

**SECOND WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME – A
WEEK of PRAYER for CHRISTIAN UNITY**

January 18 – 24, 2026

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Sunday

THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR HOPE

A Reflection adapted from a commentary by Fr. Demetrius Dumm

In John's version of the call of the first disciples, we read that Jesus was pointed out to two of them by John; they then followed him, literally. *"When he turned and saw them following him, he asked: What are you looking for? They said, Rabbi, where are you staying?"* It would be a mistake to see this as simply an account of a friendly exchange between Jesus and the two disciples. The story implies that Jesus perceives in them a deep longing. He finds it in us, too. It is characteristic of humans generally, if they allow themselves to come to terms with their actual condition. It is as if Jesus had said: "You two must be earthlings, for I see that you are searching for something!"

In response, the two call him "Rabbi" because they sense that if he knows their innermost yearning, he must also know where to find what they seek. He must be a teacher of this truth. So, they ask, "Where are you staying?" They are certainly not asking for his address. Their question means, "Where can we find you and learn from you about our true home?" Jesus says in reply, "Come and see!" Jesus doesn't give vague answers but offers an invitation to walk with him and learn what living in hope means.

What our journey, our life, means, in its pain and its joy, is the truth Jesus teaches. Most of all, he teaches about its happy ending, our true homecoming. He teaches the ability to live in hope. That is what we learn from the Bible and its stories. It is a lesson not taught us anywhere else. Take worldly ideologies or philosophies, and you can only find advice about making life as much a success as it can be here and now in our world. Such messages are about immediate fulfillment. Time is seen as one's enemy, most because we all are growing older, and this relentlessly erodes opportunities for enjoyment and happiness; certainly, in our present situation, this is so!

From the perspective we learn from the Bible, a promise dominates life and doesn't fade or become less as time passes. True fulfillment is reserved for "the end". The only real concern in our present life is to ensure that we have chosen the right path to an end whose promise never fades. The thing is to stay on the path leading to our genuine homeland. This is not an easy path.

We have to put aside personal gratification for the good of others. It is the Jesus-path of loving care and self-sacrifice. The length of life is not a major concern because one step in the right direction is as good as a thousand. We are freed from excessive anxiety or angry frustration. Old age is not just meaningless and helpless waiting for death. It is the joyful expectation of looking forward eagerly to our arrival at our longed-for home. It may be that not all experience aging this way, but all can. That we fear we won't is only proof that we need to be more and more converted from the infection of merely worldly hopes. Look to the bright hope of God's revelation as given to us in the Bible. In every tale, this hope is glimpsed around the corner of daily incidents; it calls us to God and to share in God's life. It never ends. We meet Jesus today, and we recognize him as the source of all our hope.

Monday

THE CHRISTIAN STYLE

From a Homily of Pope Francis

We can learn about the Christian style by first knowing our attitudes that don't belong to the Christian style: the "accusatory style", the "worldly style", and the "selfish style".

The accusatory style belongs to those who always try and live by accusing others, disqualifying others, acting as absent promoters of justice. But they don't realize that it's the style of the devil. In the Bible, the devil is called the "great accuser", who is always accusing others. This was the same in the time of Jesus, who, in a few cases, reproached the accusers: "Instead of looking at the speck in the eyes of others, look at the beam in yours" or again: "Those who have not sinned can throw the first stone." Living by accusing others and looking for defects is not Christian, not the new wineskin.

Worldliness is an attitude of Catholics who can recite the Creed, but live on vanity, pride, and attachment to money, believing themselves to be self-sufficient. The Lord has offered you new wine, but you haven't changed the wineskin. You did not change yourself. This worldliness is what ruins so many good people – good people who fall into the spirit of vanity, of pride, of making themselves seen. There is a lack of humility, and humility is part of the Christian style. We should learn humility from Jesus, from the Virgin Mary, and from St. Joseph.

The selfish spirit is the spirit of indifference that is common in our communities. One believes oneself to be a good Catholic but doesn't worry about the problems of others, such as wars, illnesses, and the suffering of their neighbors. This is the hypocrisy that Jesus reproached the doctors of the law for. What then is the Christian style? It is that of the Beatitudes: meekness, humility, patience in suffering, love for justice, ability to endure persecution, not judging others. If Catholics want to learn the Christian style, so as not to fall into the accusatory style, the worldly style, and the selfish style, they must read the Beatitudes. And this is our style: the Beatitudes are the new wineskins, the path we must take to arrive where we are going. To be a good Christian, one must have the ability to pray not only the Creed with the heart, but also to pray the Our Father with the heart.

Tuesday

THE PASTORAL POWER OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIVING

A Reflection based on a sermon by St. John Paul II

Father Cyprian Tansi was a contemplative as a diocesan priest. He found the power and inspiration to minister in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. In God, he found freedom from self-concern and became available to all who had any kind of need. In a culture traditionally polygamous, he worked in a special way to help married people and to secure the dignity of women. Everything that opens people to the fullness of life given only in God was something he wanted to give himself. He lived the interdependence of contemplative prayer and active ministry.

