower into genuine inner freedom in the love that is sensitive to all life and its riches.

Friday

THE APOSTLE MATTHEW

From the General Audience Address of Pope Benedict XVI, 30 August 2006

Matthew Hebrew means "gift of God". The first canonical Gospel, which goes under his name, presents him to us in the list of the Twelve, labeled very precisely: "the tax collector" (Mt 10: 3)

St John Chrysostom notes that only in the account of certain calls is the work of those concerned mentioned. Peter, Andrew, James and John are called while they are fishing, while Matthew, while he is collecting tithes.

These are unimportant jobs, Chrysostom comments, "because there is nothing more despicable than the tax collector, and nothing more common than fishing" (*In Matth. Hom.: PL 57, 363*). Jesus' call, therefore, also reaches people of a low social class while they go about their ordinary work.

Another reflection prompted by the Gospel narrative is that Matthew responds instantly to Jesus' call: "he rose and followed him". The brevity of the sentence clearly highlights Matthew's readiness to respond to the call. For him, it meant leaving everything, especially what guaranteed him a reliable source of income, even if it was often unfair and dishonorable. Evidently, Matthew understood that familiarity with Jesus did not permit him to pursue activities of which God disapproved.

The application to the present day is easy to see: it is not permissible today either to be attached to things that are incompatible with the following of Jesus, as is the case with riches dishonestly achieved.

Jesus once said, mincing no words: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mt 19: 21).

This is exactly what Matthew did: he rose and followed him! In this "he rose", it is legitimate to read detachment from a sinful situation and at the same time, a conscious attachment to a new, upright life in communion with Jesus.

Lastly, let us remember that the tradition of the ancient Church agrees in attributing to Matthew the paternity of the First Gospel. This had already begun with Bishop Papias of Hierapolis in Frisia, in about the year 130.

He writes: "Matthew set down the words (of the Lord) in the Hebrew tongue and everyone interpreted them as best he could" (in Eusebius of Cesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* III, 39, 16).

Eusebius, the historian, adds this piece of information: "When Matthew, who had first preached among the Jews, decided also to reach out to other peoples, he wrote down the Gospel he preached in his mother tongue; thus, he sought to put in writing, for those whom he was leaving, what they would be losing with his departure" (*ibid.*, III, 24, 6).

The Gospel of Matthew written in Hebrew or Aramaic is no longer extant, but in the Greek Gospel that we possess we still continue to hear, in a certain way, the persuasive voice of the publican Matthew, who, having become an Apostle, continues to proclaim God's saving mercy to us. And let us listen to St Matthew's message, meditating upon it ever anew also learning to stand up and follow Jesus with determination.

Saturday

MARY SHARES HER VOCATION OF BEARING CHRIST

A Reflection from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Mary bore only one Son. In heaven he is the only-begotten of the Father and on earth the only-begotten of his mother. She is the only virgin-mother and glories in having borne the only-begotten of the Father and embracing all the members of her son. She is the mother of all in whom she recognizes Christ being brought to full stature, in whom she knows he is growing steadily. Mary consummated the vocation Eve couldn't and so became the mother of all the living. Like the Church of which she is a type Mary, is the mother of all those reborn to life and so is the mother of life.

The one Mary brought forth brought all those who live to the new life. So the Blessed Mother of Christ, knowing that she is the mother of all Christians by reason of this mystery, shows herself a mother by her care and loving attention. Her womb carried a child only once, yet it remains ever fruitful and never ceases to bring forth the fruits of motherly compassion.

If Paul, a servant of Christ, gives birth to children again and again by care and heartfelt tenderness, and does this until Christ is formed in them, how much more is this true of the mother of Christ? Paul begot children by preaching the word of truth through which they were born again. Mary, in a manner far more godlike, begets them by giving birth to the Word himself in them. We praise Paul's ministry of preaching but admire even more the mystery of generation in Mary.

All of us are Mary's children and what we see in our mother we long to do in a way fitted to our lowliness. We, like Paul, have ministries of bringing others to birth in Christ, not only by our words but especially by examples of compassionate love. We thus see in ourselves Christ's mother. We do this by the miracle of God's grace, just as did our mother, Mary. We become, like her, instruments by which God brings Christ to birth in all those chosen to belong to the Church.

The Church too is a mother, and one with innumerable children. But she would have no children if God's grace didn't make it possible for Christ to grow within us and to show forth in his personal life and in his life of love for the beauty which the Heavenly Father seeks to share with and through us. Who is more beautiful than Christ Our Lord? Who comes after him in beauty except Mary, his mother and ours? Who can show forth that beauty now that Christ and his mother are both gone from us to heaven? We are given that responsibility.

We do this in the shadow of her love and imitating her example. As she helps us so we help one another. In God, we are all drawn together into the one Christ, who is totally God's and makes us too one with God, who is one and Triune. What is our joy but to see Christ grow and draw more and more creatures into the love that is God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit? Our mother shares with us her vocation of bearing Christ so that others might become Christ's members. Each day brings us new opportunities, that we may glorify our God.