



### SUNDAY REFLECTION

In the play *A Man for All Seasons*, Thomas More and his son-in-law William Roper argue about the law. The young Roper thinks More's respect for the law is excessive. Roper would be prepared to cut down every law in England to rout the Devil. More replies calmly: 'And when the last law was down, and the Devil turned around on you, where would you hide, Roper, the laws all being flat? This country is planted thick with laws, from coast to coast, Man's laws, not God's! and if you cut them down – and you're just the man to do it – do you really think you

could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I'd give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety's sake!"

Christians have an uneasy relationship with the *Torah*. A common caricature of Judaism at the time of Jesus presents it as obsessed by law and legalism. That is a picture that today's Gospel might at first glance appear to support, and it is a reason why we must tread carefully when reflecting on this and similar readings. It might be helpful for instance, to recognize that debates over matters such as ritual purification reflected not simply the situation in the Palestine of Jesus but later debates within the Church occasioned, on the one part, by Paul's mission to include Gentiles within the promise to Israel 'outside of the Law', and, on the other, by the growing influence of the Pharisee tradition of the Oral Law transmitted through a chain of teachers. The New Testament scholar E. P. Sanders has coined the term 'covenantal nomism' to describe the mindset of many Jews in the time of Jesus. By that, Sanders wishes to remind his readers that the Jewish way to salvation was not by a blind unthinking observance of a plethora of increasingly empty laws alone but by a consciousness that they were privileged in belonging to God's covenant people by an act of His grace in history and that they expressed their part of the covenant by a joyous obedience of the *Torah*.

It is true that law can become a burden: or perhaps there is just some instinct in the human heart to close every loop-hole by plugging it with a new law. Today's readings invite us to ponder on the meaning and purpose of law, divine as well as human. Moses and James agree that law is for the protection of the individual and the community. A nation can be distinguished for the wisdom and humanity of its civil law codes. A religious organization (e.g., Church, religious community) can become inward-looking and barren if it is concerned merely with plugging the gaps and multiplying rules and regulations.

**STEWARDSHIP:** "Every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit, comes from above," says St. James in the second reading. But, he reminds us, true worship of God involves using those good gifts to benefit the less fortunate. Good stewardship is not optional; it is the hallmark of our faith!

## READINGS TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY

5 SEP '21

**Is. 35:4-7:** Isaiah rejoices in the hope of Israel's return from exile. Among the first to enjoy the blessings of restoration will be those who are deaf or dumb, blind or lame.

**Jas. 2:1-5:** St. James points out the contradiction of believing in Christ yet treating those who are poor as inferior.

**Mk. 7:31-37:** The miracle reflects the first reading and is a sign that Jesus fulfils the Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. The power of His love and desire to heal is there for us too.

## THE MASS

Over the years various aspects of the Mass have been discussed but this topic has not been given the attention that its significance in our spiritual lives that it deserves. If we truly accept the Vatican II statement that the Mass is the source and summit of our faith thus requiring our

full participation and understanding of what is occurring then we need to analyze each of its constituent parts. But, first some general information.

Very early on, the Church saw the Mass as a mystical reality in which the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is renewed. Responding to Protestant sects who denied that the Eucharist is anything more than a memorial, the Council of Trent (1545-63) declared that "The same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, is present and offered in an unbloody manner" in the Mass.

This does not mean, as some critics of Catholicism claim, that the Church teaches that, in the Mass, we sacrifice Christ again. Rather, the original sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is presented to us once more — or, to put it another way, when we take part in the Mass we are spiritually present at the foot of the Cross on Calvary.

A very formal definition to begin with is that provided by the late Rev. John A. Hardon, S.J. (an instructor of mine while studying for the Permanent Diaconate in Arlington Diocese) in his Catholic Dictionary.

The Sacrifice of the Eucharist as the central act of worship of the Catholic Church. The "Mass" is a late form of *missio* (sending), from which the faithful are sent to put into practice what they have learned and use the graces they have received in the Eucharistic liturgy.

As defined by the Church at the Council of Trent, in the Mass, "The same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, is present and offered in an unbloody manner." Consequently, the Mass is a truly propitiatory sacrifice, which means that by this oblation "the Lord is appeased, He grants grace and the gift of repentance, and He pardons wrongdoings and sins, even grave ones. For it is one and the same victim. He who now makes the offering through the ministry of priests and He who then offered Himself on the cross. The only difference is the manner of offering" (Denzinger 1743).

