

FIFTEENTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME – A

July 12 – 18, 2026

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A Reflection from a Commentary by St. Gregory the Great

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Adapted from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

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Sunday

BRING FORTH FRUIT BY PATIENCE

A Reflection from a Commentary by St Gregory the Great

Dearly beloved, the reading from the holy gospel about the sower requires no explanation, but only a word of warning. In fact, the explanation has been given by Truth himself, and it cannot be disputed by a frail human being. However, there is one point in our Lord's exposition which you ought to weigh well. It is this. If I told you that the seed represented the word, the field the world, the birds the demons, and the thorns riches, you would perhaps be in two minds as to whether to believe me. Therefore the Lord himself deigned to explain what he had said, so that you would know that a hidden meaning is to be sought also in those passages which he did not wish to interpret himself. Would anyone have believed me if I had said that thorns stood for riches? After all, thorns are piercing and riches pleasurable. And yet riches are thorns because thoughts of them pierce the mind and torture it. When they finally lure a person into sin, it is as though they were drawing blood from the wound they have inflicted.

According to another evangelist, the Lord spoke in this parable not simply of riches but of deceptive riches, and with good reason. Riches are deceptive because they cannot stay with us for long; they are deceptive because they are incapable of relieving our spiritual poverty. The only true riches are those that make us rich in virtue. Therefore, if you want to be rich, beloved, love true riches. If you aspire to the heights of real honor, strive to reach the kingdom of heaven. If you value rank and renown, hasten to be enrolled in the heavenly court of the angels. Store up in your minds the Lord's words which you receive through your ears, for the word of the Lord is the nourishment of the mind. When his word is heard but not stored away in the memory, it is like food which has been eaten and then rejected by an upset stomach. A person's life is despaired of if he cannot retain his food; so if you receive the food of holy exhortations, but fail to store in your memory those words of life which nurture righteousness, you have good reason to fear the danger of everlasting death.

Be careful, then, that the word you have received through your ears remains in your heart. Be careful that the seed does not fall along the path, for fear that the evil spirit may come and take it from your memory. Be careful that the seed is not received in stony ground, so that it produces a harvest of good works without the roots of perseverance. Many people are pleased with what they hear and resolve to undertake some good work, but as soon as difficulties begin to arise and hinder them, they leave the work unfinished. The stony ground lacked the necessary moisture for the sprouting seed to yield the fruit of perseverance.

Good earth, on the other hand, brings forth fruit by patience. The reason for this is that nothing we do is good unless we also bear with equanimity the injuries done to us by our neighbors. In fact, the more we progress, the more hardships we shall have to endure in this world; for when our love for this present world dies, its sufferings increase. This is why we see many people doing good works and at the same time struggling under a heavy burden of afflictions. They now shun earthly desires, and yet they are tormented by greater sufferings. But, as the Lord said, they bring forth fruit by patience, because, since they humbly endure misfortunes, they are welcomed when these are over into a place of rest in heaven.

Monday

THE AUTHOR OF ENVY

From the Conferences by St. John Cassian

Let us not look for peace outside ourselves and let us not count upon another's patience to rescue us from our sins of impatience. For just as the kingdom of God is within us, so too is it the case that 'the enemies of a man are of his own household'. No one fights against me more than my own heart, which is surely close to me in my own household. If we are careful, however, we can suffer the minimum harm from the enemies within. When the enemies in our own household are not at war with us, then, in the tranquility of the spirit, the kingdom of God becomes a possession. To put the matter quite clearly to you, I cannot be harmed by the malice of any man if my own unquiet heart does not set me against myself. If I suffer harm, it is not from the attack of an outsider but because of the snare of my own impatience...

One needs to know that the disease of envy is harder to cure than any other. I would say that someone stricken by its poison is almost beyond healing. This is the pestilence described figuratively by the prophet: 'See, I will send you serpents against which there are no incantations, and they will bite you'. The bites of envy are quite rightly compared by the prophet to the lethal poison of the basilisk. For it was because of this that the very first to perish and to fall was the one who is the source of everything deadly. He brought about his own downfall long before he poured the virus of death over man, of whom he was jealous. 'Death came into the world because of the devil's envy...

"The devil was first to be ruined by this scourge, and he kept at bay the cure of penance and the warmth of healing medicine. And, in a similar fashion, those who have allowed themselves to be gnawed in the same poisonous way have barred all the efforts of the holy exorcist, for they are tormented not by the faults of the one they envy but rather by his good fortune...

