

TWENTY-NINTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME – A

October 18 – 24, 2026

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Sunday

WHOSE LIKENESS AND INSCRIPTION IS THIS?

From a Commentary by Lawrence of Brindisi

In today's gospel we find two questions: one put to Christ by the Pharisees, and the other put by him to them. The Pharisees' question concerns this world alone, while Christ's has an entirely heavenly and other-worldly sense. Their question derived from profound ignorance and perversity; his stemmed from perfect wisdom and goodness.

Whose likeness and inscription is this? Caesar's, they reply. Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. To each, he says, must be given what belongs to him. This, surely, is a judgment full of heavenly wisdom and instruction. For it teaches that authority is twofold, having an earthly and human aspect, and a heavenly and divine aspect. It teaches that we owe a twofold duty of obedience: to the human laws and to the law of God. The coin bearing Caesar's likeness and inscription must be given to Caesar, and the one stamped with the divine image and likeness must be given to God. *We bear the imprint of your glorious face, O Lord.*

We are made *in the image and likeness of God*. So you, O Christian, because you are a human being, are God's tribute money – a little coin bearing the image and likeness of the divine emperor. Therefore, with Christ I ask: *Whose likeness and inscription is this?* Your answer is, God's. To which I reply, Then why not give God what belongs to him?

If we really want to be God's image, we must be like Christ, for he is the image of God's goodness and *the perfect copy of his nature*, and God *foreordained that those he has chosen should take on a likeness to his Son*. Christ undoubtedly gave Caesar what was Caesar's and God what was God's. He fulfilled the precepts of both tablets of the law to perfection, becoming *obedient unto death, even death on a cross*, and he was most highly endowed, both inwardly and outwardly, with every virtue.

In today's Gospel, the reply, most wise and discreet, by which Christ sidestepped his enemies' trap shows his great prudence. His teaching that each must be given what belongs to him, and his example of being willing to pay the temple tax and giving a shekel for himself and Peter, show his justice. His declaring it to be a duty to pay taxes to Caesar, openly teaching the truth without fear of the Jews who would be offended, shows his fortitude. For this is God's way, of which Christ is the authentic teacher.

Those therefore who resemble Christ in their lives, conduct, and practice of virtues, are the ones who manifest the divine image; for the way to recover this image is by being absolutely just. *Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's*; that is, give to each what belongs to him.

Monday

MAY I DIE ONLY FOR YOU

From the Spiritual Diaries of St. John de Brebeuf, priest and martyr

For two days now I have experienced a great desire to be a martyr and to endure all the torments the martyrs suffered. Jesus, my Lord and Savior, what can I give you in return for all the favors you have conferred on me? I will take from your hand the cup of your sufferings and call on your name. I vow before your eternal Father and the Holy Spirit, before your most holy Mother and her most chaste spouse, before the angels, apostles and martyrs, before my blessed fathers Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis Xavier – in truth I vow to you, Jesus my Savior, that as far as I have the strength I will never fail to accept the grace of martyrdom, if some day you in your infinite mercy should offer it to me, your most unworthy servant.

I bind myself in this way so that for the rest of my life I will have neither permission nor freedom to refuse opportunities of dying and shedding my blood for you, unless at a particular juncture I should consider it more suitable for your glory to act otherwise at that time. Further, I bind myself to this so that, on receiving the blow of death, I shall accept it from your hands with the fullest delight and joy of spirit. For this reason, my beloved Jesus, and because of the surging joy which moves me, here and now I offer my body and blood and life. May I die only for you, if you will grant me this grace, since you willingly died for me. Let me so live that you may grant me the gift of such a happy death. In this way, my God and Savior, I will take from your hand the cup of your sufferings and call on your name: Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!

My God, it grieves me greatly that you are not known, that in this savage wilderness all have not been converted to you, that sin has not been driven from it. My God, even if all the brutal tortures which prisoners in this region must endure should fall on me, I offer myself most willingly to them and I alone shall suffer them all.