In today's Gospel, Jesus makes the point that all rules bend for the sake of charity. The rules exist to promote human well-being by drawing them into closer relations with God. If a rule doesn't actually help to draw people to God—due to particular circumstances—one must be ready to do charity in a way that steps outside the rule. One doesn't devalue rules but values them because of their purpose. Father Cyprian Tansi was a powerhouse of charity, and every sort of work of charity, and in a culture whose rules needed transformation by the Gospel message in many ways.

Father Tansi knew that there was something of the Prodigal Son in every human person. He knew all are tempted to separate themselves from God to seek things just for themselves. He knew that people are disappointed by the illusion which previously fascinated them, and so find in the depths of their hearts a road that leads back to the Father's House. Father Tansi was always available to people to help them make this journey of reconciliation. He lived to spread the joy of communion with God. He inspired people to welcome the peace of Christ and to nourish the life of grace in them, especially with the Eucharist and God's word.

He sought to lead people to the sources from which all contemplatives draw their life. It was no wonder that his bishop sponsored his going to England to learn Cistercian monastic life in order to bring it to the people of Nigeria. If he died before he could realize this dream, nevertheless, monastic life came to Nigeria. But it can grow there only in the measure that those who live it learn to nourish themselves with prayer as Father Cyprian did, and so free themselves from self-seeking and concern with personal comforts and conveniences.

All contemplatives must learn how to draw nourishment from the word of God. They must learn through a way of life shaped by personal prayer. This teaches the liberating love given in Jesus. We must let ourselves be set free from all that focuses attention on self rather than on serving those with whom we live. We all seek a deeper and richer, and more human life. In Blessed Cyprian Tansi, not only contemplatives but people of every way of life see that God is love and that life is the sharing of the love revealed to us in Jesus.

Wednesday

THE TRANSFORMATION ST. AGNES

A Reflection by the ancient poet, Prudentius

Agnes was a brave woman and a glorious martyr. A double crown of martyrdom was given her, that of keeping her virginity untouched and that of dying by her own will to give herself wholly to the Lord. They say that as a young girl, she was already on fire with the love of Christ and so withstood commands to marry and to worship false gods. Many stratagems were used from fair promises to threats of torture, but she stood firm and unconquerable and even made explicit her determination to die before she deserted her dedication to the Lord.

“If it seems easy for her to overcome the pains and bear the suffering of torture, and if she scorns even life as of little worth, still the purity of her dedicated virginity seems dear to her. So, I have decided to confine her to a public house of prostitution unless she lays her head on the altar and asks pardon of Minerva, the virgin, whom she persists in slighting. All the young men will hurry to seek this new slave for their entertainment.” That is what the judge said, but Agnes replied: “No, Christ isn’t so forgetful of his own as to let my chastity be lost. He stands by the chaste. You may stain your sword with my blood, but you will not pollute my body by your lust.”

The judge gave orders that she be placed naked at a corner of the public square, but while she was there, people avoided her in sadness, and one youth who happened by and looked at her with lust was struck by something like a thunderbolt of fire so that he fell down blind and lay in convulsions in the dust. Agnes sang of God the Father and of Christ because when an unholy danger fell on her, then her virginity won the day. She was chaste and pure even in a brothel. It is said that some asked her prayers on behalf of the young man who had been struck down and that he was healed in response to these prayers.

The judge saw all this and complained that he was becoming the loser in this contest. So, he gave the order: “Go and draw the sword, soldier, and give effect to the command of our Lord, the emperor. But when Agnes saw him standing there with his sword drawn, she rejoiced. “I rejoice that there comes a cruel and savage soldier to destroy me with the death of honor. This lover pleases me. I meet him with eager steps and shall welcome the entire length of his blade into my body. As Christ’s bride, I will leap out of darkness and rise higher than the sky!”

She bowed her head and worshipped Christ so that her bent neck would be more ready to accept the blow of the executioner. His arm fulfilled her great hope. At one stroke, he cut off her head, and death forestalled all pain. She now watches over Rome’s citizens together with the strangers who honor her with a pure and faith-filled heart.

Thursday

THE VOCATION TO PROTECT LIFE

From “How to Build a Culture of Life” from “Christ our Hope” website

To understand more fully how to defend and protect human life, we must first consider who we are at the deepest level. God creates us in his image and likeness, which means we are made to be in a loving relationship with God. The essence of our identity and worth, the source of our dignity, is that we are loved by God. We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the gifts the Father’s love has given us and our real capacity to become the images of his Son.

We are called to divine intimacy, true communion with God, and we can grow in this closeness with him through daily prayer, reading the Scriptures, and frequent participation in the sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist.

The knowledge and realization of how deeply we are loved by God elicits a response of love that simultaneously draws us closer to God and impels us to share his love with others.

Embracing a relationship with God means following in Christ’s footsteps, wherever he may call. Being a disciple of Jesus naturally includes sharing the Gospel with others and inviting them to a deeper relationship with God. As Christians, our identity and mission are two sides of the same coin. We are called to be missionary disciples.

When we live in union with God, open to his promptings, we’re more able to see the opportunities for witness and his guidance in responding to them. We may fear doing the wrong thing or saying the wrong word, but we don’t need to be afraid. Jesus is with us until the end of the age.

