

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

1-7 September 2024

- Sun. **The Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Sep. 1 **THE REAL HEART OF THE MATTER**
 A Reflection inspired by a retreat conference of Fr. R. Knox
- Mon. **Monday of the 22nd Week in Ordinary Time – Labor Day**
2 **GOD SHOWS US HOW TO REDEEM LABOR**
 A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini
- Tues. **Memorial of Saint Gregory the Great, Pope, Doctor**
3 **THE ESSENTIAL WORK THAT IS PATIENCE**
 A Reflection from On Pastoral Care by St. Pope Gregory the Great
- Wed **Memorial of the Dead**
4 **THE DEAD AND THE LIVING UNITED IN LOVE**
 A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini
- Thurs. **Memorial of Saint Teresa of Calcutta**
5 **A MEDITATION: I THIRST FOR YOU!**
 By Mother Teresa of Calcutta
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri. **Friday of the 22nd Week in Ordinary Time**
6 **BECOMING NEW SKINS FOR NEW WINE**
 A Reflection by Thomas Keating, OCSO
- Sat. **Memorial of Our Lady**
7 **CHRIST’S INCARNATION IN MARY & IN US**
 A Reflection based on a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

Sunday

THE REAL HEART OF THE MATTER

A Reflection inspired by a retreat conference of Fr. Ronald Knox

Why did the Lord want to come to earth as a Jew, and then spend so much time and effort criticizing the observance of the customs that most perceived as proper signs of being Jewish? It was, I think, because he saw one primary failing as characteristic of the “lost of the House of Israel” to whom he had been primarily sent. They were lost because the way they observed the prescriptions of the Law treated them as values in themselves. Usually, we interpret this as critiquing all religious practices done for the sake of appearances. Yet the actual failing is common to the whole human race. How much of your life is dominated by the feeling that you must keep up appearances and do what people expect? Are we better than the Pharisees Jesus took to task or like them?

Put yourself for a moment in Jesus’ place when the Pharisees criticize him for letting his disciples ignore some of Israel’s many purity regulations. Today we still hear concern about washing one’s hands before eating. How would you reply? In effect, Jesus reminds his critics that purity is important only as it keeps one’s heart fixed on God and entrusts all one’s mind and heart, and life to God. Yes, but isn’t that what one does in observing purity regulations? God gave them to us through our ancestors and sages and we do them, whether or not we see a deeper meaning in them, simply to obey God in every way and time and place!

But, Jesus adds, you are forgetting things like justice; i.e., like treating others as you want people to treat you—respecting and caring for them and treating them fairly. Are you praying to cover up the fact you are robbing widows of the little they have to live on? You see, actually, you often treat religious customs as though they were more important than justice. God has not only called you to love him with all your mind and heart and life but also to love your neighbors, and love them as God loves them. Unless your religious customs help you do this in deed and not just in thought you are not loving God but pretending to love God while you spend your time and energy on trying to build up yourself and make yourself more important socially. Do you want others to honor you or do you seek your honor from God? You seem to use a pretended honoring of God as a means to get honor from other people.

We are as God sees us. What’s wrong about seeking “human respect” is that it gets us into the habit of asking, “What will others think?” and forgetting to ask, “What will God think?” We are commanded to help one another. That means helping one another put God first and showing love for one another in ways that help them to put God first. As you observe customs of courtesy and mutual respect do you do this in ways that help all concerned recall God’s love for us and our need to love God by loving each other so that we all go steadily toward God and God’s Kingdom?

Monday

GOD'S LABOR SHOWS US HOW TO REDEEM LABOR

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Sacred Scripture speaks of "God's work". The Book of Genesis tells us that "on the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing". The Bible doesn't hesitate to describe God as one who works. It shows us that the objective of God's work is creation, the earth, and life. We ourselves are works of life and we are to work for life as God did.

