

# **THE TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**

22-28 September 2024

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- Sun.     **The Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
Sept.22 **STANDING FAST WHEN WE DON'T UNDERSTAND**  
          **A Reflection from a Homily by Fr. Karl Rahner**
- Mon.     **Memorial of St. Pius of Pietrelcina**  
23       **THE HUMILITY THAT ACCEPTS SUFFERING**  
          **A Reflection taken from a Letter by St. Paulinus of Nola**
- Tues.    **Tuesday of the 25<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time**  
24       **THE DISPOSITION REQUIRED TO HEAR THE WORD**  
          **From The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,**  
          **Synod of Bishops 2008**
- Wed.     **Wednesday of the 25<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time**  
25       **CHRIST AND THE CHURCH**  
          **From the General Audience Address of Pope Benedict XVI, 15 March 2006**
- Thurs.   **Thursday of the 25<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time**  
26       **LIKE PEELING AN ONION**  
          **From the Morning Meditation by Pope Francis, 25 September 2014**
- MONASTIC DESERT DAY**
- Fri.     **Memorial of St. Vincent de Paul**  
27       **TEACHING THE ENTIRE GOSPEL MESSAGE**  
          **A Reflection based on Homilies by St. Pope John XXIII**
- Sat.     **Memorial of our Lady**  
28       **GOD'S IMMENSE LOVE FOR US**  
          **A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini**

*Sunday*

## **STANDING FAST WHEN WE DON'T UNDERSTAND**

### **A Reflection from a Homily by Fr. Karl Rahner**

*“Jesus and his disciples came down from the mountain and began to go through Galilee. He didn't want anyone to know about this because he was teaching his disciples that the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and put to death and that three days later he will rise” (Mk.9:30ff).* The Twelve Apostles, the foundation stones of the Church, Peter and the other eleven, those Jesus had chosen and called, didn't understand him. Yet they were to be the beginning of the new People of God!

They can't grasp the fact Jesus must suffer. They aren't even willing to try to make sense of what he has said, even the part about rising after three days. Yet they remain with Jesus! They do that even when they see they don't understand him. They remain steadfast, faithful, and are patient. Jesus, for them, is a kind of advance payment of confidence. They give him time to grow in their hearts! More, God bears with them. Their hearts are darkened; they don't understand. They are stuck and scarcely even want to leave their ignorance behind.

The thing is that they are undergirded by God's mercy and faithfulness and providence and love. Uncomprehended mystery stands between them and the Lord but doesn't separate them. Neither abandons the other and both cling to each other. Why is this? It is because God loves and is faithful and because the humans involved realize that even if they don't understand what seems a mystery, God and God's grace are found only where Jesus, that mystery, is.

There is a lesson for us in all this. Compare all you grasp and understand—all that is clear and straightforward—with the obscure and baffling things, the hidden and not comprehended ones, all that is mysterious and unspeakable. When we do this, we understand that what we see is like a tiny candle shining in endless darkness.

How could anything else be possible, granted that we are on a pilgrimage? We are making our way through things that seem only parables rather than realities. We are on the way toward the everlasting light. And we are told it is an unapproachable light! It is God. What we seek only God can give. Wouldn't it be foolish to expect that everything will be intelligible? Wouldn't it be foolish to accept only so much as we can understand?

God is for us incomprehensible, so God must lay hold of us. Only when God does, can we let ourselves be made open to God. God is infinite and we must be open to that. But only if we are open wholly is there any hope for us. More than hope, however, we have the promise that we will find everything. Remembering this we cling to God, even in darkness. We must be faithful and patient and loving toward God, just as our God is toward us.

*Monday*

## **THE HUMILITY THAT ACCEPTS SUFFERING**

### **A Reflection taken from a Letter by St. Paulinus of Nola**

From the beginning of the world, Christ has been suffering in all his people. He is, you see, the beginning and the end, veiled in the Law and revealed in the Gospel, the Lord ever wonderful in his saints and he both suffers and triumphs in them. Today we remember St. Padre Pio, one who was truly humble and whose sharing in the suffering of Christ made his and Christ's humility shine forth and reveal themselves as saving love.

In Abel, Christ was killed by a brother, in Noah mocked by a son, in Abraham a wanderer, in Isaac a sacrifice, in Jacob a servant, in Joseph a slave, in Moses a refugee, in the prophets one scorned and stoned and sawn in two, and in the apostles slapped and whipped and killed. It is the same Lord who endures our sufferings and sorrows today.

