

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME – A

September 6 – 12, 2026

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Sunday

IF YOUR BROTHER SINS AGAINST YOU

From a Commentary by St. Jerome

If our brother sins against us and injures us for any reason, we have the power, or rather the obligation, to forgive. For we are commanded to forgive debts for our debtors. But if anyone sins against God, it no longer depends on our choice. For the Holy Scripture says: "If a man sins against a man, the priest will pray for him; but if he sins against God, who will pray for him?" In contrast with this, we are mild about an injury to God, but annoyed to the point of hatred about insults to ourselves! Now our brother ought to be corrected privately. Otherwise, he may all at once lose his shame and modesty and continue in sin. And if he in fact listens, we have gained his soul, and by the salvation of another we have achieved salvation for ourselves as well.

On the other hand, if he is unwilling to listen, a brother should be summoned. And if he does not listen to that one, even a third brother should be summoned. This is done either out of zeal for correcting him or for the purpose of meeting together with witnesses. Next, if he is unwilling to listen to them, then the matter must be told to many. In this way they formally renounce the one who could not be saved by shame, in the hope that he might be saved by their reproaches. Now when it is said: "Let him be to you as a pagan and a tax collector," it is shown that the one who has the name of believer but who does the works of unbelievers is more accursed than those who are openly Gentiles. For they are called "tax collectors" as a figure of speech referring to those who pursue worldly gain and collect taxes by means of business, fraud, theft, crimes, and perjury...

Now the secret response or unspoken thought of this brother who despises [the Church] could be: Well, if you despise me, I also will despise you. If you condemn me, you too will be condemned by my sentence of judgment. Because of this possibility, Jesus gave authority to the apostles to ensure that those who are condemned by such measures may know that the human verdict is corroborated by a divine verdict, and whatever is bound on earth is equally bound in heaven...

Therefore, a reward is even promised that we might hasten toward peace more solicitously, since he says that he will be in the midst of the two or three. This accords with that [famous] example of the tyrant who made prisoners of two men who were friends. One of them left his friend as a hostage in his place and went back to see his mother. By keeping the one man in prison while releasing the other, the tyrant wanted to test them. When the friend returned on the appointed day, the tyrant so admired the fidelity of both men that he begged them to enroll him as the third partner in their friendship. We can also interpret this spiritually: where the spirit, soul, and body agree and do not have a war of diverse wills between them, as the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, concerning any matter that they ask, they will procure it from the Father.

Monday

ON WORK AND PRAYER

An Excerpt from The Divine Milieu by Fr. Teilhard de Chardin

Our work appears to us, in the main, as a way of earning our daily bread. But its essential virtue is of a higher order: through it we complete in ourselves the subject of the divine union; and through it again we augment in some sense, in relation to ourselves, the divine end of that union, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence whatever our human function may be, whether artist or workingman or scholar, we can, if we are Christians, speed towards the object of our work as though towards an outlet open on the supreme fulfillment of our beings.

We ought to accustom ourselves to this basic truth till we are steeped in it, until it becomes as familiar to us as the perception of relief or the reading of words. God, in all that is most living and incarnate in Him, is not withdrawn from us beyond the tangible sphere; He is waiting for us at every moment in our action, in our work of the moment. He is in some sort at the tip of my pen, my spade, my brush, my needle - of my heart and of my thought. By pressing the stroke, the line, or the stitch, on which I am engaged, to its ultimate natural finish, I shall arrive at the ultimate aim towards which my innermost will tends.

I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that nine out of ten practicing Christians feel that work is always at the level of a 'spiritual encumbrance.' In spite of the practice of right intentions, and the day offered every morning to God, the general run of the faithful dimly feel that time spent at the office or the studio, in the fields or in the factory, is time diverted from prayer and adoration.