The Mass cannot be understood apart from Calvary, of which it is a re-presentation, memorial, and effective application of the merits gained by Christ.

The re-presentation means that because Christ is really present in His humanity, in heaven and on the altar, He is capable now as He was on Good Friday of freely offering Himself to the Father. He can no longer die because He now has a glorified body, but the essence of His oblation remains the same.

The Mass is also a memorial. Christ's death is commemorated not only as a psychological remembrance but as a mystical reality. He voluntarily offers Himself, the eternal high priest, as really as He did on Calvary.

The Mass is moreover, a sacred banquet or paschal meal. The banquet aspect of the Mass is the reception of Holy Communion by the celebrant and the people, when the same Christ who offers Himself to the Father as a sacrifice then gives Himself to the faithful as their heavenly food. It was this fact that inspired the Holy See, after the Second Vatican Council, to restore the practice of receiving Communion under both kinds for all the faithful: "The entire tradition of the Church teaches that the faithful participate more perfectly in the Eucharistic celebration through sacramental Communion. By Communion, in fact, the faithful share more fully in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In this way they are not limited to sharing in the sacrifice by faith and prayer, nor to merely spiritual communion with Christ offered on the altar, but receive Christ

Himself sacramentally, so as to receive more fully the fruits of this most holy sacrifice. In order that the fullness of the sign in the Eucharistic banquet may be seen more clearly by the faithful, the Second Vatican Council prescribed that in certain cases, to be decided by the Holy See, the faithful could receive Holy Communion under both species" (*Sacramentali Communionem*, June 29, 1970).

Finally the Mass is the divinely ordained means of applying the merits of Calvary. Christ won for the world all the graces it needs for salvation and sanctification. But these blessings are conferred gradually and continually since Calvary and mainly through the Mass. Their measure of conferral is in proportion to the faith and loving response of the faithful who unite themselves in spirit with the Mass.

It is in this sense that the Mass is an oblation of the whole Mystical Body, head and members. Yet, among the faithful, some have been ordained priests and their role in the Mass is essentially different from that of the laity. The priest is indispensable, since he alone by his powers can change the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Nevertheless the role of the participants is of great importance; not as though there would be no Mass without a congregation but because the people's "full, active and conscious participation will involve them in both body and soul and will inspire them with faith, hope and charity." The more active this participation, the more glory is given to God and the more grace is bestowed not only on the Church but on all the members of the human race.

## **SAINT OF THE WEEK: GREGORY I THE GREAT POPE DOCTOR of the CHURCH**

Pope from 590 to 604, last of the Latin Fathers of the Church. A Roman patrician by birth, he was born in Rome, the son of Gordianus and St. Sylvia. He began a most promising secular career, receiving appointment as prefect of the city (*praefectus urbi*). He soon abandoned any thought of such a course as he embraced the religious life, converting his estate on the Caelian Hill into a monastery and founding six other monasteries on his lands on Sicily. Pope Pelagius II (r. 579-590) ordained Gregory a priest, and he became a papal nuncio in 578. In 579, he represented the pope to Constantinople, remaining there until 586. Returning to Rome, he served as abbot of St. Andrea until 590, when Pelagius died in a plague and Gregory was unanimously elected as his successor, being consecrated on September 3, 590, despite serious reluctance on his part to take up the massive burdens of the papacy. The labors of his pontificate ensured Gregory's place in history, as he is considered the founder of the medieval papacy.

Gregory conducted a massive reform of the clergy and clerical affairs, established guidelines of religious practice in the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis* (Book of Pastoral Rules), promoted monasticism, appointed numerous monks to offices of the Holy See, and sent St. Augustine and forty monks from his monastery on the Caelian Hill to England, thereby starting the conversion of the English. He is credited with the creation of the form of musical worship known as the Gregorian Chant and with contributing prayers to the Gregorian Sacramentary (although the collection dates to a later era).

As Rome was in a state of severe political crisis owing to the advance of the Lombards and the virtual disintegration of civil government Gregory was forced by circumstances to assume many



temporal duties. He ransomed captives of the Lombards, concluded a peace agreement with the Lombards to spare Rome from siege and destruction, and ignored the Byzantine governor in Italy, the exarch of Ravenna, all the while assuring the Byzantine emperor of his continued recognition of imperial suzerainty. He also rebuilt Rome after many natural disasters and launched a series of charitable programs to feed the large number of hungry people throughout Italy. This last project was one of deep importance to Gregory, who once wept openly upon learning that someone had starved to death in Rome during his administration.