Jesus has identified himself with us and our race and has continually borne the mistreatment we inflict on each other. He knows how to suffer and to endure. Power is brought to perfection in Christ's weakness. The tragedy is that when we hate each other we hate him. Was anyone ever so humble as to accept so much without complaint or desire for revenge?

Thanks be to God that Christ has been vindicated and in him, we see for the first time what suffering truly is and what humility accomplishes. As we read in Scripture, the Lord triumphs in us through living as a slave among us; he gains, for all who follow and serve and imitate him, a new kind of freedom the world never knew before. He clothed himself in the nature of a slave for our sakes, even when we make ourselves slaves.

Christ humbled himself even to the point of accepting a cross and all the suffering that went with it. Christ dwelt with us in lowliness. Christ won for us an endless exaltation. In this light, consider the position from which we have fallen. When we do we begin to realize that all has come about by God's design; i.e., by divine wisdom and love. We see ourselves and our world with new eyes and a renewed mind. Thus we are beginning to be restored to the life God wished to give us from the beginning.

In Adam, we were ruined by pride. In Christ and Christ's saints, we are restored by humility. The more we become like Christ the more humble we become. The more we suffer with Christ the more our humility gives birth to exaltation. In humility, Christ washed away all the guilt of foolish pride by living in the depths of humility. Having offended by ignorant arrogance, we are forgiven and restored by knowing and deliberate humility.

Rejoice! Stand firm with Christ! See, Christ has overcome the world! What overcame it was suffering humility. Do not be afraid of either. Follow Christ even in this way, if he invites you. It is a way that leads to all good and all joy and all fulfillment and peace. Look to the example of those who have gone before us. It is a great gift of God.

Tuesday

## **THE DISPOSITION REQUIRED TO HEAR THE WORD**

**From The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, Synod of Bishops 2008**

Faith may not be necessary in reading the Bible. However, Faith is indeed necessary, if a person is to hear the Word of God in the Bible. A Bible group does well if its members, while reading the Bible, also receive instruction in the faith, so they can conform their lives as Christians to the indications offered in the Bible as well as bring faith to bear in difficult times.

People today need to hear a positive and encouraging message which offers various ways of approaching the biblical texts in a spiritual reading of the Bible, in prayer, in sharing the Word, etc... This is done primarily in viewing the Word not so much as a static deposit of dogmatic truth or pastoral reference, but as a font of living water, where a person joyously awaits to hear the Lord through the events of everyday life. The complete hermeneutic circle must be followed, namely, to believe so as to understand, and to understand so as to believe; faith seeks understanding and understanding opens the way to faith. The story of Emmaus remains an exemplary model of the believer's encounter with the Incarnate Word (cf. *Lk 24:13-35*).

"Hear, O Israel!", "*Shema Israel*", is the first commandment of the People of God (*Deut 6:4*). "Hear" is also the first word of St. Benedict's Rule. God invites the faithful to hear with the ears of their heart. In the Bible, the heart is not only the seat of feelings or emotion, but the in-depth core of the person, where decisions are made. Therefore, a prolonged silence, unable to be put into words, must be there, so that the Holy Spirit can reveal the intent and understanding of the Word of God and unite himself silently to our spirit (cf. *Rom 8: 26-27*).

Each person needs to hear like Mary and with Mary, the Mother and Teacher of the Word of God. In the mysteries of the Rosary, Mary provides the simple, universally applicable form to prayerfully hearing the Word. Pope John Paul II has highlighted the richness of this prayer, calling it "the Gospel compendium", where the announcement of the mystery "allows God to speak" and permits "contemplating Christ with Mary" (35). Moreover, the Church, like the Virgin Mary, the Temple of the Spirit, in her silent, humble, and hidden life, learns to bear witness to this close relationship between the Word and Silence and the Word and the Spirit of God. In the believer, this causes the hearing of the Word in faith to become understanding, meditation, communion, sharing, and fulfillment, which are the components of *Lectio Divina*, the privileged manner of approaching the Bible with faith.

A disposition of faith is linked to the Word of God in all its signs and expressions. Faith receives a communication of truth from the Word through a story or doctrinal formula. Faith recognizes the Word of God to be the initial stimulus towards a fruitful conversion, the light to respond to the many questions of the believer, the guidance in wisely discerning reality, and an invitation to do the Word (cf. *Lk 8:21*) and not simply to read it or speak it; and, finally, the enduring font of consolation and hope. Thus, believers must work towards recognizing and ensuring the primacy of the Word of God in their lives, receiving it as the Church announces it, understands it, explains it, and lives it.

