

TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

13-19 October 2024

.....

Sun. The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Oct. 13 **THE LORD'S CALL AND OUR REPLY**

A Reflection by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Mon. Monday of the 28th Week in Ordinary Time

14 **JONAH, A PREFIGURATION OF CHRIST**

Text from On Jonah [II 2,5,6,11 (SC 43)] by St Jerome

Tues. Memorial of St. Teresa of Jesus

15 **PLACING ONESELF IN GOD'S HANDS**

A Reflection from the Autobiography of St. Teresa of Jesus

Wed. Wednesday of the 28th Week in Ordinary Time

16 **THE PROPEDEUTIC VALUE OF THE LAW**

From the Catechesis of Pope Francis on the Letter to the Galatians

Thurs. Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch

17 **SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH**

From the General Audience Address of Pope Benedict XVI, 14 March 2007

Monastic Desert Day

Fri. **THE FEAST OF ST. LUKE, EVANGELIST**

18 **THE HUMILITY OF AN EVANGELIST**

A Reflection developed from a homily by St. Bernard

Sat. Memorial of St. Isaac Jogues, and Companion Martyrs

19 **HOW THE MARTYRS SUFFERED FOR CHRIST**

A Report to the Jesuit General

Sunday

THE LORD'S CALL AND OUR REPLY

A Reflection by John Henry Cardinal Newman

"Go and sell everything you own and follow me!" All through our lives, Christ is calling us. The first time was in baptism but the calls continued. Whether we obeyed or not Christ graciously went on calling. If we fall away from our baptism, he calls us to repent. If we answer the call, we are called again and again, from grace to grace and from holiness to greater holiness, and as long as we live. Abraham was called from his home, Peter from his nets, from his tax office Matthew was called, Elisha from his farm, Nathanael from his retreat. We are all called from one thing to another without rest, mounting toward an eternal rest. Christ keeps calling to keep justifying and sanctifying us more and more.

How wonderful if we understood these facts. We are slow to master the truth that Christ is walking among us now and by hand or eye or voice bidding us to follow him. We don't understand that this call happens right now. Don't think it took place only in the Apostles' day. We are called now! Do we watch for our calls? Perhaps we don't have eyes to recognize the Lord, as the Beloved Apostle did when the other disciples didn't. Jesus stood on the shore and told them to cast their net and that one disciple said to Peter, *"It is the Lord!"*

My meaning is this. People who are living their faith from time to time will glimpse truths they didn't previously know and did not need to consider. Now these truths, these facts, are brought home to them powerfully! They are truths that involve duties; they are precepts and call for the response of obedience. It is in such ways that Christ calls us now. Nothing happens that is miraculous or extraordinary in the way Christ deals with us. Christ works through our natural abilities and the circumstances of our lives. Yet what happens is in God's Providence. For us, it is the same thing as Christ's voice was to those he spoke to when on earth.

It doesn't matter whether Christ calls by a visible presence, by a voice, or by our consciences. The crucial thing is that we feel we are being commanded. We may obey or disobey; we may accept the command as Samuel did or St. Paul did. Or we may put it aside like the rich young man who had to care for his possessions first. We don't have to be afraid of spiritual pride when we follow Christ's call. The important thing is that we respond with earnestness. We need to be determined to do God's will. We simply have to say, *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening"*. We simply have to ask, *"Lord, what do you want me to do?"*

O God, grant us more of this spirit you gave to young Samuel. Help us to look only to one thing—to feel that the one thing we need to do is please our God! So let's each and all beg God day by day to reveal himself to us more and more fully. May our senses come alive! May he give us sight and hearing and taste and touch to perceive the world to come emerging in our daily world. We need to say with sincerity, *"Guide me with your counsel and then receive me into your glory!"* Do you think like this? *"Whom do I have in heaven except you? There is no one on earth that I long for as I long for you! God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!"* Pray for the grace to think this day in and day out.

Monday

JONAH, A PREFIGURATION OF CHRIST

Text from On Jonah [II 2,5,6,11 (SC 43)] by St Jerome

If Jonah is a prefiguration of the Lord who evokes the Savior's Passion by his dwelling in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, then his prayer, too, must be an expression of the Lord's prayer. "I am banished from your sight. I will again look upon your holy Temple" (Jon 2:5) When I was with you, rejoicing in your light, then I would not say: "I am banished". But once I am at the bottom of the sea and clothed in human flesh then I take human feelings and say: "I am banished from your sight." I said this as man but what follows I say as God: "I who, being in your form, did not regard my equality with you (Phil 2:6) because I wanted to raise humankind to you. But I will again look upon your holy Temple." In the same way the gospel text says: "Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began" (Jn 17:5), and the Father answers: "I have glorified it and will glorify it again" (Jn 12:28). One and the same Lord asks as man and promises as God and is certain of the possession that was always his. "The waters surged around me up to my neck; the deep enveloped me" (Jon 2:6). May hell not imprison me! May it not refuse me a way out! I made the descent freely, may I freely make the ascent. I came as a captive voluntarily and I have to set free the captives so that this verse may be accomplished: "He ascended on high and took prisoners captive" (Eph 4:8; cf. Ps 68:19). Those, in fact, who formerly were captives in death have been conquered for life by him. "Then the Lord commanded the fish to vomit Jonah upon dry land" (Jon 2:11). And so he commanded this large whale to restore the Savior to the dry land from the deep and from hell. Thus He who had died to free those held in the bonds of death can lead back a great crowd to life together with him.