On the contrary, try, with God's help, to perceive the connection even physical and natural which binds your labor with the building of the Kingdom of Heaven; try to realize that heaven itself smiles upon you and, through your works, draws you to itself; then, as you leave church for the noisy streets, you will remain with only one feeling, that of continuing to immerse yourself in God. If your work is dull or exhausting, take refuge in the inexhaustible and becalming interest of progressing in the divine life. If your work enthralls you, then allow the spiritual impulse which matter communicates to you to enter into your taste for God whom you know better and desire more under the veil of His works. Never, at any time, "whether eating or drinking," consent to do anything without first of all realizing its significance and constructive value in Christ Jesus, and pursuing it with all your might. This is not simply a commonplace precept for salvation: it is the very path to sanctity for each man according to his state and calling. For what is sanctity in a creature if not to cleave to God with the maximum of his strength? And what does that maximum cleaving to God mean if not the fulfillment -- in the world organized around Christ -- of the exact function, be it lowly or eminent, to which that creature is destined both by natural endowment and by supernatural gift?... Right from the hands that knead the dough, to those that consecrate it, the great and universal Host should be prepared and handled in a spirit of adoration.

May the time come when men, having been awakened to a sense of the close bond linking all the movements of this world in the unique work of the Incarnation, shall be unable to give themselves to a single one of their tasks without illuminating it with the clear vision that their work - however elementary it may be - is received and made use of by a Center of the universe.

Tuesday

MARY'S BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

From a Homily by Ogier of Locedio

This most holy Virgin Mary was of royal lineage: Joachim was her father, and Anne her mother. She is that mighty woman presaged by the Lord when, at the time of Eve's undoing, he told the serpent, '*You shall lie in wait for her heel, and she shall trample your head.*' She is that mighty Virgin who trampled *the head of the dragon* by her power... Through her the Lord delivered our first parents, Adam and Eve, from everlasting death... She is that valiant woman, endowed with strength and choicest virtue, of whom Solomon spoke: *Who shall find a valiant woman?* Hers is a prize far *beyond all bounds*. Indeed, her prize was none other than the Son of God the Father, who from *far beyond all bounds*... marvelously and ineffably entered the enclosure of the virginal womb...

How greatly God's angels rejoiced when thus the restoration of humankind was secured! The whole world leapt for joy, heaven thundered with praise, the earth danced for delight, her song of joy soon joined by the skies above and the seas below... so the whole universe took on its pristine glory as that most blessed daughter was told: *Virgin Mother of God, your birth is news of joy to all the world!* If therefore all the orders of angels rejoice in the birth of Mary the Mother of God, let all orders of monks rejoice therein as well. If heaven and earth rejoice, then all Christ's consecrated virgins also. Let everyone rejoice... with great joy, for the birth of Mary the sacred Virgin spells joy for the whole of heaven and earth.

Thus Mary, the morning star that drives away all darkness, came forth from her mother's womb beautiful as the moon, sought-out as *the sun*, *dreadful* as a well-armed camp, the glorious light that came forth from the darkness, within whose womb Light itself would shine. *From Jesse's root there came the Virgin who would bear the flower.* It is she who says, *I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys*'. Before that fragrant flower all other flowers lose the sweetness of their scent... By means of Anna and Joachim, God created that remedy whereby humankind would be freed from everlasting death. Through... blessed Mary, the Lord gives light to the blind, heals the sick, raises the dead, frees us from sin, justifies us through grace, and crowns us with his glory.

Let therefore all the just rejoice at the birth of her through whom they *have* been justified. Let the blessed rejoice who through her have been made blessed... Let them approach the blessed child, the sublime Queen on high. Let them embrace her, let them cradle her in the arms of perfect love. Let them bear her in their hearts, her praises ever on their tongues, so as to possess her with their love. For this is no woman to be slighted, this is no ordinary mother: this is blessed Mary, wholly sweet and lovable...

She is the sweetness of myrrh, the absence of all bitterness. She who was never to dwell in the bitterness of sin is rightly named Mary. She never sinned nor ever wished to sin, in thought or word or deed. Wholly beautiful, there was no blemish in her; only thus could she become the Mother of the Lord...

Wednesday

GOD'S CARE FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

A Reflection taken from a sermon by Cardinal Newman

When Hagar fled from Sarah and was lost and alone in the wilderness, she was visited by an angel. Together with a reproof for her impatience, she was given a promise to encourage her. In the mixture of humbling and cheering words, Hagar recognized the presence of her Maker and Lord, and realized that God always comes to those who seek him, which shows both holiness and mercy. She had not expected this, and so in her mind, the Lord became the "God who sees me".

