

EIGHTEENTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME – A

August 2 – 8, 2026

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Sunday

TRUSTING IN THE LIVING BREAD

A Reflection by Bishop Theophylact

Scripture tells us: "Our ancestors ate manna in the desert; God gave them bread from heaven to eat". When the Lord Jesus performed a miracle by multiplying bread, did those who ate think only of earthly hunger or did they see what he did as a sign that God is always ready to satisfy our spiritual hunger? Jesus makes the contrast clear by telling those who came to him, "It wasn't Moses who gave you bread"; only God could give manna. What's more, Moses couldn't give the true bread but could only represent this gift symbolically by the manna. The true giver was God and the true bread was, and is, Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us that he is the true bread come down from heaven, and it is "true" bread because it gives "true" life; i.e., a life that lasts forever.

The bread that is the Son of the living Heavenly Father is life by its very nature. Thus, it gives life to all who eat it with true faith. Just as earthly bread sustains the frail substance of the flesh and prevents it from decaying, so Christ's gives the soul life through the power of the Spirit. He also preserves even the body for immortality. Through Christ's resurrection from the dead and through bodily immortality, everything pertaining to life is given freely to the human race.

We read in the Gospel: "Jesus said to the people: "I am the bread of life and whoever comes to me will never hunger and whoever believes in me will never thirst". He didn't say he gave a bread for bodily nourishment and nothing more; he said that he gave "the bread of life". When everything had been reduced to a condition describable only as "spiritual death", then the Lord gave life through himself. He is bread because, as we believe, the leaven in the dough that is our humanity was baked through and through by the fire of his divinity.

Christ gives us the bread not of ordinary life but of a very different kind of life. Death can never cut short this kind of life. Whoever believes in the true bread that is Christ will never hunger and never be famished. What sort of hunger is he speaking of? It is a hunger for hearing God's word. Christ is the Word of God and one who eats him can't lack God's Word. Nor can such a person be parched by spiritual thirst. One is given to drink of the Spirit through the waters of baptism. One is thereby consecrated by the Spirit.

Compare your condition, then, to that of an unbaptized person. Such a one lacks the refreshment given by the sacred waters. Such a one suffers great spiritual aridity. But we who are baptized and have been possessed by the Spirit can be sure of being given continually all that is needed for spiritual consolation. You have only to ask. God has promised you all things by choosing you and then gifting you with his Christ and his Spirit. What would God withhold from you? You have only to ask in prayer for what you truly need.

Never allow the gift of prayer to fade within you. Pray daily. Pray continually. Pray with Jesus. You will have all you need. But you have to trust that what God has given you meets the needs you truly have. Trust God to know what you need and give that to you in love.

Monday

GOD'S CALL TO US, EACH AND ALL

A Reflection from a sermon by John Henry Cardinal Newman

Our Lord Jesus Christ, after dying for our sins on the cross and ascending on high, didn't leave the world as he found it. Jesus left a blessing behind him. He left in the world what before wasn't in it – a secret home for faith and love to enjoy. And this secret home is there for us despite the world around us.

What is this home? It is the Church of God, our true home provided by God. There God dwells with all the angels and saints, and he introduces us into it by giving us a new birth. We can even enter into it in a way that enables us to forget the troubles of the world around us.

A foretaste was provided by the Jerusalem Temple. It rose stately & beautiful on Mount Zion. It invited worshipers and led them into an outer court and away from the outward world and into God's presence. But it was confined to one place and couldn't be a home for the whole world but only for a few at a time. Our Christian temple is spiritual and invisible and can be everywhere at once. It is wherever Christians are and are praying in Jesus' Name. All may enter it and be part of God's heavenly family in a way that is just as real as the Jerusalem Temple was when one entered it.

Yes, this temple is invisible but this is a necessary condition for its being everywhere. Listen to St. Paul: "You are come to Mount Zion and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant." So leave this earthly scene, Virgin Soul. No matter how attractive and winning you are, aim at a higher prize, the noblest companionship.

We can enter into the tabernacle of God. Though we are in a fleshly body and a member of this world, we have only to kneel reverently in prayer, and we are at once in the society of the saints and angels. Wherever we are, we can, through God's incomprehensible mercy, in a moment bring ourselves into the midst of God's Holy Church invisible and receive secretly that aid the very thought of which is a present and perceivable blessing. Whatever may have been our past life, whether we have never trusted anyone wholly but God and God's sacred light has been with us, or whether we have trusted in the world and it has failed us, God's mercies in Christ are offered in full abundance.