"All those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God" (Rom 8,14). It was the Holy Spirit, then, who led Simeon into the Temple. So if you, too, want to hold Jesus, wrap your arms around him, and become worthy of leaving your prison, strive to let yourself be led by the Spirit into the temple of God. Now see how, even now, you are in the temple of our Lord Jesus, namely his Church: his temple built of living stones (1Pt 2,5)...

So if you enter the Temple impelled by the Spirit, you will find the Child Jesus, will take him into your arms, and will say: "Now, Lord, let your servant depart in peace". This deliverance, this departure takes place in peace... Who are they who die in peace if not those who possess the peace of God that surpasses all knowledge and keeps the hearts of those who to whom it belongs? (Phil 4,7). And who are they who leave this world in peace if not those who understand that God was in Christ reconciling the world?

Tuesday

PLACING ONESELF IN GOD'S HANDS

A Reflection from the Autobiography of St. Teresa of Jesus

"When I began to turn to God Father Alvarez was my confessor. He began to lead me to greater perfection. He told me that I ought to leave nothing undone but seek to become entirely pleasing to God. He treated me with great skill yet also very gently. My soul was not at all strong, but very sensitive, especially as regards letting go of a certain friendship, though they were not actually leading me to offend God. They involved a great deal of affection and it seemed to me that if I let them go I would be sinning through ingratitude. So I asked him why it was necessary for me to be ungrateful if I was not offending God. He told me to commend the matter to God for a few days and to recite the hymn, "Come, Creator Spirit", and that I would then be enlightened as to what was the better thing to do.

"I spent the greater part of an entire day in prayer and then I begged the Lord to help me please him in everything. I began to pray the hymn. While I was doing that a kind of transport came upon me so suddenly I was almost carried away. I could make no mistake about this, it was so clear. It was the first time the Lord had granted me the favor of any kind of rapture. I heard these words: "I will have you talk with angels and not with human beings".

"This simply amazed me. My soul was very much moved and the words seemed to me to be spoken in the depths of the spirit. For this reason, they made me afraid, even though, on the other hand, they brought me great comfort. This remained with me after the fear caused by the strangeness of the experience had dissipated. The words have come true! Never since then have I been able to maintain a firm friendship except with people whom I believe love God and try to serve him. Nor have I been able to draw comfort from others or cherished a personal affection for them. It hasn't been in my power to do that. It makes no difference whether they are relatives or friends. Unless I know that a person loves God or practices prayer it is a real cross to me to have to associate with that person. I believe this is the absolute truth.

"Since that day I have been courageous enough to give up everything for the sake of God. At that moment, for what happened took no longer than a moment, God was pleased to make me, as his servant, another person than before. There was no longer a need for my confessor to give me further commands. When he had seen I was so attached to certain friendships he didn't dare tell me to abandon them. He had to wait until the Lord took the matter into his own hands, as he did. I hadn't thought I could ever give them up, even though I had tried to. It disturbed me so much that I put the very idea out of my mind. But now the Lord had set me free and given me strength to carry out my resolution. When these persons saw how determined I had become they were edified. Blessed be God forever! What I had been unable to do was done within me by the One who is almighty!"

Wednesday

THE PROPEDEUTIC VALUE OF THE LAW

From the Catechesis of Pope Francis on the Letter to the Galatians

Saint Paul, who loved Jesus and had clearly understood what salvation was, taught us that the “children of the promise” (*Gal 4:28*) — that is all of us, justified by Jesus Christ — are not bound by the Law, but are called to the demanding lifestyle of the freedom of the Gospel. The Law however exists. But it exists in another way: the same Law, the Ten Commandments, but in another way, because it could no longer be justified by itself once the Lord Jesus had come. And therefore, in today’s catechesis, I would like to explain this. And we ask: what, according to the Letter to the Galatians, is the role of the Law? In the passage we heard, Paul says that the Law was like a *pedagogue*. It is a beautiful image, that of the pedagogue we spoke about during the last audience, an image that deserves to be understood in its correct meaning.