"This is the reason why to escape one of the lethal bites of the basilisk, to keep everything alive in us, to have ourselves, so to speak, under the living sway of the Holy Spirit Himself, we must ceaselessly beg for the help of God to whom nothing is impossible. As regards the poisonous bites of other snakes – and here I mean the sins and the vices of the flesh – human frailty, despite the speed with which it falls into them, is just as readily purged of them. The wounds that they cause leave their own evident marks on the flesh. And although the earthly body swells up most dangerously because of them, yet some very skilled declaimer of the divine words of Scripture can provide an antidote or saving cure of those words, and the rampant poison will not bring everlasting death to the soul.

But like the poison spurted out by the snake, the bane of envy shuts out the very life of religion and of faith before the wound can ever be diagnosed in the body. For the fact is that a blasphemer rises up not against a man but against God. He launches his complaints against nothing other than the good fortune of his brother. He criticizes not so much the fault of a man as the judgment of God. Here surely is that 'root of bitterness cropping up', raising itself up on high to hurl spite against the One who bestows all that is good upon man... For God is certainly not the author of envy.

Tuesday

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS TO SHARE

Adapted from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

What does it mean to be a “witness”? It means you don’t express your own opinion or communicate your own beliefs, but that you share what you have experienced of another. If that Other is Jesus or God, then you share what you have experienced as explaining why you are wholly dedicated to that Other. A witness to Jesus has encountered Jesus personally and testifies to that fact and what it has meant practically. That is the way Kateri Tekakwitha witnessed Jesus.

Though Kateri wasn’t officially a catechist, she had the qualifications. She had opened her heart to Christian faith and had encountered Jesus personally. The missionaries who taught her had said nothing about how women might live a life wholly consecrated to serving God and their people. Kateri, because of her experience of Jesus’ love, and because of the love she gave him in response, created a form of consecrated life for the women of her people. She even moved to a Christian village where she could live such a way of life completely and fully.

A person who meets Jesus superficially, by tradition or family-based habit, has no exact and practical idea of Him. Such a person doesn’t know Jesus as a power of salvation who transforms every aspect of one’s life. Such a person needs to know Jesus as the reply to life’s practical questions, as a genuine “bread of life” and a medicine healing wounds and giving new meaning to suffering. Jesus, genuinely and personally experienced, is the fulfillment of our longings and dreams. He transforms our longings and dreams!

Christian witness, then, is an intense and lived relationship with Jesus as this is shared with others. This should encourage us. Jesus offers such a relationship to each of us. It isn’t something given in an “official” way by an official of the Christian Church: it is a gift from Jesus to each person. We don’t become agents of the Church but witnesses to Jesus and to what he does to humanity and human history, starting with “you”. That is what brought Kateri Tekakwitha to holiness, and one day to official recognition as a saint. She listened to Jesus, she loved Jesus, she sought Jesus – e.g., through a private vow of virginity for the sake of the Kingdom – and she loved him with all her heart and all her life.

Kateri’s Mohawk culture and society had not been Christianized, as we say. But she used it to love Jesus with all her heart and soul and strength, and that was what mattered most. She made her way of living a witness to this and a way of sharing her faith with others. She sought to help others understand, as best she could, what the Christian message is and to help them open their hearts to the mystery of God’s love for all human persons. She shows that we can all do that, no matter what our cultural or social contexts may be, and how open or closed these may be concerning Jesus and his message. That is our way to holiness and sanctity, too. We only have to say “Yes” to Jesus’ offer of his love and friendship and then respond with our own offer to Him.

Wednesday

WHEN THROUGH ECSTASY OUR AFFECTION PASSES OVER ENTIRELY INTO GOD **From the writings of St. Bonaventure**

Christ is the way *and the door*; Christ is the ladder and the vehicle, like the Mercy Seat placed above the ark of God and the *mystery hidden from eternity*. Whoever turns his face fully to the Mercy Seat and, with faith, hope and love, devotion, admiration, exultation, appreciation, praise and joy, beholds him hanging upon the cross, such a one makes the Pasch, that is, the passover, with Christ. By the staff of the cross he passes over the Red Sea," going from Egypt into the desert, where he will taste the *hidden manna*. With Christ, he rests in the tomb, as if dead to the outer world, but experiencing, as far as is possible in this wayfarer's state, what was said on the cross to the thief who adhered to Christ; *Today you shall be with me in paradise*.

