

**FOURTEENTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME – A
& SOLEMNITY of our HOLY FATHER BENEDICT
July 5 – 11, 2026**

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Wed. 8	Memorial of Bl. Eugene III, Cistercian Pope THE PONTIFF AND CARE FOR HIMSELF From the Treatise <u>On Consideration</u> written by St. Bernard for Pope Eugene III
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Sunday

GENTLE AND HUMBLE OF HEART

A Reflection from a Commentary attributed to St. John Chrysostom

Our Master is always the same, gentle and benevolent. In his constant concern for our salvation, he says explicitly in the gospel: *Come, learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.*

What great condescension on the part of the Creator! And yet the creature feels no shame! *Come, learn from me.* The Master came to console his fallen servants. This is how Christ treats us. He shows pity when a sinner deserves punishment. When the race that angers him deserves to be annihilated, he addresses the guilty ones in the kindly words: *Come, learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.*

God is humble, and we are proud! The judge is gentle; the criminal arrogant! The potter speaks in lowered voice; the clay discourses in tones of a king! *Come, learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.* Our master carries a whip not to wound, but to heal us. Reflect upon his indescribable kindness. Who could fail to love a master who never strikes his servants? Who would not marvel at a judge who beseeches a condemned criminal? Surely the self-abasement of these words must astound you.

I am the Creator and I love my work. I am the sculptor and I care for what I have made. If I thought of my dignity, I should not rescue fallen humankind. If I failed to treat its incurable sickness with fitting remedies, it would never recover its strength. If I did not console it, it would die. If I did nothing but threaten it, it would perish. This is why I apply the salve of kindness to it where it lies. Compassionately, I bend down very low in order to raise it up. No one standing erect can lift a fallen man without putting a hand down to him.

Come learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. I do not make a show of words; I have left you the proof of my deeds. You can see that I am gentle and humble of heart from what I have become. Consider my nature, reflect upon my dignity, and marvel at the condescension I have shown you. Think of where I came from, and of where I am as I speak to you. Heaven is my throne, yet I talk to you standing on the earth! I am glorified on high, but because I am long-suffering, I am not angry with you, *for I am gentle and humble in heart.*

Monday

THE SUSTAINER OF LIFE

From the writing of Howard Thurman

It is of enormous reassurance to us, our Father, that Thou art the sustainer and the holder of life, that despite all of our own limitations and finitudes, despite all our weaknesses and failures, despite all of the soarings of our minds and imaginations and our spirits, always we come back to the deeply-lying assurance that Thou art the sustainer of life, the holder of all creation, and the guarantor of all our values. This is of such overwhelming reassurance to us that we celebrate in simple words of praise this almighty grace.

We offer on our part not merely the good deeds of which we are aware at times, not merely the concerns for our fellows which sometimes lead us to simple deeds or glorious acts of self-sacrifice, but we offer Thee the things that we might become - all of the possibilities of our lives, the potentials not yet realized. We offer to Thee our failures also; those times when something breaks down, and we do not know what... all that we might have been at a particular time and were not; all of the sense of conscience that disturbs and whips and tortures because we have not been in quality and in kind what we knew at the time we could have been in quality and kind. And beyond all of these expressions of ourselves, our Father, we offer to Thee ourselves. This is what we want to do, and sometimes we can do it - just to say to Thee, Father, here am I. My life as it is at its depth, I give to Thee. And I want Thee to hold it so that it is no longer my life to do with in accordance with my whims, my impulses, my desires, or even my needs, but to take my life and to hold it until it takes on Thy character, Thy mind, Thy purposes. If Thou wilt do this and if Thou wilt help me to do this, then I can be in myself what is truest and surest in me. And this, O God, is all, all, all.

Tuesday

TURNING OURSELVES TOWARD GOD

A Reflection developed from a Scripture commentary by Abbot Rupert of Deutz

"A great storm arose on the sea." The wind that was against them is the hot north wind from which comes all evil. Well knowing its fury, the soul banishes it by saying, "North wind, be off; wind of the south, blow through this garden of mine, and set its fragrance astir." There can be no doubt that the contrary wind is the devil, Satan, who stirs up the depths of the sea, namely, the children of this world, and attempts by instigating frequent storms of opposition to shipwreck the Church. In his power, he disturbs even the mountains because of the bitter trials that overtake them. Where now, I ask, is the Power of him whom they have followed on to the boat, the power that made them boast in their confidence: "Not for us to be afraid, though earth should tremble about us, and the hills be carried away into the depth of the sea?"