The Apostle seems to suggest to Christians that they divide the history of salvation into two parts, and also his personal story. There are two periods: before becoming believers in Christ Jesus and after receiving the faith. At the center is the event of Jesus’ death and resurrection, which Paul preached in order to inspire faith in the Son of God, the source of salvation, and in Christ Jesus we are justified. Therefore, starting from faith in Christ there is a “before” and an “after” with regard to the Law itself, because the Law exists, the Commandments exist, but there is one attitude before the coming of Jesus, and another one afterward. The previous history is determined by being “under the Law”. And those who followed the path of the Law were saved, they were justified; the subsequent one, after the coming of Jesus, is to be lived by following the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal 5:25*). This is the first time that Paul uses this expression: to be “*under* the Law”. The underlying meaning implies the idea of a negative servitude, typical of slaves: to be “under”. The Apostle makes it explicit by saying that when one is “under the Law” it is as if one is “watched” and “locked up”, a kind of preventive custody. This period, Saint Paul says, has lasted a long time — from Moses, to the coming of Jesus — and is perpetuated as long as one lives in sin.

The relationship between the Law and sin will be explained in a more systematic way by the Apostle in his Letter to the Romans, written a few years after the one to the Galatians. In summary, the Law leads to the definition of transgression and to make people aware of their own sin: “You have done this, and so the Law — the Ten Commandments — say this: you are in sin”. Indeed, as common experience teaches, the precept ends up stimulating the transgression. In the Letter to the Romans, he writes: “While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive” (*Rom 7:5-6*). Why? Because the justification of Jesus Christ has come. Paul succinctly expresses his vision of the Law: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (*1 Cor 15:56*). A dialogue: you are under the law, and you are there with the door open to sin.

Thursday

SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

From the General Audience Address of Pope Benedict XVI, 14 March 2007

St Ignatius was the third Bishop of Antioch from 70 to 107, the date of his martyrdom. At that time, Rome, Alexandria and Antioch were the three great metropolises of the Roman Empire. The Council of Nicea mentioned three "primacies": Rome, but also Alexandria and Antioch participated in a certain sense in a "primacy".

St Ignatius was Bishop of Antioch, which today is located in Turkey. Here in Antioch, as we know from the Acts of the Apostles, a flourishing Christian community developed. Its first Bishop was the Apostle Peter - or so tradition claims - and it was there that the disciples were "*for the first time called Christians*" (Acts 11: 26). Eusebius of Caesarea, a fourth-century historian, dedicated an entire chapter of his *Church History* to the life and literary works of Ignatius (cf. 3: 36).

Eusebius writes: "The Report says that he [Ignatius] was sent from Syria to Rome, and became food for wild beasts on account of his testimony to Christ. And as he made the journey through Asia under the strictest military surveillance" (he called the guards "ten leopards" in his *Letter to the Romans*, 5: 1), "he fortified the parishes in the various cities where he stopped by homilies and exhortations, and warned them above all to be especially on their guard against the heresies that were then beginning to prevail, and exhorted them to hold fast to the tradition of the Apostles".

The first place Ignatius stopped on the way to his martyrdom was the city of Smyrna, where St Polycarp, a disciple of St John, was Bishop. Here, Ignatius wrote four letters, respectively to the Churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralli and Rome. "Having left Smyrna", Eusebius continues, Ignatius reached Troas and "wrote again": two letters to the Churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna, and one to Bishop Polycarp.

Thus, Eusebius completes the list of his letters, which have come down to us from the Church of the first century as a precious treasure. In reading these texts one feels the freshness of the faith of the generation which had still known the Apostles. In these letters, the ardent love of a saint can also be felt.

Lastly, the martyr traveled from Troas to Rome, where he was thrown to fierce wild animals in the Flavian Amphitheatre.

No Church Father has expressed the longing for *union* with Christ and for *life* in him with the intensity of Ignatius. We therefore read the Gospel passage on the vine, which according to John's Gospel is Jesus. In fact, two spiritual "currents" converge in Ignatius, that of Paul, straining with all his might for *union* with Christ, and that of John, concentrated on *life* in him. In turn, these two currents translate into the *imitation* of Christ, whom Ignatius several times proclaimed as "my" or "our God".

Thus, Ignatius implores the Christians of Rome not to prevent his martyrdom since he is impatient "to attain to Jesus Christ". And he explains, "It is better for me to die on behalf of Jesus Christ than to reign over all the ends of the earth... Him I seek, who died for us: him I desire, who rose again for our sake... Permit me to be an imitator of the Passion of my God!" (*Romans*, 5-6).

Friday

THE HUMILITY OF AN EVANGELIST

A Reflection developed from a homily by St. Bernard

How better can one celebrate the love for Christ, shown by one who dedicated his life to the spread of the Gospel, than by contemplating the way St. Luke lived the words he preached? In his Gospel (14:1f) we read: "*All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves shall be exalted*". These words were first lived and only then written down so that we might live them too.