Tuesday

THE RETURN OF THE MASTER

From a Commentary by St. Gregory the Great

At that time Jesus said to his disciples, "Let your loins be girded, and let your lights be lighted in your hands." And you, be like men who wait for their master on his return from the wedding, so that when he arrives and knocks on the door, they open to him immediately..."

Here two things are ordered at once: girding one's loins and holding lamps; which means that chastity must make our bodies pure, and the truth our actions luminous. For neither purity nor light can please one without the other to our Redeemer, whether we do good without renouncing the faults of lust, or excel in chastity without exercising...good works. Without good works, chastity is therefore very little, and without chastity, good works are nothing...

It is thus immediately added: "And you, be like men who wait for their master on his return from the wedding."... The Lord comes when he approaches to judge; he knocks on the door when he warns us of the proximity of death by the attacks of an illness. We open it immediately if we welcome it with love. We do not want to open to the Judge who knocks, if we are afraid of dying and we dread to see the Judge that we remember to have despised. But he who draws his assurance in his hope and his works opens to him as soon as he knocks on the door, because he is waiting for his Judge in joy, and seeing the approach of the moment of death, the thought of the glory that will reward him the height of joy. This is why it is immediately added: "Blessed are these servants whom their master, on his return, will find vigilant!" He watches, he who keeps the eyes of his soul open to contemplate the true light; he watches, he who strives to act as he believes; he watches, he who repels the darkness of numbness and lukewarmness. It is in this sense that Paul says, "Watch, O righteous, and sin not"...

But what must the servants do if they have been negligent on the first watch?... Those who have been careless must not despair, nor give up the exercise of good works. For the Lord, declaring his extreme patience, adds: "And if he come on the second watch, and come to the third watch, and find them thus, happy are these servants!" The first watch...is the time of...childhood. The second is adolescence or youth... As for the third watch, it means old age. Thus, he who did not want to remain awake during the first watch, he observes anyway the second... And he who did not want to stay awake during the second watch, he does not let escape the remedies of the third... that he can recover at least in his old age.

Consider, dear brothers, how the goodness of God leaves no escape for our hardness of soul. Impossible for men to find excuses! God is despised, and he waits; he is scorned, and he calls again; he endures disdain, and yet he goes so far as to promise to reward those who will one day return to him...

Wednesday

HOW DOES ONE WAIT FOR THE LORD?

A Reflection from a Homily by St. Macarius of Egypt

We have heard very often that those who wish to be found worthy of eternal life must become a dwelling place for Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are told that such people must produce the fruits of the Spirit and keep the commandments of Christ purely and blamelessly. But one begins all this by first believing steadfastly in the Lord and by devoting oneself as entirely as possible to obeying the commandments and to renouncing worldly interests; i.e., one must free the mind from immersion in secular affairs.

But when we hear this, even we monks tremble, for we know we are sinners and that all of the things we have listed are beyond our unaided human powers. But then we recall, by God's gift, that none of this depends simply upon us. It is all a gift of God. But how, then, are we to know we have received this gift?

Do you find you persevere in prayer and do so as ceaselessly as you can? Are you always waiting in expectant faith for the Lord to visit and assist you? Do you keep this goal constantly in view? But we know that sin is within us and that all our efforts don't seem to be sufficient. But this very thought is a beginning. For example, we are to make every effort to do good and do it by showing humility. Isn't our sense of our sin an expression of humility? Of course, we are not to seek honors or praise or special distinctions or special treatment from anyone – just as the Gospel teaches. But if we present ourselves as sinners, how can we fall into any of these faults?

What is the most important thing? It is to have the Lord always before our eyes. It is to wish above all to please God. Is God not pleased in a special way by humility? Have you not felt humbled continuously by the failure that follows every effort to depend simply on yourself? Jesus said, "Learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart, and then you will find your rest". We need not seek to do all the things we have mentioned as though we had the strength for that. We do not. What makes us more humble than this reflection?

