

SIXTEENTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME – A

July 19 – 25, 2026

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July 19 **Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**
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A Reflection from the writing of St. Alphonsus de Ligouri
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22 **Feast of St. Mary Magdalene**
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23 **Thursday of the 16th Week of Ordinary Time**
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Sunday

WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT

A Reflection from a commentary by St. Gregory Palamas

Now, as the Lord himself explains, the darnel is the offering of the evil one. They bear his mark because they behave the way he does; they are seeds of his sowing, and his children by adoption. Harvest time will be the end of the world, for although it began long since and continues now through death, only then will all things come to an end.

The reapers are the angels, for they are, and will be especially at that time, the servants of the King of heaven. As Scripture says: *Just as the darnel is collected and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man, who is the son of the Father Most High, will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all evil doers and every cause of sin.*

And so the Lord's servants, the angels of God, seeing the darnel in the field, that is, the wicked and impious folk living among the good people, and that even within the Church, said to the Lord: *Do you wish us to go and gather it up?* In other words: "Shall we kill them, to remove them from the earth?" But the Lord's reply was: *No, for fear that in collecting the darnel you may also uproot the wheat.*

How then would the wheat, the good people, be uprooted as well if the angels gathered up the darnel, cutting off the wicked by death to separate them from the just? The fact is that many godless sinners who live among people who are upright and devout repent in time and are converted, and learning new habits of piety and virtue, they cease to be darnel and become wheat. And so some wheat would be uprooted in the gathering of the darnel if the angels snatched the wicked away before they repented. Moreover, many while living evil lives produce children of good disposition, or they may have other rightly disposed descendants. This is why he who sees everything before it comes into being would not permit the darnel to be uprooted until the appointed time. But he says: *At harvest time I will say to the reapers: "First collect the darnel and bind it into bundles to be burnt, but gather the wheat into my barn."*

Those therefore who wish to be saved from eternal punishment and to inherit the everlasting kingdom of God must be not darnel but wheat. They must avoid saying or doing anything evil or useless, and practice the opposite virtues, thus bringing forth the fruits of repentance. In this way they will become worthy of the heavenly granary; they will be called children of the Father Most High, and as heirs will enter his kingdom rejoicing, resplendent with divine glory. To this may we all attain through the grace and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ. To whom with his eternal Father and the most holy, good and life-giving Spirit belongs glory now and always and for endless ages. Amen.

Monday

UNIFORMITY IN ALL THINGS

A Reflection from the writing of St. Alphonsus de Ligouri

The essence of perfection is to embrace the will of God in all things, prosperous or adverse. In prosperity, even sinners find it easy to unite themselves to the divine will; but it takes saints to unite themselves to God's will when things go wrong and are painful to self-love. Our conduct in such instances is the measure of our love of God. St. John of Avila used to say: *"One 'Blessed be God' in times of adversity, is worth more than a thousand acts of gratitude in times of prosperity."*

Furthermore, we must unite ourselves to God's will not only in things that come to us directly from his hands, such as sickness, desolation, poverty, death of relatives, but likewise in those we suffer from man – for example, contempt, injustice, loss of reputation, loss of temporal goods and all kinds of persecution. On these occasions we must remember that whilst God does not will the sin, he does will our humiliation, our poverty, or our mortification, as the case may be. It is certain and of faith, that whatever happens, happens by the will of God: *"I am the Lord forming the light and creating the darkness, making peace and creating evil."* From God come all things, good as well as evil. We call adversities *evil*; actually they are good and meritorious, when we receive them as coming from God's hands: *"Shall there be evil in a city which the Lord hath not done?" "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God."* ... And our Lord himself told St. Peter that his sacred passion came not so much from man as from his Father: *"The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"* ...

Cesarius points up what we have been saying by offering this incident in the life of a certain monk: Externally, his religious observance was the same as that of the other monks, but he had attained such sanctity that the mere touch of his garments healed the sick. Marveling at these deeds, since his life was no more exemplary than the lives of the other monks, the superior asked him one day what was the cause of these miracles. He replied that he too was mystified and at a loss as to how to account for such happenings. "What devotions do you practice?" asked the abbot. He answered that there was little or nothing special that he did beyond making a great deal of willing only what God willed, and that God had given him the grace of abandoning his will totally to the will of God.