*Wednesday*

## **CHRIST AND THE CHURCH**

**From the General Audience Address of Pope Benedict XVI, 15 March 2006**

The number 12, which evidently refers to the 12 tribes of Israel, already reveals the meaning of the prophetic-symbolic action implicit in the new initiative to re-establish the holy people. As the system of the 12 tribes had long since faded out, the hope of Israel awaited their restoration as a sign of the eschatological time (as referred to at the end of the Book of Ezekiel: 37: 15-19; 39: 23-29; 40-48).

In choosing the Twelve, introducing them into a communion of life with himself and involving them in his mission of proclaiming the Kingdom in words and works (cf. Mk 6: 7-13; Mt 10: 5-8; Lk 9: 1-6; 6: 13), Jesus wants to say that the definitive time has arrived in which to constitute the new People of God, the people of the 12 tribes, which now becomes a universal people, his Church.

With their very own existence, the Twelve - called from different backgrounds - become an appeal for all of Israel to convert and allow herself to be gathered into the new covenant, the complete and perfect fulfillment of the ancient one. The fact that he entrusted to his Apostles, during the Last Supper and before his Passion, the duty to celebrate his Pasch, demonstrates how Jesus wished to transfer to the entire community, in the person of its heads, the mandate to be a sign and instrument in the history of the eschatological gathering begun by him. In a certain sense, we can say that the Last Supper itself is the act of foundation of the Church because he gives himself and thus creates a new community, a community united in communion with himself.

In this light, one understands how the Risen One confers upon them, with the effusion of the Spirit, the power to forgive sins (cf. Jn 20: 23). Thus, the Twelve Apostles are the most evident sign of Jesus' will regarding the existence and mission of his Church, the guarantee that between Christ and the Church, there is no opposition: despite the sins of the people who make up the Church, they are inseparable.

Therefore, a slogan that was popular some years back: "Jesus yes, Church no", is totally inconceivable with the intention of Christ. This individualistically chosen Jesus is an imaginary Jesus.

We cannot have Jesus without the reality he created and in which he communicates himself. Between the Son of God-made-flesh and his Church, there is a profound, unbreakable, and mysterious continuity by which Christ is present today in his people. He is always contemporary with us, he is always contemporary with the Church, built on the foundation of the Apostles and alive in the succession of the Apostles. And his very presence in the community, in which he himself is always with us, is the reason for our joy. Yes, Christ is with us, the Kingdom of God is coming.

*Thursday*

## **LIKE PEELING AN ONION**

**From the Morning Meditation by Pope Francis, 25 September 2014**

Today, the Pope recalled, “so many Christians live for appearances”. And “their life seems like a soap bubble”, which is “pretty, it’s colorful, but it lasts for a second and then” it’s over. “Even when we see some funeral monuments”, he continued, “we think this is vanity, because the truth is a return to bare earth, as the Servant of God Paul VI said”. After all, “the bare earth is waiting for us, this is our final truth”. However, the Pope added, “In the meantime, do I boast or do I do something? Do I do good? Do I seek God? Do I pray?”. This is why one must aim for “things of substance”. Instead, “vanity is a liar, it’s fanciful, it deceives itself, it deceives the vain person: first, he pretends to be, but in the end, he believes to be what he says. He believes it, poor thing”.

And this is precisely what happened to Herod the Tetrarch, the Pope explained, referring to the passage in the day’s liturgy from the Gospel according to Luke (9:7-9): “When Jesus appeared, [Herod] was perplexed. In his imagination he thought: ‘But could this be John, whom I beheaded? Could it be another?’”. Herod’s reaction shows us that “vanity sows cruel unrest, it takes away peace”. Thus, vanity “is like those people who wear too much makeup and then are afraid to get rained on because all that makeup will wash off”. This is why “vanity does not give us peace: only the truth gives us peace”.

Therefore, Pope Francis advised, “Let us consider today Jesus’ counsel to build our life upon the rock. He is the rock. The only rock is Jesus!”. But “let us think about this proposal of the devil, of the demon, who also tempted Jesus with vanity in the desert”. The devil proposed, “Come with me, let’s go to the temple, let’s make a spectacle: throw yourself off and everyone will believe in you”. The devil truly served Jesus “vanity on a platter”.

For all these reasons, the Pope stated, vanity “is a very serious spiritual illness”. It is significant, he added, that “the Egyptian desert fathers said vanity is a temptation that we must fight against throughout all of life because it always returns to us to strip away the truth”. And “to explain this they used to say: it’s like an onion, you take it and begin to peel it. You shed a layer of vanity today, a bit of vanity tomorrow” and so it goes, “throughout all of life, peeling vanity to defeat it”. This way “in the end you are content: I shed vanity, I peeled the onion. But the odor stays on your hands”. Francis concluded the meditation by asking the Lord in prayer for “the grace to not be vain” but rather “to be true, with the truth of reality and of the Gospel”.