We can also ask: How does God work? God's labors are done freely. All that is done is a spontaneous self-expression of God. God's works are inventive and creative. They are good, beautiful, and filled with satisfaction. After each work, God pauses and says, "This is good!" And we, for our part, are made in the image of God. So we are called to make our work an expression of freedom and our dignity and we are to create what is good and true.

What makes this difficult for us is that we have so many wrong ideas and habits and values. These can enslave us. But we have to value human welfare and human good before everything that enslaves and degrades human life. If we do this we will not have to make life's journey in sadness or think that bad things can never be changed. God has a plan of redemption that pertains to human labor and its fruits.

We have to begin from what we are told about Jesus' work, and about that of Joseph and Mary. All of us are following them in working for the realization in daily life of the world's redemption. This is the marvelous task before us. It is actually what all the worker's movements of recent times are ultimately about. All people of goodwill are invited to work together to make human work more like God—free, creative and uplifting, and for the greater good of all.

This may seem like a dream but it is rather a long and difficult road we need to travel together. From time to time we think we have reached one of these goals; e.g., diminishing the drudgery of so much labor. But then we run up against the fact that we haven't gotten rid of repetitiveness or anonymity and have to renew our efforts to find ways to realize human dignity through labor and not despite it.

This is the more difficult because along the path we have to rethink our ways of living, our ways of consuming, and even our ways of wanting. This is a matter of putting human and humanizing values first. They have to be put ahead of present satisfaction, profit, consumption for its own sake, and everything that tends to make work enslaving and degrading.

If we are to convince others to join us we can't try to make our journey in sadness. Neither can we fool ourselves into thinking that some miracle will come from who knows where to bring about what we are striving for without our having to do the work. This journey has been entrusted to us. We set out on it every day as we begin the work of that day. The redemption of human life depends on the redemption of work and that depends on our courage, our hope, and, most of all, our faith. We start again today and every day.

Tuesday

THE ESSENTIAL WORK THAT IS PATIENCE

A Reflection from On Pastoral Care by St. Pope Gregory the Great

All of us are sick, at least spiritually, and we need to be helped to learn patience. We need to think, for instance, of how great were the evils our Redeemer had to bear at the hands of the very beings he had created out of love. Think of the horrible insults and criticisms he had to bear. How many slaps did he receive from scoffers? Yet what he was doing was snatching from the power of the ancient enemy the souls of those he held captive. We have to bear the pain of this process and so we must look to Our Lord for an example of patience.

The Lord silently endured scourging as a way to set us free. He cleanses us with the water of salvation but its power comes from the love that didn't screen his own face from the spittle of treacherous people. He freed us by the mediation of his torments so that we would not have to bear eternal torment. He endured blows to free us for everlasting honor enjoyed amid the choirs of angels. He offered his own head to bear a crown of thorns and didn't shrink even from this to free us. He drank bitter gall so that we might be inebriated with the wine of everlasting sweetness.

Think of the patience that enabled him to endure mocking adoration. He held his peace and in doing it he adored the Heavenly Father for us. Though he was equal to the Father in divinity and was life itself, he was willing to pass through death so that he might prepare us for everlasting life and actually bring us to it. We were dead in spirit but by his patience, we have been brought to life.

Why do we think it is so difficult when he has to bear illness and pain? Aren't these simply punishments that God gives us by way of discipline? We have done evil and deserve what we get. But God himself was willing to bear the same for us when he didn't deserve it at all. If God endured such great evils, and it was as though they were a response to his good deeds on our behalf, then how could we be ungrateful? If we are grateful, how can we fail to patiently bear all that will bring us to our redeemer and eternal lover?

Everyone who would proclaim the Gospel, as our God has called us to, must do so by deeds more than by words. We must do this by our righteous way of life. When we do this we leave footprints that others may follow, and even walk in. If we are to do this then we have to be awakened and stirred up by what we bear for the sake of others and following the example of Christ. If the head languishes the members of the body have neither vigor nor direction. Christ never languished and has always been ready to bear whatever might be necessary to lead us to the Heavenly Father and eternal salvation.