"Prosperity does not lift me up, nor adversity cast me down," added the monk. "I direct all my prayers to the end that God's will may be done fully in me and by me." "That raid that our enemies made against the monastery the other day, in which our stores were plundered, our granaries put to the torch and our cattle driven off -- did not this misfortune cause you any resentment?" queried the abbot.

"No, Father," came the reply. "On the contrary, I returned thanks to God -- as is my custom in such circumstances -- fully persuaded that God does all things, or permits all that happens, for his glory and for our greater good; thus I am always at peace, no matter what happens." Seeing such uniformity with the will of God, the abbot no longer wondered why the monk worked so many miracles.

Tuesday

THE CALL TO SHEPHERD ONE ANOTHER

A Reflection developed from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

"I am the good Shepherd; the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep." Our Lord appropriates to himself the title under which the prophets had foretold him. Almighty God says through Ezekiel, "David, my servant, shall be king over them and they shall all have one shepherd". What is more, our Lord found the sheep scattered. Recall his saying, "All who came before me were thieves and robbers". He said this concerning the official shepherds, the rulers in Israel. As a result, the people had no proper guides. That was the character of the priests and rulers of the Jewish people when Christ came. Recall that one day when he was teaching, we are told, "he saw the multitudes and was moved to compassion for them because they were scattered and losing strength like sheep who have no shepherd".

This had been true for a long time. Recall the stories about the prophet Micah and King Ahab. When asked if Ahab should attack Syria, Micah responded: "I saw all Israel scattered among the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said: These have no master; let everyone return to his house in peace". The same had been true in the time of Ezekiel, who prophesied: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves, though shepherds should feed their flocks. Israel was scattered because there was no shepherd and so they became prey for wild animals". The prophet Zechariah said, "Woe to the idle shepherd that abandons the flock".

In fact, it was this way all over the world when Christ came in infinite mercy to gather all God's children who had been scattered abroad. Though Christ, the Good Shepherd, had to lay down his life, it was only for a moment. He rose from death to live forever. He is now calling his own by name and leading them and goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice". We are all like Mary Magdalen who wept in the garden because she couldn't find her shepherd but recognized him when she heard his voice.

How do we hear Jesus' voice? We hear it in and through the Spirit Christ has poured into our hearts. We hear it through the ears of love that the Spirit gives us. What did Christ tell his chosen ones when he breathed into them the Spirit? He said, "As the Father has sent me, I send you!" We are given the Spirit so we may be taught how to imitate our Good Shepherd and become shepherds to one another. From Jesus, we learn compassion for those who can't find their shepherd and don't recognize his voice. If we love as he does, then we speak with his voice. In giving us his own Spirit, the Lord Jesus has given us his own love and so his own compassion and so his own care for one another, even to the point of giving our lives for one another. A true shepherd of God's people shows a love like that of Jesus for all those who belong to God's flock. It is a great privilege to follow and to imitate and to share in the work of the one truly Good Shepherd. That is our privilege. Today we are called to love one another with the same mercy and tenderness with which we ourselves are loved and shown mercy by Christ, our One Good Shepherd.

Wednesday

KEEP WATCH FOR CHRIST

A Reflection from the writings of Blessed Gueric of Igny

Brethren, this is the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and rejoice in it. Let us exult in the hope it brings, that we may see and rejoice in its light. Abraham exulted that he might see the day of Christ, and by this token he saw and rejoiced.

You too, if you keep watch daily at the doors of wisdom, steadfast at its threshold, if you stay awake through the night with Magdalen at the entrance of his tomb, if I am not mistaken you will experience with Mary how true are the words we read of the Wisdom which is Christ: "She is easily seen by those who love her and she is found by those who seek her. She anticipates those who desire her and shows herself to them first. He who, as soon as it is light, keeps watch for her will not have to toil, for he will find her seated at his doors." So did Christ, Wisdom himself, promise in the words: "I love those who love me, and they who from early morning keep watch for me will find me."