Come, then, to God and ask for these mercies. Approach God as you are asked to do with all your heart and mind and strength. You will find God!

Tuesday

THE CROSS IS THE LADDER TO HEAVEN

A Reflection from the writings of St. John Vianney

You must love while you're suffering and suffer while you're loving. On the road to the cross, it's only the first few yards that hurt. Souls who give themselves completely to God in their suffering feel an extraordinary contentment. Vinegar will always be vinegar, but oil softens its sharpness so that you scarcely taste it.

There was a little boy, quite near here, in one of the neighboring parishes, who was lying in his bed a mass of sores, very sick and in great pain. I said to him: 'My poor boy, you must be suffering!' He replied: 'No, Monsieur le Curé, today I don't feel my pain of yesterday, and tomorrow I shan't feel my pain of today.' 'But surely you'd like to get well?' 'No, I was bad before I was ill and I might become bad again. I'm all right as I am.' There was vinegar there, sure enough, but the oil had drowned the taste of it...We don't understand that, because we're too earthly. Children in whom the Holy Spirit takes up His Home put us to shame.

The cross is the ladder to heaven. The crosses we meet on the road to heaven are like a fine stone bridge on which you can cross a river. Christians who don't suffer cross this river on a shaky bridge that's always in danger of giving way under their feet. Once they've been transformed in the flames of love, crosses are like a bundle of hawthorn that you throw on the fire and that the fire reduces to ashes. The hawthorn is thorny, but the ashes are soft. The hawthorn exudes balm, and the cross exudes sweetness. But you've got to press the thorns in your hands and clasp the cross to your heart if you want them to distil the essence they contain.

Put a good bunch of grapes under the winepress, and a delicious juice will come out. Under the winepress of the cross, our soul produces a juice which feeds and strengthens it. When we haven't got any crosses, we are dry: if we carry them with resignation, what happiness, what sweetness we feel! The cross is the gift God makes to his friends. Contrarities bring us to the foot of the cross and the cross to the gate of heaven.

Wednesday

COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: 15:21FF

A Reflection by Thomas of Villanova

“Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting: Sir, Son of David, take pity on me! My daughter is tormented by a devil.” The Canaanite woman did not have the law; she did not know the prophets; she was unacquainted with the mysteries, and yet, good God! How many virtues and signs suddenly shine forth from her! What faith, what trust, what patience, what humility, what perseverance! She had not seen Christ’s miracles, she had not witnessed the dead rising, the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the lame leaping, but at the hearing of some light rumor, faith filled her godly heart and she believed with a firm devotion of soul that her absent, demon-possessed daughter could be healed by his word alone.

Her trust in obtaining his favor was so strong that she neither became silent when scorned nor gave up when despised. She had cried out with incredible patience, and the Lord ignored her. He continued and did not answer her. He pushed aside the interceding apostles. He reviled her as she was praying and lying prostrate before Him. No one was ever exasperated, no one ever scorned, no one ever provoked by so many rebukes.

What can I say of her humility? When she was called a dog, she also added her own abuse and called herself a puppy. Her perseverance was beyond human ability, for as often as she was provoked and despised, she never ceased from crying out until she obtained her request. O the wonderful greenness of this bough! O this remarkable woman, firmer in faith than one of the faithful, more filled with virtues than someone initiated in the mysteries.

What shall you say, O faithful soul, when you grow cold and numb, you who are imbued with the sacraments of life from the beginning, who are surrounded by so many teachings on holy scripture, so many oracles of the prophets and apostles, taking part in holy rites every day and with continuous praises of God, frequent sermons on the divine law and constant exhortations from preachers? Learn fervency from this idolater, learn faith, and learn virtue.

The Lord knew what lay hidden within her. He kept silent that she might become known; he disdained her that she might shine; he delayed that he might exalt her, that he might leave behind for the Church this woman as an example for imitations, that he might provide all future generations with this exemplar of all virtues. He suddenly confirmed her, not with an external word, but with an internal ray; thus rightly the Church presents her now to the penitent, that they might see in her what they should do, that they might observe in her what they should imitate.