By now, the waters, the mountainous waves of the deep, rage and roar, and those mountains of his Church or mountains of the little ship are in a proper panic over the force and fury of the elements. Why have they lost their bearings? Why are they afraid? Their strong Saviour is asleep. Where Christ their Strength sleeps, their fear holds sway, for then the sea's fury rises and a man forgets his faith in Christ.

While Christ's power is inoperative, it is a good thing that fear should dominate; it will in due time force the frightened and their slight and sleepy faith to seek safety with him with whom they should have kept their strength, and far from being afraid could have claimed: "God is our refuge and strong hold amid the bitter trials that overtake us." Instead, they have to beg Christ to wake up and save them because if he sleeps on, they will drown. The best thing the disciples could have done would have been to keep their Master from sleeping; they did the next best thing and woke him from sleep. In place of courage and glowing faith, they had but fear and a confession of need. Love keeps Christ awake; necessity wakes him from sleep. What a good thing it is, nonetheless, to have to make a virtue of necessity!

Seeking counsel and help is indeed virtuous, though not as virtuous as having the courage that prevents fear. So, brothers, whenever persecution rages against us, let us, after the holy Apostle's example, have recourse to Christ. Let us enliven our faith in Christ and awaken the memory of his Passion, that sleeping of his that this sleeping in the boat fittingly refers to. By ourselves, we become either weak and fearful or indulge in foolhardy fortitude; in Christ, we find the very pattern of patience, and he endows us with... virtuous endurance, teaching us true constancy. Separated from him, we are forever failures; joined to him, we are fit for anything; as the blessed Apostle says, "Nothing is beyond my powers, thanks to the strength he gives me."

How true it is that the Lord's eyelids appraise us! When he closes his eyes, the sea rages, and everything becomes savagely difficult. May we not be broken! He opens his eyes, all is calm, and it is all smooth sailing. May we not become proud! For when all is quiet, all is safe, may we not become lazy. In foul weather, we must hope for fair, and in fair weather, we must beware of foul. Changes are always going on, and one thing follows another. The truly wise man will be more anxious in prosperity than in adversity, and in neither will such a person grow lazy and surrender to slumber; not for such to either despair or become complacent. So, brothers, with fear and hope for escort, let us keep ever alive in us faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wednesday

THE PONTIFF AND CARE FOR HIMSELF

From the Treatise On Consideration written by St. Bernard for Pope Eugene III

Listen now to what I condemn in you and to what I would exhort you. If you devote yourself to external activities all your time and all your attention, reserving nothing for consideration: "What shall I say to (you) ? Do I praise (you) ? In this I praise (you) not" (1 Cor. xi. 22). Neither, as I suppose, would anyone else who remembered the words of Solomon, "He that is less in action shall receive wisdom" (Eccli. xxxviii. 25). Even for action itself, it is expedient that it should follow, not precede, consideration. Again, if you desire to put yourself unreservedly at the disposal of all, after the example of him who "became all things to all men" (1 Cor. ix. 22), I certainly applaud your charity – provided only that it be full. But how can your charity be full unless you yourself also are comprehended in its embrace? You are a man like the rest of us. Therefore, if your charity is to be considered full and perfect, it ought to include you as well as all other men in its folds. For, in the words of the Lord, what will it profit you to gain the whole world, if you lose yourself alone? (Matt. xvi. 26). Wherefore, since everybody else enjoys a share of your solicitude, do you likewise participate therein? Why should you be the only one defrauded of the benefit of your zeal?

How long will you be as "a spirit that goes and returns not" (Ps. lxxvii. 39)? How long will you refuse to admit yourself also in your turn among the multitude of men to whom your door stands open? Both "to the wise and to the unwise (you are) a debtor" (Rom. i. 14), and do you deny yourself to yourself alone? Simple and wise, slaves and freemen, rich and poor, men and women, old and young, priests and laity, good and bad – all alike have a share in you, all drink from the public fountain of your heart, and will you, though thirsty, stand aloof? If he is accursed who deteriorates his portion,* what shall be the fate of him who loses it altogether? By all means let the waters of your well flow out into the public ways; let not men alone partake thereof, but their beasts of burden likewise, and their flocks and herds; yes, draw, if so pleases you, and give to drink to the camels of Abraham's servant (Gen. xxiv. 19, 20); only do you also with the rest slake your thirst at the fountain. It is written, "Neither let strangers be partakers with thee" (Prov. v. 17). But art thou a stranger? To whom art thou not a stranger if a stranger to yourself? "He that is evil to himself," says the Wise Man, "to whom will he be good?" (Prov. xiv. 5).