Mary found Jesus in the flesh. For this she was keeping watch. Over his tomb she had come to mount guard while it was still dark. You, who no longer ought to know Jesus according to the flesh but according to the spirit, will be able to find him spiritually if you seek him with a [similar] desire, if he finds you likewise vigilant in prayer. Say then to the Lord Jesus with the desire and the affection of Mary: "My soul has longed for you during the night, my spirit too, deep within me; from early morning I will keep watch for you." Say with the voice and the mind of the Psalmist: "God, my God, for you as soon as it is light I keep watch, my soul is athirst for you". And see if it is not your lot to sing with him: *"We have been filled early in the morning with your mercy, we have exulted and been delighted."*

Keep watch then, brethren, intent in prayer; keep watch and carefully guard your actions; especially since the morning of that day which has no sunset has already shone upon us. For already eternal light has come back to us from the nether regions, more serene and more pleasing, and the morning has given its welcome to the newly restored Sun. Indeed it is time now for us to arise from sleep; the night has passed away, while the day has drawn near. Keep watch, I say, that the morning light may rise for you, that is Christ, whose coming forth has been made ready like the dawn, ready to renew often the mystery of the morning of his resurrection in those who keep watch for him. Then you will sing with jubilant heart: *"God the Lord has shone upon us. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us exult and rejoice in it"*. For then he will give you a glimpse of the light which he has hidden in his hands, telling his friend that it is his possession and he can attain to it.

Thursday

PERFECT SIMPLICITY

A Reflection from an Excerpt from The Spirit of Simplicity

The union of wills, making us one Spirit with God, is the highest and purest and most intimate union that can possibly be achieved by two individuals remaining essentially distinct. *This is the culminating ideal of Cistercian simplicity!* The paradox is that the soul itself is more perfectly simple when absorbed in this union than it could ever be outside of it. The soul is never so truly itself as it is when it is lost in God, and it is never so unlike itself as when it is completely separated from God and left entirely to itself. The reason for this paradox is in the fact that it is of the very essence of the soul to be like God and therefore it is most truly itself when it becomes, as nearly as is possible to a creature, *identified* with Him.

In this perfect identification of the soul with God the soul is rightly said to lose itself in God: not in the sense of losing its substance, but in the sense of losing its own will in a perfect union of love with God's will that makes them truly one will, one spirit. In such a state, the soul has completely forgotten *itself* and its own *interests* and desires for the simple reason that it no longer has any interests or desires other than those of God. It no longer has anything whatever of its own... The soul in this perfection of simplicity now loves itself *exactly as God loves* it, in the same degree, in the same manner -- indeed, with the very same love. Even self-love is at last vindicated in this ultimate beatification of the soul!...

St. Bernard describes this union in the tenth chapter of "On Loving God"... "I should call that man holy and blessed, to whom it may be granted to experience such love, even were it only rarely, or but once, and *that* in a brief flash which might pass and be all over in an instant. For to lose yourself, in a manner of speaking, and to become as though you did not exist, and to lose absolutely all consciousness of yourself, and to go forth from yourself, and to be practically annihilated, all that belongs to heaven. and is utterly above natural human love."

"However, since Holy Scripture says that God made all things for Himself, the creature must surely at some time conform itself to its Creator. Some day, then, we must attain to the same love *that* God has for us... We shall then delight, not in the fact that all our needs have been satisfied, and all our happiness carried to *the* ultimate consummation, *but in the fact* that His will in us *and for us* will *then* be *seen* to be completely *accomplished and* carried out. And this is what we daily ask for in our prayers when we say: Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Oh holy and chaste love! Oh sweet and delightful affection! Oh *pure*, utterly *clean* intention of *the* will, all *the* cleaner and more pure *because* no *admixture* of self remains therein; all the sweeter and more delightful in *that* what we feel is entirely divine. To love like this is to become a god."

This, then, is the ultimate limit of Cistercian simplicity: the simplicity of God Himself, belonging to the soul, purified of all admixture of self-love, admitted to a participation in the Divine Nature, and becoming one Spirit with the God of infinite love.

Friday

THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND THE GUARDING OF THE HEART

A Reflection from the writings of Nil Sorsky

By fighting against the first appearance of the thought... we cut off all that would follow. Such a person who battles in so wise a manner turns away the mother of evil, namely, the wicked assault. And he ought to strive to make his mind deaf and speechless in prayer...