O sinner, do for your own soul what she did for her daughter. For your soul suffers with a similar sickness, it is weighed down by an equal infirmity, it is vexed by an evil demon in the same way. So run after healing, seek a cure, cry out, beg, and keep at it. Do what she did and you will be free, just as her daughter was freed.

Thursday

THE BOMBING OF HIROSHIMA

From the recorded account of Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ

It was 8:15 when a magnesium flash ripped across the blue sky. I was in my office with another Jesuit... The whole house shook, the windows shattered, the doors twisted, and the fragile walls of mud and cane broke like cards crushed by a giant hand. That terrible force, which we thought would rip the building from its foundation, threw us to the ground... When that initial earthquake finished, we stood up... I saw that not a single one was wounded... Immediately afterward, a gigantic mountain of clouds swept up into the sky. In the very center of the explosion, there appeared a horrific thunderhead and, with it, a fierce five-hundred-mile-an-hour wind that swept away everything within a six-kilometer radius...

Everywhere there was death and destruction, and we were reduced to impotence. And he was there, knowing everything, contemplating everything, and waiting for our offering to take part in the work of rebuilding everything. I left the chapel, and my decision was immediate. We would turn the house into a hospital... But there were more than two hundred thousand victims. Where to begin?... Within a few minutes the wounded people began to appear, like walking ghosts, with their skin torn and their bodies covered with boils and red and violet spots... All of them had expressions of horror on their faces, as if they had just escaped from hell... It was an uninterrupted flow of half-burned bodies stumbling forward...

After taking care of the most urgent medical problems, <I> prepared to celebrate Mass... The half-destroyed chapel was full of shuddering sick people who were lying next to one another on the ground; they were suffering terribly and writhing in pain. I began the Mass as best I could in the midst of that human mass that had not the slightest idea of what was happening on the altar. I will never forget the horrible impression I had when I turned toward them at the *Dominus vobiscum* and contemplated that spectacle from the altar. I could not utter a word. I was as if paralyzed, with my arms stretched open, beholding that human tragedy... They looked at me with anguish-filled eyes, with desperation, as if they were hoping that some consolation would reach them from the altar. What a terrible scene that was! A few minutes later, the One of whom John the Baptist said, "In the midst of you is one whom you do not know," came down on the altar.

I have never felt again as I felt then the sadness of the unbelievers' incomprehension regarding Jesus Christ. Their Savior was there among them, the one who had given his life for them... but they did not know that he was in the midst of them. I was the only one who knew it. From my lips came spontaneously a prayer for those who had had the savage cruelty to drop the atomic bomb: "Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do," and for those who were lying near me, twisting in pain: "Lord, grant them faith [...], so that they see; give them the strength to put up with the pain." When I raised the host before those wounded, destroyed bodies, a cry rose from my heart: "My Lord and my God, have pity on this flock that has no Shepherd." "So that I may believe in you, Lord, remember that they also have to come to know you."

Torrents of grace no doubt flowed from that host and from that altar. Six months later, when all the patients had recovered and left our house (only two persons died in our care), many of them had been baptized, and all had had the experience of a Christian charity that knows how to understand, help, and console in ways that surpass all human expectation. Such charity had communicated to them a serenity that helped them to smile despite the pain and to pardon even those who had caused their suffering.

Friday

ENTERING THE MYSTERY OF COMMITTED LOVE

A Reflection from The Wellspring of Worship by Fr. Jean Carbon, OP

One day isn't long enough to enter fully into the mystery of the transfiguration. What the Incomprehensible One has revealed is endless but elusive beauty seen in the transfigured Christ. The change is not in Christ but in us; our eyes are opened though we had been blind. Note that what we are told to contemplate is Jesus' committed love. In one account, he speaks about it with Moses and Elijah.

The purpose of Jesus' transfiguration is salvation. As in the burning bush, so here God allows the light that is Divinity to be seen by bodily eyes and the goal is not sharing knowledge but sharing life and salvation, which is its full realization. Christ reveals himself as giving himself totally to the Heavenly Father, the one who has given him everything! Christ shows us how one gives everything back to the Father, including one's very self. We are called to do this. Answering the call with a "Yes!" is salvation. Now we have entered upon this holy ground. So let's take off the sandals of mere human curiosity and enter more deeply into the mystery of self-giving.