Friday

## **TEACHING THE ENTIRE GOSPEL MESSAGE**

### **A Reflection based on Homilies by St. Pope John XXIII**

It has been asserted that in this era of the triumph of science and technical skill, we can set up a civilization that leaves God out. But the truth is that scientific and technical progress themselves give rise to new human problems of worldwide dimensions that can only be resolved in the light of a sincere and active faith in God.

This situation calls for teaching the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ and not just in words but translated into concrete realities. This is a truth that St. Vincent de Paul saw clearly and dedicated his life to making incarnate in practical love for the poor and marginalized. Christian social teaching has as its objective justice and its motive power is love. We must draw attention to the need to educate all Christian believers, starting with children, about this fact and how it relates to effectively dealing with social problems.

Christian formation has to be integral. That means that it must extend to all the kinds of duties we have as responsible Christians and must help all such people feel bound to do something practical to carry out these duties. All have to feel an obligation to behave socially and economically according to the Gospel's teachings and precepts.

The passage from theory to practice often seems difficult. That is due to the selfishness which is so deeply rooted in today's culture. It is difficult for many to grasp clearly and precisely the objective requirements of justice that need to be realized in each individual case. Therefore, it isn't enough to bring people to consciousness of their duty to act in a Christian way in the social and economic fields of life; they must be helped to know how they can carry them out.

A free heart and a pure intention give birth to generous love, which is the core of every virtue and the strength behind every sacrifice. If you find you are eager to love God and love your neighbor then you know you have God dwelling within you. Follow charity. This is the most effective means to overcome the danger of distrust and indifference. This is a message that touches the hearts of all and will recall many to the Gospel of Christ.

The commandment to love in this way brings us face to face with the need not to steal, not to deprive people of their just wages, not to oppress the poor, not to cherish an immoderate appetite for wealth. This value forces us to confront the crucial problem for our entire world, both social and economic. There are many honest people, but the temptation to covet and even steal is everywhere. It must be overcome by charity, by love that seeks only the good of all.

St. Vincent de Paul made the primacy of charity more than obvious when he told his disciples that the service of the poor and needy came before even prayer. "*Offer the deed to God as your prayer*", is what he said. Charity enacted is the greatest prayer. It can bring us face-to-face with God. But that is what Heaven is. We begin now to live the life of heaven when we live a life of love like that of Jesus.

*Saturday*

## **GOD'S IMMENSE LOVE FOR US**

### **A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini**

The Virgin Mary presents us with the perfect case and example of the dignity of life received from the beginning as grace and expressed throughout its existence as obedience. This dignity is the fruit of grace, which means the fruit of God's love. As the Gospel says, Mary is full of grace. This expression in Greek is actually in the passive mood, which expresses something received. Even more, it is in the remote past. Therefore, we could interpret the phrase in this way: "O Mary, you have been loved for a long time!" This is the dignity of Mary—forever immensely loved.

With the help of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, which speaks of God's eternal plan, we can realize in our contemplation the dignity of every person—each person born, each person conceived, each of us. Just as the words applied to Mary, they apply to us. We are creatures forever loved, forever present in love and in God's plan. "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ."

"Before the world was made, God chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become God's adopted children". Human dignity, seen in this mystery, is grace and gift and being loved.

But to be loved also means letting oneself be loved. It, therefore, concerns obedience: listening to God's Word. The sincere and loving acceptance of that Word—which has always spoken our name and which always loves us—is perfectly expressed by Mary's response to the angel: "Let what you have said be done to me". This is how our dignity is received and how it is expressed in obedience.

At the center of God's plan, we find a woman, and with her we find ourselves. This is the key to our understanding of our dignity and hers. Mary is the first in the chain of human believers. She is the beginning of the Church, the Mother of the Church. God himself was interested in her from before the beginning of all things. This is her human sacredness.

Such sacredness calls for respect, love, protection, and defense of human dignity—in ourselves and in Mary, and in all human persons. From the beginning, all human persons are beings forever loved by God! God puts his love into our hearts. We are all called, and invited, to listen to the voice of love that God puts there as the very source of our life. That is what we venerate, what we learn from Mary to venerate. We evoke all this each time we speak the "Hail, Mary". We proclaim the certainty of a life and a love that is eternal. We proclaim it best when we too respond to God, moment by moment, as Mary did at the moment when she heard the voice of the angel.