The Lord has taught us to be on the lookout for opportunities to be merciful, to be kind, to be compassionate. These are the good works that make us good according to the Lord's teaching. "If you love me, enter through the narrow gate." What is this gate if not the small and humble deeds of mercy and kindness and compassion? We don't have to wait for opportunities to show these virtues in great and extraordinary ways.

We should never forget how humble the Lord's ways were in the way he lived and in the gentle things he did to help others. Take this as a pattern for yourself. If you help others pray, you are helping yourself pray and becoming like the Lord. And this happens in many other ways as well. One day the things you now have to force yourself to do, and that you do with a reluctant heart, you will find yourself doing willingly. You will have made a habit of invariably doing what is humble and merciful and kind and so on, doing what is right. You will have become ever-mindful of the Lord and be a person who is always waiting for him by doing what he commands you.

Thursday

KINDLED AND ENFLAMED BY GOD

From The Eternal Promise by Quaker Thomas Kelly

Is God *your* passion? Do you long for Him and rejoice in Him and find life meaningful only to the degree you are in His Presence and He is in your life? Do you keep close to the Divine Center, the Inner principle, counting all else as loss? For a depth of commitment such as mild men do not know, I speak in order that you may hear Him speak in you the same message. Out of such lives will the world be reborn, will the church be reborn. Hasten unto God, all you zealous pearl-merchants! There will you find rest for your souls, and power, and peace, and joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

Hasten unto God. I have spoken with deep feeling, for I am convinced this is the deepest need of all men. We...have become earthy. We are more at home with humans than we are with God. We have men of burning social passion, but not so many that burn for God, who long for God, who go down deep into the Waters of His life, who call to us, "O taste and see that the Lord is *good*." Social reformers we have now, men who are great in their contribution to social thinking, to war, to peace, to economic injustice, to racial cooperation. But this epoch of history is weak in great prophets of the inner life, great voices who cry in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord within your hearts." Skill in social expressions of God is great; skill in communion with Him, agile obedience to the Inward Glory, is less common today...

Strip monasticism; strip it of its retreat behind walls from much human need; strip it of its celibacy; and there is left, in Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi, a God-hunger, and completeness of renunciation of all else in the world in comparison with the life that is hid with Christ in God. Such a passion for God as leads men... to leave father and mother and all the world... until deep relations with God have been found... Such men and women, not with *social* techniques, but with God-motivations born out of deep immersion in the ocean of the Love of God... Down at the base of life, for all such people, would be a fellowship in a common Life which is the Light within every man who is kindled and enflamed by God.

Do not misunderstand me. There is a practice of the presence of God which is done on the run, in the busiest of days, in office, and schoolroom, and kitchen. Little prayers and communion; ejaculations of surrender and joy and exaltation... And most of our lives can be lived this way, as divine conversation of our soul with God, going on behind the scenes all the time. But then come crucial periods in life when the quest for God grows hot, when the hot breath of the Hound of Heaven is at our heels, when the heart cries out, "Give me the Presence or I die." And these are the times when we get beneath the conventional mildness of average religiosity and find Him more fully, who is dearer than life itself. From these men and women will come the profound return to religion... the love of God and neighbor, which is so desperately needed.

Friday

THOSE WHO SEARCH FOR THE TIME OF CHRIST'S COMING

From a Commentary by St. Cyril of Alexandria

Observe how... He cried unto the multitudes, saying, "When you see a cloud rising out of the west, straightway you say that rain comes; and it is so. And when [you see] the south wind blowing, you say there will be heat: and so it is." For men fix their attention on things of this kind, and from long observation and practice tell beforehand when rain will fall, or gusts happen of violent winds: and one especially sees sailors very skillful in this matter. Well therefore, He says, well would it become those who can calculate things of this sort, and... fix the penetrating glance of the mind also upon matters of importance. And what are these? The law showed beforehand the mystery of Christ; and that certainly He would shine forth in the last ages of the world upon the inhabitants of the earth, and submit to be a sacrifice for the salvation of all...