If one reflects on the life of a human person, a sinner but one saved by Christ, one can discern two types of happiness and two types of misery. There, on the one hand, is perfect happiness in Heaven, and also earthly happiness in Paradise. On the other hand, there is the misery sinful humankind experiences in this world and there is the complete and utter misery that is hell. This can be summed up by saying that there is fullness of life and a shadow of life, and there is a shadow of unhappiness and extreme and utter unhappiness. We find ourselves naturally in the shadow of unhappiness and fear lest we fall further. In Christ, we have the hope of more than natural happiness and hope that we will receive the grace to climb the ladder that leads to it. That ladder is one of humility.

St. Luke, as a physician, knew full well the shadowland of human misery in which we dwell, all too often and for too long. As a believer, he knew also of the happiness we humans all lost in our first parents. But as a believer in Jesus Christ and a fellow evangelist with the Apostle Paul, he gloried in the hope of the perfect and everlasting happiness we are offered. But he knew that we ascend to such happiness only by humility. What seems a descent actually is an ascent.

We see this in the way he effaced himself and his evangelizing work by pointing always to Jesus Christ and to St. Paul as his herald to the gentile world, in which he himself had lived. His pride is simply in the fact that he was a humble servant of St. Paul, especially in his various illnesses.

Scripture says "*In your truth, you have humbled me.*" (Ps 118). God humbles us by convincing us of the truth of our situation and our total dependence on God. Those who are humbled by truth are truly humbled. Fortunately, the Lord didn't say that those who exalt themselves shall be exalted, but "*Those who humble themselves shall be exalted*" (Matt.23:12).

However, many are humiliated but not humble. They are people who ignore the slippery paths they walk and the darkness that blinds them. They bear a heavy yoke and a heavier conscience and a weight of condemnation. Such people have loved vanity rather than truth. And this shows us how we can be exalted! We must cling to the truth, even when it humbles us! We can avoid the hardness of the heart if we cling voluntarily to the truth. This is a heavy cure to bear for our sins, but not as heavy a burden as pride. We need to be cured of this so that we may be healed by Christ. St. Luke points always to Christ as our true physician whom he can only imitate so imperfectly. Did Luke, like Paul, kick against the goad before he surrendered to the thorn of truth that humbled him? We know only that he teaches us to do just that and we know he sought always to practice what he preached. Daily we have the opportunity to imitate this humility.

Saturday

HOW THE MARTYRS SUFFERED FOR CHRIST

A Report to the Jesuit General

We were informed by some escaped captives of the deaths of Fathers Jean de Brebeuf and Gabriel Lallement. The next morning sent eight men to seek their bodies. At the place of torture, we found a spectacle of horror. It seems that as soon as they were taken captive they were stripped naked and some of their fingernails torn out. They were subjected to a hailstorm of blows with clubs over their entire bodies. In spite of this Father de Brebeuf addressed the Christians, many of who he had instructed, also being held captive. "My children, let's raise our eyes to heaven in the midst of our afflictions and remember that God is witness to our sufferings and will soon be our glorious reward. Let us die in this faith and let us hope from God's goodness the fulfillment of his promises. The torments will end with our lives but the glory which follows will never end." The Christians replied, "Our spirits will be in Heaven while our bodies are still suffering on earth. Pray to God for us that he may show us his mercy; we will call upon him until death!"

Some enemies of the faith were angered by these words. They cut off hands and pierced others with iron awls. They heated hatchets red hot and held them against the armpits and thighs of those being tortured. They made necklaces of red hot ax heads and hung them about the necks so that one was tortured in every posture one could take. They made belts of bark filled with pitch and resin and set them on fire, burning the entire upper body.

Father de Brebeuf suffered like a rock, insensible to fires and flames and not uttering a single cry. This astonished the tormentors. When he began to preach to them they became even angrier and gouged out a circle around his mouth, cut off his nose and tore off his lips. His blood spoke more loudly than his words had. They then baptized the Fathers with boiling water, not once but three times. They also mocked their teaching: "We treat you as a friend since we are the cause of your greatest happiness in Heaven. Thank us for our kind services, for the more you suffer the more your God will reward you!"

Before the two fathers died they had their hearts torn out by means of an opening above the breast. The torturers feasted on these organs and drank their blood while it was still warm. While the fathers were still conscious pieces of flesh were removed and placed on coals to roast. They were then eaten in the sight of the captives. They sliced open their bodies in various places and stuck red hot hatchets into the wounds. They had broiled their tongues by thrusting flaming fire bands into their mouths to prevent them from invoking God while dying.

I have learned all these details from persons worthy of being believed. They saw it all and reported it to me first-hand. They too had been captives but were reserved for death at a later date. Before that time came they had escaped.