Before the coming of Christ, there was little recognition of the fact that the Maker sees and is concerned for each human being. But now the gift of knowing God's care for us individually is given to everyone, though only we who are his people may be fully aware of it.

St. Peter Claver was one of the few who recognized the full implications of this fact. He knew that God cared for each and every one of the many slaves that survived the Atlantic crossing and were sold in South America to Spanish masters. He knew that because God cares for each of us, God sends someone to care for every person in need of special care. The God who sees everyone does the seeing through my eyes and yours.

God beholds you individually, whoever you are. God calls you by your name. God sees you and understands you, just as God made you. God knows what is in you, all your own peculiar feelings and thoughts, your dispositions and likings, your strength and your weakness. The fact that you may feel you lack the abilities or resources to help others doesn't matter, and in any case, it is false. Peter Claver lacked almost every sort of resource to help the newly landed slaves, many of whom were ill or suffering from exposure. Even his fellows in religion wouldn't help him and thought him crazy for doing what he did. In many instances, all he had to give was love and concern and an effort to provide a blanket or some food or fruit.

You are one of those for whom Christ offered up his last prayer. You are one of those for whom Christ gave his life, sealing his love with his blood. You may have nothing to give but a good word or a prayer, but you can give it with genuine concern. God sees whether we reach out to others in their need, in whatever kind of need they have. God sees what you have, and if it is no more than Christ had, would you dare to claim that it wasn't enough? Though he had so little, Peter Claver brought love and concern to tens of thousands. Does that count for nothing? God knows what you can do, and God waits for you to do it. Who knows how God may come to the aid of others when what you can do really isn't enough? Trust in the power of God, and in God living in you.

Thursday

THE CROSS

An Excerpt from Gravity and Grace by Simone Weil

Christ healing the sick, raising the dead... that is the humble, human, almost low part of his mission. The supernatural part is the sweat of blood, the unsatisfied longing for human consolation, the supplication that he might be spared, the sense of being abandoned by God. The abandonment at the supreme moment of the crucifixion, what an abyss of love on both sides! 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' There we have the real proof that Christianity is something divine... The cross...

The tree of life was a wooden beam. Something which does not give fruit, but only vertical movement. "The Son of Man must be lifted up and he will draw all men unto himself."... Leaves and fruit are a waste of energy if our only wish is to rise. Adam and Eve sought for divinity in...fruit. But it is prepared for us on dead wood... where a corpse is hanging. We must look for the secret of our kinship with God in our mortality.

God wears himself out through the infinite thickness of time and space in order to reach the soul and to captivate it. If it allows a pure and utter consent (though brief as a lightning flash) to be torn from it, then God conquers that soul. And when it has become his entirely, he abandons it. He leaves it completely alone, and it has in its turn, but gropingly, to cross the infinite thickness of time and space in search of him whom it loves. It is thus that the soul, starting from the opposite end, makes the same journey that God made towards it. And that is the cross... We are what is furthest from God, situated at the extreme limit from which it is not absolutely impossible to come back to him...

In order that we should realize the distance between ourselves and God, it was necessary that God should be a crucified slave. For we do not realize distance except in the downward direction. It is much easier to imagine ourselves in the place of God the Creator than in the place of Christ crucified...

Of the links between God and man, love is the greatest. It is as great as the distance to be crossed. So that the love may be as great as possible, the distance is as great as possible. That is why evil can extend to the extreme limit beyond which the very possibility of good disappears. Evil is permitted to touch this limit... How could that which is good love that which is evil without suffering? And that which is evil suffers too in loving that which is good. The mutual love of God and man is suffering... For if he had made the best of all possible worlds, it would mean that he could not do very much. God crosses through the thickness of the world to come to us...

Suffering is at the same time quite external concerning innocence and quite essential to it. Blood on snow. Innocence and evil... An innocent being who suffers sheds the light of salvation upon evil. Such a one is the visible image of the innocent God. That is why a God who loves man and a man who loves God have to suffer...