As a society and as individuals, we often measure ourselves by false standards. But God’s love is the true source of our worth, identity and dignity. It really isn’t a question of who we are but of whose we are. God’s love will never change, and nothing can reduce our God-given dignity.

When a woman becomes pregnant, and her boyfriend threatens to leave if she continues the pregnancy, we need to lovingly walk with her. When family members or friends become seriously ill, we need to assure them that God offers them something marvelous and that they still have purpose.

This is how we answer our missionary call. This is how we build a culture of life, one that joyfully proclaims the truth of God’s love, purpose, and plan for each person. Changing the culture is a process of conversion that begins in our own hearts and includes a willingness to be instructed and a desire to be close to Jesus—the deepest source of joy.

When we encounter Christ, experience his love, and deepen our relationship with him, we become more aware of our own worth and that of others. Our lives are often changed by the witness of others, so too others’ lives may be changed by our witness and authentic friendship. Let us not be afraid. God is always with us.

Friday

WEEPING FOR THE DEAD

From a Homily by St. Lawrence of Brindisi, OFM Cap

The patriarch Abraham wept bitterly at the death of his wife, Sarah. So did Isaac at the death of his mother. The people of Israel wept at the death of the high priest Aaron and that of the great prophet Moses. David likewise mourned the death of Absalom: *"Oh Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you!"* In similar words, Christ addressed himself to Jerusalem: *"Oh Jerusalem, if only I might die instead of you; for I am ready to die for your salvation."* David loved his son Absalom with a most tender love, even though he was wicked, and sought to assassinate his father and usurp his kingdom. And so David wept over his death and wished he had died in his place. Christ too loved Jerusalem, and that is why he wept over it, wept to think that, like Absalom, it would be destroyed.

Christ mourned over Jerusalem, and not only longed to die to save it but actually did die. But Christ's greatest sorrow was that although he was going up to Jerusalem to die for its salvation, his death would, through its own fault, lead not to its salvation but to its greater condemnation. *"When he came in sight of the city, he wept over it"*. Christ grieved not so much because of the suffering and death he would endure upon the cross as because people would not realize what he had done for them. Hence his words, *"If only you knew, even today, the way that leads to peace"*. We are born children of wrath and enemies of God; but God gives us the whole span of our lives to make our peace with him, to receive his grace, and, in the end, to attain glory.

Alas, there is nothing to which we devote less attention. On the contrary, our enmity with God is increased every day by our sins. The reason this happens is that the end of God's grace, which is glory, and the end of sin, which is eternal death, are hidden from our sight. *"When Jesus came in sight of the city, he wept over it because it did not recognize the time of God's visitation."* God, in his tender mercy, has visited us to give us light, *"to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins"*. God has visited us to save us from our sins, *"so that freed from the hands of our enemies we might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness in his sight all the days of our life"*.

But if we want to do this, I beg you, brothers and sisters, let us keep our last day ever before us. Let us always remember that we shall die, and recognize the world's deceitfulness; then we shall live holy and upright lives. Then we shall be prepared to live in the company of God's holy ones for days without end.

Saturday

OUR SEARCH FOR THE KISS OF FAITH

A Reflection from Treatise on the Love of God by St. Francis de Sales

Under the rays of the noonday sun, we are no sooner aware of its brightness than we feel its heat. So it is with the light of faith; no sooner has it shed the splendor of its truth on our mind than straightaway the will feels the glowing warmth of charity. With infallible certitude, faith gives us knowledge of God's existence, shows us that God is infinite goodness, that God is capable of sharing his life with us ... indeed, not merely that he can do this but that he wants to. With this in view, he has provided, with indescribable tenderness, all that we need to attain the bliss of eternal glory.

We have a natural tendency toward the supreme good. As a result, the human heart knows an innermost eagerness, a constant restlessness, which it has no way of quieting. It has no way of hiding its lack of perfect satisfaction and utter contentment. Once faith has pictured to the mind the beauty of the goal of its natural tendency, God alone knows how we thrill through and through with joy and happiness. As though caught off balance by the sight of such superlative beauty, we cry out with love: "How fair you are, my true love, how fair!"

Abraham's servant Eliezar went in search of a wife for his master's son. He was not certain of finding anyone as fair and gracious as he hoped. But when he did discover her by the well, when he saw her beauty, her charm, and most of all when she had been given to him to take to his master, he fell to worshiping and praising God with joyful gratitude that knew no bounds.

The human heart is drawn to God by a natural tendency, even though a person has no clear knowledge of who God is. When we discover God at the well of faith, when we see how good God is, how beautiful, how kind, how gracious toward everyone, how ready to give himself as the supreme good and to all want him—heaven knows the gratification we feel, the inspirations we have for uniting ourselves to him forever with a goodness so supremely lovable!

I have found him at last, cries the person who moved in this way. I have found the one I have been looking for, and now I am satisfied. But just as Jacob wept for joy after he had seen the fair Rachel, after he had greeted her with a kiss, even so, the human heart melts with love when it has found God, when it has received from him the first kiss of faith. It has had the first sight and taste of the infinite treasures that are supreme beauty!