We can only follow in these footsteps if we allow ourselves to be corrected and set in order and on the right path. We should regard all we suffer as only penance done to make us ready to proclaim in our deeds the saving love of our God. We have to lead one another in patience if we are to do what God calls us to do. Let us, then, pray with all our hearts to receive the grace by which we may become patient as the Lord was. That is what we can show daily in all we do, and especially in all we suffer.

Wednesday

THE DEAD AND THE LIVING UNITED IN LOVE

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

“It is in regard to death that the human condition is most shrouded in doubt”. These are words of the Second Vatican Council. They are grave and serious words. They don't call us to think of the dead-in-general but of the people we have known and cared for, and who have known and cared for us. Some are saints, whether we know it or not, and some are still working through God's process of purification and of preparation for the work of blessing many others which comes from being one with God and letting our love be transformed into God's love.

We speak of “eternal rest” but that means we no longer worry about what we shall accomplish and whether it will be enough—because all we do will be God's deed even more than ours, and God never fails.

Those who have gone before us into God's presence have left us memories that show us what living the Word of God can mean in our time and place, and by people who led a life as we do. Their way of life brought them to God, no matter how many times they fell and had to turn to God's grace in order to get up again and continue to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus is our supreme example but our dead give us many precious examples of the multitude of ways in which one can imitate Jesus. After all, what we have to do is imitate Jesus' love. How many ways are there to love others? There are endlessly many. No two of those we remember today lived love in exactly the same way or with the same deeds or words.

We don't remember our departed ones only in sadness because of their separation from us. Actually, when we strive to imitate Jesus we strive to do exactly what they do always. We are not separated because we continue to work together to build up others and draw them toward the resurrection and life's uttermost fullness. In Jesus, we, and our dead, have everlasting life and everlasting loving service and care and joy. We begin now by praying for one another. Our dead speak to us of Jesus' love and we speak to them of that same love. That is the language of prayer. It brings us together in mutual care, now and always.

Thursday

A MEDITATION: I THIRST FOR YOU!

By Mother Teresa of Calcutta

I know you through and through; I know everything about you. Nothing in your life is unimportant to me. I have always loved you, even in your wanderings. I know every one of your problems. I know your needs and worries, and, yes, I know your sins. But I tell you again, I love you for you, for the beauty and dignity my Father gave you by creating you in his own image. I know what is in your heart; I know your loneliness and hurts, the rejections, the judgments, the humiliations. I carried it all before you did; I carried it so you might share my strength and victory.

I know especially how you have thirsted to be loved and cherished but how often you have thirsted in vain, seeking that love selfishly, striving to fill your emptiness with pleasures and with the even greater emptiness of sin. Do you thirst for love? Come to me all you who thirst! *I thirst for you!*

Yes, that is the only way to even begin to describe my love for you: I thirst for you. I thirst to love and be loved by you—that is how precious you are to me. I thirst for you! Come to me and fill your heart and heal your wounds. If you feel unimportant in the eyes of the world, that doesn't matter at all. For me, there is no one any more important in the entire world than you. *I thirst for you!*

No matter how far you may wander, no matter how often you forget me, no matter how many crosses you may bear, there is one thing I want you to remember always, one thing that will never change: I thirst for you—just as you are. Do you find that hard to believe? Then look at the cross. Look at my heart that was pierced for you. Haven't you understood my cross? Then listen again to the words I spoke there—for they tell you clearly why I endured all this for you: "I thirst". Yes, *I thirst for you.*

All your life I have been looking for your love. I have never stopped seeking to love and be loved by you. You have tried many other things in your search for happiness; *why not try opening your heart to me, right now, more than you ever have before?*

Whenever you do open the door of your heart, whenever you come close enough, you will hear me say to you again and again, not in mere human words but in spirit: No matter what you have done, I love you for your own sake. Come to me with your misery and your sin, with your troubles and needs, and with all your longing to be loved.