However, if you cannot pray without thoughts in a silenced heart, but you find the thoughts multiplying, do not become discouraged, but remain in prayer. It is a well-known experience, as blessed Gregory of Sinai insists, that we who are laden by passions are aware that no beginner can control his mind and drive away thoughts that attack him unless God supports him and helps him to dispel such thoughts. It is the prerogative of the strong to hold the mind in check and drive away all thoughts, but even these do not turn away all thoughts by themselves; they are supported in their struggles by God, who arms them with his grace and all his defenses.

If you see, Gregory says, the impurity of evil spirits in the thoughts that are presented in your mind, do not be frightened and do not wonder, even if such thoughts seem good to you. Do not give any attention to them, but... enclose your mind in your heart, as you arm yourself by calling on the Lord Jesus. Appeal to him, as often and consciously as possible, and the thoughts will dissolve as they are burnt up by the fiery, invisible rays radiating from your calling on the divine Name...

If you find yourself becoming a bit slothful and fatigued, then call on God for help and force yourself to continue praying as best you can, never giving up on praying. Then all such thoughts will depart from you, as they are driven out by God's help. When you calm the mind from such phantasms, then enter into your heart and pray the prayer of the heart... For even though there are many good works, their value is only a partial good. The prayer of the heart is the source of all good and is likened to gardens that are refreshed by water; so does this prayer of the heart refresh the soul...

The attaining of this work, namely, the pushing of the mind down into the heart, which becomes freed of all thoughts, is difficult to accomplish, not only for beginners, but also for well-advanced persons in this work, if the latter have not yet received and maintained the sweetness of prayer in their hearts through the workings of grace. And we know from experience that for weak persons this work is very difficult and not very agreeable. However, when any person has obtained grace, then he prays without difficulty and lovingly, since he is comforted by grace. "And when the action of the prayer takes over," Gregory of Sinai says, "then truly the mind lives within the heart and brings joy and freedom to the person from all enslavement."

Saturday

CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP

A Reflection from a homily by St. John Chrysostom

The sons of Zebedee press Christ: "Promise that one may sit at your right side and the other at your left". What does he do? He wants to show them that it is not a spiritual gift for which they are asking, and that if they knew what their request involved, they would never dare make it. So he says: "You do not know what you are asking", that is, what a great and splendid thing it is and how much beyond the reach even of heavenly powers. Then he continues: "Can you drink the cup which I must drink and be baptized with the baptism which I must undergo?" He is saying: "You talk of sharing honors and rewards with me, but I must talk of struggle and toil. Now is not the time for rewards or the time for my glory to be revealed. Earthly life is the time for bloodshed, war, and danger."

Consider how, by his manner of questioning, he exhorts and draws them. He does not say: "Can you face being slaughtered? Can you shed your blood?" How does he put his question? "Can you drink the cup?" Then he makes it attractive by adding: "which I must drink", so that the prospect of sharing it with him may make them more eager. He also calls his suffering a baptism, to show that it will affect a great cleansing of the entire world. The disciples answer him: "We can!" Fervor makes them answer promptly, though they do not know what they are saying, but still think they will receive what they ask for.

How does Christ reply? "You will indeed drink my cup and be baptized with my baptism". He is really prophesying a great blessing for them, since he is telling them. You will be found worthy of martyrdom; you will suffer what I suffer and end your life with a violent death, thus sharing all with me. 'But seats at my right and left side are not mine to give; they belong to those for whom the Father has prepared them.'" Thus after lifting their minds to higher goals and preparing them to meet and overcome all that will make them desolate, he sets them straight on their request.

"Then the other ten became angry at the two brothers". See how imperfect they all are: the two who tried to get ahead of the other ten, and the ten who were jealous of the two! But... show them to me at a later date in their lives, and you will see that all these impulses and feelings have disappeared. Read how John, the very man who here asks for the first place, will always yield to Peter when it comes to preaching and performing miracles in the Acts of the Apostles. James, for his part, was not to live very much longer; for from the beginning he was inspired by great fervor and, setting aside all purely human goals, rose to such splendid heights that he straightway suffered martyrdom.