Remember, therefore, I do not say always, I do not even say often, but at least from time to time, to restore yourself to yourself. Attend to yourself among others, or at all events, after the others. Could anything be more indulgent? Indeed, if I have not asked more of you, it is not because reason would not approve, but because I desire to be lenient. It seems to me that in this matter I am less exacting than the Apostle. Less, therefore, than is right, say you ? I will not deny it. But perhaps it is the part of prudence to require from you less than is due. For thou, as I trust, will not be content with giving the small measure which is all that my nervous timidity dares to ask, but rather wilt "abound the more" (1 Thess. iv. 1). This certainly will be more becoming, viz., that you should show yourself generous than that I should appear bold. Besides, in dealing with majesty, I judge it more expedient to seem wanting in courage than wanting in discretion. And perhaps it is only in this way, namely, by asking little and leaving the rest to his generosity, that I ought to have admonished a wise man, according to the recommendation of Solomon, "Give an occasion to a wise man and wisdom shall be added to him" (Prov. ix. 9).

Thursday

EVANGELIZATION IS AN ART

From a Homily by Pope Francis

Evangelization is an art and never a walk in the park. It is witnessing to Christ with one's whole life.

There are some Christians today who live their lives of service as though they were mere functionaries – priests and lay people who boast of what they do. This reduces the Gospel to a function or even a source of pride. Therefore, neither coast along, nor reduce the Gospel to rote work, nor to proselytize. This is what Paul says in the 1st Letter to the Corinthians (9:16-19, 22b-27): “For me, it is not a boast. For me, it is a necessity, one that is laid on me.” A Christian has an obligation, the force of which is such as to make it like a heartfelt necessity to carry the name of Jesus.”

And what, then, ought to be the “style” by which we evangelize? By “becoming all things to all people. Go and share in the lives of others: accompany them on their journey of faith, that they might grow in faith along their way.”

We must put ourselves in the other's condition: not to get in others' way, but to be on the way with them. During lunch with young people at the World Youth Day in Krakow, a boy asked what he should say to a close friend who was an atheist:

“It's a good question. We all know people far from the Church: what should we tell them? I said: ‘Look, the last thing you need to do is say something! Begin to do, and he will see what you are doing and ask you about it; and when he asks you, then tell him. To evangelize is to give this testimony: I live the way I do because I believe in Jesus Christ; I awaken in you a curiosity, so you ask me, ‘But why are you doing these things?’ The answer: ‘Because I believe in Jesus Christ and preach Jesus Christ and not just with the Word’ – you must proclaim the Word – but with your life.”

This is to evangelize, he said, “and this is done free of charge,” because “we have freely received the Gospel.” Grace, salvation, can be neither bought nor sold: it is free. “We have to give it for free.”

Look at St. Peter Claver: a missionary who went off to preach the Gospel. Perhaps, he thought his future would be devoted to preaching. The Lord, however, asked him to be close to those who had been ‘discarded’ at that time: the slaves, the black people who arrived there from Africa, to be sold.”

“This man did not stroll along saying he evangelized: he did not reduce evangelism to a rote task, and even to a proselytizing; he proclaimed Jesus Christ with his actions, speaking to the slaves, living with them, living like them – and there are many like him in the Church – many people who annihilate themselves to proclaim Jesus Christ – and all of us, brothers and sisters, have an obligation to evangelize – and that does not mean a knock on the neighbor's door to say: ‘Christ is risen!’ – it is living the faith, talking about it with meekness, with love, with no desire to win an argument, but to give it away for free: giving away freely that, which God has given to me – that is what it means to evangelize.”

Friday

SEEKING GOD WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

A Reflection taken from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

The most important thing to seek is God's love. It is the beginning and end of everything. Of course, we would very much want others to like and love us, especially because they see how we love our God. May God grant us this grace. May we become worthy to be loved by all through striving to grow in love for God. More, may we learn by such striving how to react to human love and use it to grow more in love of God.