I stand at the door of your heart and knock. Open to me, for *I thirst for you!*

Friday

BECOMING NEW SKINS FOR NEW WINE **A Reflection by Thomas Keating, OCSO**

The disciples of John came to Jesus, asking: Why do we and the Pharisees fast often but your disciples do not? Jesus responded: The wedding guests can't mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. The patch pulls away from the cloak and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. New wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.

New wine is a marvelous image of the Holy Spirit. As we move to the intuitive level of consciousness using contemplative prayer the energy of the Spirit cannot be contained by old structures. They are not flexible enough. They may have to be left aside or adapted. The new wine as a symbol of the Spirit tends to stir people up; for that reason, the Fathers of the Church said the Spirit's action results in "sober intoxication". Although exuberance may be subdued it breaks out in forms that cannot be put into neat and ready-made boxes.

Jesus points out to John's disciples, and to us, that one can become too attached to good practice, as to fasting as a structure for one's spiritual life. The wine of the Spirit that Jesus brings did not fit into such narrow ideas, as was indicated by their question. So they must expand inwardly; otherwise, the new wine of the Gospel will give them trouble. It bursts the narrow confines of one's mindset and both what one has and what one is trying to receive are lost.

Jesus suggests a solution: Put the new wine into new wineskins. The new wine of the Gospel is manifested by the fruits of the Spirit which St. Paul speaks of. There are really nine aspects of the mind of Christ as he reaches out to others and accepts the gifts of the Spirit into his ministry. If the new wine is to be preserved then new structures have to be found in the mind and heart; they must be ones more appropriate than the old to the new life Christ brings. Are we ready and willing to actively cooperate in letting this be done to us?

Saturday

CHRIST'S INCARNATION IN MARY & IN US

A Reflection based on a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

St. Paul knew full well that the flesh of itself won't get us anywhere apart from the Spirit. It is what gives life. So St. Paul refuses to know Christ simply according to the flesh. Why? He wants to give himself wholly and with the greatest zeal to the life-giving Spirit.

It seems that Mary also had a deep understanding of all this. She longs for all to love the beloved Fruit of her womb. Jesus is the object of her love and prayers. But she doesn't speak of him simply according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. It is as though she were saying, *"Even though I have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now I know him in that way no longer"*. Mary longs to see her only begotten son formed in all the children God has given her through Jesus.

All are begotten and brought forth through the Word of Truth. Nevertheless, Mary also brings them forth daily in her loving and devoted care. She longs for them to attain the perfect maturity we see in Christ. This is the full measure of the richness of that Son of hers whom she once bore and goes on bearing in all his incarnations in us. It was the fruit of eternal joy that she brought forth.

In Ecclesiastes wisdom, speaking as Mary, says: *"I am the mother of fair love and of fear and of knowledge and of holy hope"*. Who is your son, O virgin of virgins? Is this son your beloved, O fairest of women? Yes, this is my beloved, this is my son, O Daughters of Jerusalem. My beloved Son is fair love itself. He is fear, and hope, and knowledge in the persons who are born of him. He is not only the object of our love, our fear, our knowledge, and our hope, more He is the One who works all these things in us.

We thus become like so many members of a single body. Through the virtues as though through many members of a single body, Jesus takes form within us. Christ will be perfectly formed in you—to the extent that it is possible in this life—as his Truth finds full expression in and through your thoughts, words & deeds.

First, you must recognize that He has and is the Truth. Having recognized this truth, we must glorify him through our reverential fear and hope. And lest this hope be disappointed the charity of God must be poured out into our hearts.

Then only is Christ fully formed in you.

This is what Mary has always longed for. This is a fulfillment of her vocation. It is only through our formation in love that Christ is fully formed within us all. That is what we are to pray for daily, with Mary and with all God's saints.