This was also shown to Blessed Francis when, in ecstatic contemplation on the height of the mountain, there appeared to him a six-winged Seraph fastened to a cross... There he passed over into God in ecstatic contemplation and became an example of perfect contemplation as he had previously been of action, like another Jacob and Israel, so that through him, more by example than by word, God might invite all truly spiritual men to this kind of passing over and spiritual ecstasy.

In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind, and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God. This, however, is mystical and most secret, which no one knows *except* him who receives it, no one receives except him who desires it, and no one desires except him who is inflamed in his very marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent into the world. And therefore the Apostle says that this mystical wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit...

But if you wish to know how these things come about, ask grace, not instruction, desire not understanding, the groaning of prayer, not diligent reading, the Spouse, not the teacher, God, not man, darkness, not clarity, not light but the fire that totally inflames and carries us into God by ecstatic unctions and burning affections. This fire is God, and *his furnace is in Jerusalem*; and Christ enkindles it in the heat of his burning passion, which only he truly perceives who says: *My soul chooses hanging and my bones death*.

Whoever loves this death can see God because it is true beyond doubt that *man will not see me and live*. Let us, then, die and enter into the darkness; let us impose silence upon our cares, our desires, and our imaginings. With Christ crucified, let us *pass out of this world* to the *Father* so that when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip: *It is enough* for us. Let us hear with Paul: *My grace is sufficient for you*. Let us rejoice with David, saying: *My flesh and my heart have grown faint; You are the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever...*

Thursday

OUR LADY'S UNNOTICED GIFTS

A Reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard

"Hail, Mary, full of grace", said the angel. He said this to a virgin, but her fullness of grace didn't consist only in her virginity. Not everyone receives the gift of remaining a virgin, and the Lord shows us in Mary that He has more than one blessing. Even if one has not preserved virginity, one can still come to Mary and plead with her that the Lord may share with us her other gifts. The angel came to a most humble young woman of Nazareth, and her beauty was the result of her humility as much as of her virginity. Many are virgins, but not all are humble, and their virginity will count for nothing if they don't learn humility. We come to Mary as Abraham's servant came to Rebecca when he was seeking a wife for Isaac. He came to her at a well and found her drawing water. When he asked her for a drink, without hesitation, she lowered her jar and shared her water with him, and then gave water to his beasts as well. She was most humble and delighted to serve even in lowly ways.

Mary, if I come to you and ask you for a drink, will you share with me that humility which was among your principal beauties and adornments? Give me to drink from the water which gives strength to serve and to love. Give me the water of life which comes to us from the fruit of your womb. For you are not only a virgin, you are not only humble, but you are also fruitful.

God always looks upon the humble with love and lifts them up by many graces to rejoice with him and in his Kingdom. Lift me up, Lord, and give me the strength I need not only to be humble but to love and serve as did your lowly handmaiden. The water that Mary drew had been given to her by the Son after he turned it into wine. That is what happens when humility is joined to the strength that is from God and that flows forth to give joy to every human heart that will receive it. You, O Lord, have invited us to your very own wedding banquet as you join yourself with our race and take on all that comes with our humanity, including weakness and lowliness. You changed these seemingly insignificant things into strength and joy at the prayer of your servant, the virgin and mother.

The fruitfulness of Mary, the unexpected and marvelous fruitfulness of one who was a virgin and knew no man, was made fruitful for the entire world when you made her virginal womb fruitful by the incarnation of your only Son. Who could be stronger than he? Who could lavish greater and more wondrous gifts on all who are lowly and give a "Yes" in response to every request?

Mary, lower your jar that I may drink! Let me drink of the blood of your Holy Son, our Lord Jesus. Let me draw strength from him that I, too, may be twice humble, because I was not strong enough to be like you as a virgin. It is in that humility that I answer with my "Yes" to the call by which you send me to love others even as your Son and our brother has loved them. Let the water of the Holy Spirit's grace cause me to conceive in my heart the Lord Jesus, and let me share the water of life that flows from him even as you do. O Virgin, humble and fruitful, may I too become fruitful by imitating your humility and turning with you to God so my every moment shall be a "Yes". Let all be done in me according to your will!