A few days before the transfiguration, Peter received an interior enlightenment and acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God. All the other disciples heard this and shared the knowledge, but Jesus had to reveal to them the truth that he had to suffer, to be put to death, and to be raised from the dead because it means giving self wholly to God. But no one, Peter included, saw how to put together the revelation of Jesus' true nature with his passion and death. That began with what Jesus revealed when he took three disciples up a mountain to see that the truth about the link between passion and glory is revealed in Scripture.

In the lives of those who love the Heavenly Father with all their heart, one may not understand why God requires certain gifts of self. Jesus tells his disciples it is so, but they don't actually understand what he means in the concrete. Jesus then repeats that giving one's whole being to the Father means entering into the suffering when it comes from living out a gift of self in particular circumstances. He commits all he is to the loving will of the Father, accepting even the self-giving of Gethsemane and the Cross. He is committed wholly to loving totally.

We must enter into the mystery of this committed love. We are called to love in a way that is as committed as was that of Jesus. The transfiguration on the mountain opens our eyes to the intensity of this self-giving. When these truths are glimpsed, we see what glory is. The same radiance is now to shine through us as well. Then we understand the words: "This is my beloved, who has my favor!"

When we hear God say this of us, we know that we have given everything to God. When others can "see" the difference this gift makes, they can see the glory that God has chosen to give us. Then all will also grasp why our God says, not only of Jesus but of us, "Listen to this person!" Listen, that is, to the witness of committed love. Our transformation in God is to transform the world.

Saturday

THE SIX VIRTUES OF ST. DOMINIC

From the writings of St. Mechtild of Magdeburg

On the feast of St. Dominic, I prayed to our Lord for the whole Order of Preachers. Our dear Lord deigned to come to me himself, and he brought along St. Dominic... Our Lord said: "My son Dominic had four things about him while on earth that all priors should have about them. He loved his fellow Dominicans so much that he could never bear to trouble them with things arising from some whim of his own. The second is that he often improved the food to help and show affection for his brethren, so that the young brothers might not think back on the world and so that the older ones might not succumb on the way. The third is that in holy wisdom he provided for them the model for being moderate, for the sake of God, in their whole being, in all their customs, and in all their wants. The fourth is that he was so merciful that he never wanted to burden his dear brethren with any kind of penance that the order did not require for wrongdoing."...

After this our dear Lord said: "I love two things in the Order of Preachers so much that my divine heart unceasingly smiles upon it. The first is the holiness of their life; the second is their great value for the church. In addition, they greet my Holy Trinity with seven things. These are: deep sighs, sincere weeping, intense longing, strict discipline, distressful exile, genuine humility, and joyous love."...

In the Order of Preachers, a brother <Heinrich> died on the solemn feast of Easter... After he was buried, a certain person went to where his dead body was and greeted both soul and body. She did this regularly upon the death of religious people. There God celebrated in her soul a divine feast, and his soul was shown to her in God's embrace in great glory. She saw clearly that his glory was not yet complete, and she asked our Lord how long he was going to remain like that and whether he had suffered at all in purgatory. Our Lord said: "He shall remain like this for a week." That is, seven days and seven nights. He had rested himself on God's breast in untold bliss of spiritual fervor that he had not experienced on earth. Very quickly had he come there without suffering, just as a mother takes up her dear child out of the ashes onto her lap...

Then he invited me to his feast, where he was going to receive his glory. The whole heavenly army prepared for it and joined together in a beautiful procession. St. Dominic came with a whole throng. They were all preachers, and they all wore the golden crowns of those who died in the order, crowns that differed in value according to how holy they had been in the order. St. Dominic brought a shining crown toward Brother Heinrich that sparkled as beautifully as the sun at its brightest. He gave it to him as a reward from God, because he had followed his holy example in the Dominican order. St. Dominic is indescribably more beautiful than the others because he receives a special honor from each brother as a reward. I saw him especially well clothed because of three qualities. He wears a white garment of innate purity; in addition, a green garment of growing wisdom of God, and also a red garment decorated with clasps because he had suffered spiritual martyrdom. They carry a military standard displaying the order's honor, one that no one else carries...

Our Lord sat in his omnipotence and crowned this brother with three kinds of honors. They were simple obedience, voluntary poverty, constant humiliation. Brother Heinrich thanked our Lord thus: "I thank you, Lord, that you found me, preserved me, and received me." He then bowed to our Lord and turned to his brothers. St. Dominic said: "Welcome, dear son, now enter into the glory of your Lord!"