Friday

THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION TO JOY

A Reflection by G. K. Chesterton

It has sometimes been claimed that Paganism is a religion of joy and Christianity one of sorrow. That is pure nonsense! Everything human has in it both joy and sorrow; the only topic of interest here is the way joy and sorrow get balanced or divided by different beliefs. What is most interesting is that pagans take special delight in the earth but grow more and more sad as they draw nearer to the next world. What's more, their joy is about the mere fact there is life and not because of its origin or goal. To pagans, the small things are sweet, as we see in ancient poetry, but the larger view leaves them bitter. Paganism is darkened with an incurable despair because everything ends.

The majority of human beings have been forced to find their joy in little things and be sad about the big ones. Nevertheless, and I offer this as my contribution to dogma, it is not native to human beings to feel this way. We, humans, are more ourselves when joy is the fundamental thing, and grief is the superficial one. Thanksgiving seems to be the permanent pulsation of the human spirit, while pessimism is at best an emotional half-day off. Joy is an uproarious labor by which all things live fully. Yet, according to the appearances grasped by pagans and agnostics, this primal need of human nature can never be fulfilled. Joy ought to be expansive; but for the agnostic it must be contractive because it can cling only to one aspect, one corner, of the world's reality. Grief ought to be for a moment; yet for the agnostic its desolation spreads through eternity.

This view of agnosticism presents what I call being born and living upside down. To the modern person, the heavens are actually around the earth; the explanation is simple; the skeptic is standing on his or her head – a weak pedestal to try and stand on. On the other hand, Christianity satisfied suddenly and perfectly the ancestral human instinct to stand right side up. Its creed is born of joy; hope becomes gigantic and sadness something special and small.

The vault of heaven above us is not deaf nor the universe idiotic; its silence is not a heartless indicator of an endless and aimless world. Rather, this silence is small, like the pity-filled stillness of a sickroom. We are permitted tragedy because the energy of divine things would knock us down as in a drunken farce. Joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian. Open the small book which shows us how Christianity came to be. The tremendous figure of Christ towers above all others. His pathos was almost casual; he never concealed his tears; and yet he did conceal something. It wasn't anger; he flung furniture (money changers' tables) down the steps of the Temple and asked people how they expected to avoid damnation.

There was still something he hid when he went up a mountain to pray. I have sometimes fancied that it was his mirth. He saw joy would be realized and that all would end in joy and glory. Wouldn't that make you laugh and be glad?

Saturday

THE DAY AFTER 9/11

From the Message of St. John Paul II

I cannot hold this audience without expressing my profound sorrow at the terrorist attacks which yesterday brought death and destruction to America, causing thousands of victims and injuring countless people. To the President of the United States and to all American citizens, I express heartfelt sympathy.

In the face of such unspeakable horror, we cannot but be deeply disturbed. I add my voice to all the voices raised in these hours to express indignant condemnation, and I strongly reiterate that the ways of violence will never lead to genuine solutions to humanity's problems.

Yesterday was a dark day in the history of humanity, a terrible affront to human dignity. After receiving the news, I followed with intense concern the developing situation, with heartfelt prayers to the Lord. How is it possible to commit acts of such savage cruelty? The human heart has a depth from which schemes of unheard-of ferocity sometimes emerge, capable of destroying the normal daily life of a people. But faith comes to our aid when words seem to fail. Christ's word is the only one that can give a response to the questions which trouble our spirit. Even if the forces of darkness appear to prevail, those who believe in God know that evil and death do not have the final say. Christian hope is based on this truth; at this time, our prayerful truth draws hope from it.

With deeply felt sympathy I address myself to the beloved people of the United States in this moment of distress and consternation, when the courage of so many men and women of goodwill is being sorely tested. In a special way I reach out to the families of the dead and the injured and assure them of my spiritual closeness. I entrust to the mercy of the Most High the helpless victims of this tragedy, for whom I have offered Mass this morning. May God give courage to the survivors; may he sustain the rescue workers and the many volunteers who are presently making an enormous effort to cope with such an immense emergency.

I ask you, dear brothers and sisters, to join me in prayer for them. Let us beg the Lord that the spiral of hatred and violence will not prevail. May the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Mercy, fill the hearts of all with wise thoughts and peaceful intentions.