Friday

SEEK WISDOM

From the Sermon on the Song of Songs (Sermon 15.1-2) by St. Bernard

What are we doing in this world, brothers? Or what do we make of this world? If we strive to be saved from this present wicked world, then why do we still worry ourselves about this world? If we wish to escape, then why do we take pains to drag our shackles with us? Let us suppose that the shackles were made of gold: even then, it would be much better to be free of them than to be held back on account of them. Let us not esteem their value, but let us consider how they hinder us. In addition to the inherent privation of our human condition (which is generally considered harsh enough), we even start clinging to these shackles with the glue of cupidity, and we start to be entangled in the obligations of foolish worries.

Let us assume that it is perhaps less conclusive to explore what anyone in shackles may do, because human beings are put in shackles to make them suffer, rather than to make them do anything; shackles are meant to prevent action, being instruments of passivity. Nevertheless, there is something that we must do in this world: we must at least do penance. Although this will seem to pertain more to suffering than to action, nevertheless, we must do something here indeed; in this world, but not of this world.

For when we read that in the beginning Adam was put in a paradise of pleasure in order to work, what wise and sane person would suppose that Adam's children were put in the place of affliction to take a break from toil? Therefore, let us labor not for the food which perishes. Rather, let us perform the work of our salvation. Let us work in the Lord's vineyard so that we deserve to receive our daily wage. Let us work in Wisdom, who says, they who work by me shall not sin.

Truth says, The field is the world. Let us dig into it! A hidden treasure lies buried within. Let us dig it out. For wisdom itself is drawn out of secret places. We all seek her; we all long for her.

But one who seeks on his little bed seeks wisdom in vain. Neither is wisdom found in the land of those who live in delights. The bed is small, and yet you hope to find him there, him who never knew a bed at the inn?

If you seek, says Isaiah, then seek; be converted and come. Come where, you ask? Away from your little bed. Do you ask from what you are converted? Turn away from your own will, says Scripture. And if I do not find wisdom in my own will, where, you say, shall I find it? For my will vehemently desires wisdom. Nor shall it suffice to find wisdom unless I put it into my bosom, in good measure and pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Rightly indeed, for Blessed is the person who finds wisdom and is rich in prudence.

Seek, therefore, Wisdom while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. Do you wish to hear how near wisdom is? The word is near, even in your mouth and in your heart, if only you seek with an upright heart. Lift up your heart! Get up from your little bed so that you do not hear in vain him who urges us from on high to have a heart. For this shall you find wisdom with your heart. You shall pour prudence from your mouth. That is, wisdom shall overflow from abundance. See that it does not just escape or be expelled.

Saturday

SURRENDER IS EVERYTHING

A Reflection from a Meditation by Jean-Pierre de Caussade, S.J.

Surrender of the heart to God includes every possible way of obedience to God. It means giving up one's very being to God's good pleasure. Since this surrender is effected by unalloyed love, it includes in its embrace every kind of operation his good pleasure may bring to pass for us. Thus, at every moment, we practice a surrender that has no limits, a surrender that includes all possible methods and degrees of service to God. It is not our business to decide what the ultimate purpose of such submission may be, but our sole duty is to submit ourselves to all that God sends us and to stand ready to do his will at all times.

What God requires of the soul is the essence of self-surrender. The free gifts he asks from us are self-denial, obedience, and love. The rest is his business. It does not matter whether the soul is carefully fulfilling the duties of one's state in life, or quietly following the leadings it is given, or submitting peacefully to the dealings of grace either for the body or for the soul. In all this, the soul is exercising, within, the one overall act of self-surrender.

It is not a matter of single, isolated incidents or the duty of one moment. It is the act that always carries with it the full merit and good effect that a sincere will always have, although the outcome does not depend on a single act of surrender. What the soul desires to do is done in the sight of God.

If it happens that God's will sets a limit to the exercise of some particular faculty of ours, he sets no limit on our wills. The good pleasure of God, God's being and essence, are the object of the will, and through the exercise of love, it is united to God without limit, manner, or measure.

O heavenly purity! O blessed emptying! O unreserved submission! Through you, God is welcomed into the very center of the heart! It matters not what my abilities may be, then, provided that I possess you, Lord. Do what you will with this insignificant creature. Whether it be that I should work, or become inspired, or be the recipient of your impressions, it is all the same. Everything is yours; everything is from you and for you. I no longer have anything to be concerned about, anything to do. I have no hand in the arrangement of one single moment of my life; everything belongs to you. I do not need to add or subtract anything, nor seek after or mull over anything. It is for you, Lord, to regulate everything: direction, humiliations, sanctification, perfection, and salvation – all are your business, Lord. Mine is to be satisfied with your work and not to demand the choice of action or condition, but to leave everything to your good pleasure.