But against those, who, in the greatness of their wickedness, have scorned His goodness, and rejected the Saviour, there is decreed wrath and misery; and, as it were, a winter of torment and punishment, from the blast of which hard will it be to escape. For, as the Psalmist says, "Fire, and brimstone, and the whirlwind, is the portion of their cup." And why so? Because they have rejected... the grace that is by faith; and therefore the guilt of their sins cannot be wiped away, and they must bear, as they deserve, the punishment due to those who love sin. For...He said, "Verily I say unto you, that if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins."...

But those who are in Christ by faith, escaping from the pollutions of sin, are not only not full of shame, but have that boldness which becomes those who are free. It was their duty, therefore... as being possessed of understanding, and able to discern the face of the sky and of the earth, to examine also things future, and not to let those tempests escape their observation, which come after this world. For there will be the south wind and rain: that is to say, fiery torment. For the south wind is hot: and the infliction of that punishment is vehement and inevitable, like the rain falling upon those overtaken by it. They must not, therefore, let the time of salvation pass by unnoticed: that time in which our Saviour came, and at which perfect knowledge of the truth reached mankind, and the grace shone forth which purifies the wicked...

Now all of us, without exception, upon earth are guilty of offences: he who has a suit against us and accuses us is the wicked Satan: for he is "the enemy and the exactor." While therefore we are in the way... let us deliver ourselves from him: let us do away with the offences of which we have been guilty: let us close his mouth: let us seize upon the grace that is by Christ, which frees us from all debt and penalty, and delivers us from fear and torment: lest if our impurity be not cleansed away, we be carried before the judge, and given over to the exactors, that is, the tormentors, from whose cruelty no man can escape... who will exact vengeance for every fault, whether it be great or small.

Far removed from this danger are those who search for the time of Christ's coming, and are not ignorant of His mystery, but well know that the Word, though He be God, has shone forth upon the inhabitants of earth in likeness as one of us, that freeing them from all blame, He may bless with exceeding happiness those who believe in Him, and acknowledge Him as God...

Saturday

IN MARY THE WORK OF GOD IS PERFECT

From Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

There is a person who has already accomplished all that humanity desires and hopes for, a person in whom the work of Christ is perfected. It is the Virgin Mother of our Lord. Each of us can look to her and say: Here is God's work made perfect, here is the face of true joy and true peace. And since Mary is the Mother of the Church, all those who conform themselves to her in the Church live, in the measure that they do correspond to her, the splendor of God's gifts.

But what is meant when we say that we should imitate Mary's adherence to God, and express that in our lives? It means three things. It means listening to the Word, it means saying 'Yes' to God, and it means serving.

Listening to the Word comes first. Mary is a person who made space in her life so that the Word of God could enter. Mary let the Word resonate within her, from the first words of the angel until the last words of Jesus on the cross.

Mary created a zone of silence within and about her so that she could hear: "She treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart". She said "Yes" to God. From Mary's contemplative silence is born the second characteristic already mentioned, the capacity to say 'Yes'. She puts herself at the disposition of the divine call. "He called those whom he intended and those he justified and with them, he shared his glory." This somewhat obscure saying of St. Paul means to tell us that we have nothing to fear when we say "Yes" to God in our own lives. God guides us always and is always faithful to his words of love and choice.

Then there is the matter of service. Jesus' mother demonstrated her adherence to God. She allowed God to manifest his reign in her through her humble service as his servant, and she did it from the incarnation to the cross. And then she did the same in the early Christian community.

The Church was born out of this openness and readiness to serve. The Church is continually sustained and advanced by the generous service of all those baptized into Christ. The service of bishops and priests is part of this but not all of it. Each person serves in what God sees as the right place for him or her. It is out of this spirit of service that civil society too is served and supported.

God calls each of us as God called, and still calls, Mary. We imitate her by doing the same three things that she did. Through this obedience, comes salvation to the whole world. It comes, notice, through our obedience, just as it did through Mary's.