Much of the time, we feel a certain fear and trembling that we may not be loving God as we should. Oh yes, we hear St. Paul saying, *"I am certain that nothing can separate me from the love of God!"* But I'm not St. Paul! For you and me, the future is unclear. Even Paul had to struggle lest, having proclaimed God's love to others, he should find himself cast away from it. I feel so often wretched and unworthy. How am I to be consoled? Everything seems to denounce me as unworthy. My life doesn't seem a striving against sin but a slavery to it. I seem to want the friendship of this world more than that of God.

It seems a great consolation that others like you or even love you. And yet we recall all that Scripture says about the emptiness of merely human love and how fleeting and changeable it can be. That is the danger of rejoicing in the love of others before one has learned how to love, even how to long for love. How can one be a friend to another if one hasn't learned to be a friend to oneself? Such a person may experience being abandoned by the very friends for whose love one has abandoned God.

It isn't that it takes time to pass between learning to love God and learning to love others. What I am saying is that the two must differ in intensity. It is always necessary to pay attention to each sort of love without neglecting the other. God can't be loved without loving the neighbor, and the neighbor can't be loved well without loving God well. But if our heart is right, we can't be unaware of which of these two loves should be the stronger and which should shape the form and expression we give to each type of love, or to limits on human loves.

The blessed state is to live in the truth – to avoid seeking to please out of a love of feeling good and so making yourself amiable in silly ways, or aloof in pride. One who is filled with genuine charity doesn't fall into the one or the other ditch but stays on the path shown us by Jesus. Taking thought for what is good not only in God's sight but also by human standards, you mustn't neglect either a clear conscience or the respect of others. We have to show ourselves, true friends to others, if we are to love God rightly. Nor can you simply try to avoid shocking others; indeed, if you don't build others up in their love for God by correcting them, you give a kind of scandal. But, of course, are you sure you have the wisdom to discern who is going wrong and who is simply weak? Indeed, we walk in fear and trembling. We are never wholly secure in knowing that we ourselves are walking in true love of God or in right love of the members of our community. What we are being taught is humility and a humble trust that brings us to God.

Saturday

WHAT SANCTIFIES A PERSON

A Reflection from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

"God sanctified him through faith and meekness", says the Book of Wisdom. The actual subject of this verse is Moses, but it is fitting to apply it to our Holy Father Benedict because he, too, was for so many a teacher and guide to salvation. Both Moses and Benedict are our teachers because neither lived otherwise than he taught. This wouldn't have been possible if both hadn't had the two virtues of faith and meekness. Consider their examples.

What could be more notable than a faith that scorned wealth and power, even as a youth? Both preferred to suffer the hardships of the world for the sake of God rather than live for personal gain or pleasure. What could be holier than their meekness? Benedict refused to be provoked even by those who tried to kill him with poisoned wine, and Moses was said to be the meekest of all on earth. I remember reading that Benedict's gentleness held even for those who spoke against him or tried to do him harm.

This didn't mean that either lacked a burning zeal to overcome sin. If this had been absent, they would have sunk into tepidity. They realized that the meekness of peacefulness must be sprinkled with the salt of zeal for justice and right. We must seek meekness, but at the same time, burn with faith and zeal for right.

Apply these lessons to yourself. We too will be sanctified through faith and meekness. Our meekness, however, will remain unblemished only if faith leads it. Faith too must be true and unblemished, then, and it is so only if it is living and vigorous. Benedict and Moses weren't afraid even of kings. The reason is that they considered ordinary things as nothing compared with the things of God. Faith gives two special gifts. It speaks penetratingly of the future and gives a keen perception of present things. It does the first through hope and the second by reason of trust in God's providence.

Faith sees what is not yet present and what, for now, is invisible because it lays hold of the good things to come as if they were already present. It makes them exist in every heart that is faith-filled. For instance, it discloses the presence of God in all things and places. This is what Scripture means when it says, *"The just one lives by faith"*. But let us be mindful that this is *"faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things that are not apparent"*.

If we push God behind our backs, as if we had no faith, we put aside the fear of God. Then we are left with our attention fixed on empty things. But how terrible that will make the Last Day! Living faith stands before God, anxious only to see God's will. It stands at Judgment with serenity and beholds God's glory with joy. Let us be watchful, then, and stand firm in faith. The person, whose faith is aroused through fear of the Lord, isn't able to slumber due to negligence. The one whose faith is established in hope can't falter through lack of confidence. But everything must be done in love. Then indeed will it be said that faith and meekness sanctify us, as they did our Father Benedict. Our faith engenders love. It is by our love that we will be meek and holy like Jesus, and we will stand in the presence of God with him forever!