Gregory was a copious writer, the author of treatises, including his *Dialogues* and *Liber Regulae Pastoralis* (on the duties of the bishops); a collection saints' lives, visions, and prophecies; the *Magna Moralis*, an exegetical work on the Book of Job; homilies on the Gospel; and 850 letters. Gregory was a deeply holy and sincerely humble pontiff, taking for himself the title *Servus Servorum Dei* (Servant of the Servants of God) when the patriarch of Constantinople took for himself the ambitious claim of Oecumenical (or Ecumenical) Patriarch. He died on March 12 in Rome and was canonized by acclamation immediately after his death. With Pope Leo I and Pope John Paul II he is only one of three popes to be honored with the name the Great. In liturgical art he is depicted as a pope, carrying the double barred cross. A dove is sometimes shown with him, and he is at times portrayed at a desk or at an altar. Feast 3 September.

## PRAYERS

### **Novena Prayer to St. Joseph**

St. Joseph, you are the faithful protector and intercessor of all who love and venerate you. I have special confidence in you.

You are powerful with God and will never abandon your faithful servants.

I humbly invoke you and commend myself with all who are dear to me to your intercession. By the love you have for Jesus and Mary, do not abandon me during life and assist me at the hour of death.

Glorious St. Joseph, by my guide, my father, and my model through life that I may merit to die as you did in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Guardian of the Word Incarnate, I am confident that your prayers on my behalf will be graciously heard before the throne of God.

Through Christ, our Lord. Amen

### **Faith in the Eucharist**

*O, my God, I firmly believe that Thou art really and corporally present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I adore Thee here present from the very depths of my heart, and I worship Thy sacred presence with all possible humility. O my soul, what joy to have Jesus Christ always with us, and to be able to speak to Him, heart to heart, with all confidence. Grant, O Lord, that I, having adored Thy divine Majesty here on earth in this wonderful Sacrament, may be able to adore it eternally in heaven. Amen.*

### **An Explanation of the Act of Faith in the Eucharist**

Our eyes still see bread, but our faith tells us that the Host that is consecrated during the Mass has become the Body of Christ. In this Act of Faith in the Eucharist, we acknowledge Christ's

Presence in the Blessed Sacrament and look forward to the day when we will not only believe but see Him in Heaven.

### **St. Thomas Aquinas' Prayer of Thanksgiving After Communion**

I give Thee thanks, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, that Thou hast vouchsafed, for no merit of my own, but of the mere condescension of Thy mercy, to satisfy me, a sinner and Thine unworthy servant, with the Precious Blood of Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ. I implore Thee, let not this Holy Communion be to me an increase of guilt unto my punishment, but an availing plea unto pardon and forgiveness. Let it be to me the armor of faith and the shield of good will. Grant that it may work the extinction of my vices, the rooting out of concupiscence and lust, and the increase within me of charity and patience, of humility and obedience. Let it be my strong defense against the snares of all my enemies, visible and invisible; the stilling and the calm of all my impulses, carnal and spiritual; my indissoluble union with Thee the one and true God, and a blessed consummation at my last end. And I beseech thee that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to bring me, sinner as I am, to that ineffable banquet where Thou, with the Son and the Holy Ghost, art to Thy saints true and unfailing light, fullness and content, joy for evermore, gladness without alloy, consummate and everlasting bliss. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **An Explanation of the Prayer of Thanksgiving After Communion**

St. Thomas Aquinas is known today primarily for his theological works (most famously the *Summa Theologica*), but he also wrote extensive meditations on Scripture, as well as hymns and prayers. This beautiful prayer reminds us that, while we are unworthy to receive Communion, Christ has still given us the gift of Himself, and His Body and Blood strengthen us to live a Christian life.

In this prayer, Saint Thomas expresses his gratitude for the gift of the Eucharist. When we receive Holy Communion in a state of grace, God grants us additional graces (sacramental grace) that strengthen our faith and our desire to do what is right. Those graces help us to grow in virtue and to avoid sin, draw us closer to God in our daily lives, and prepare us for an eternity with Him.

## **SCHEDULE TWENTY-SECOND WEEK ORDINARY TIME SATURDAY 28 AUG - SUNDAY 5 SEP**

**Saturday 28 Aug M St. Augustine Bishop, Doctor of the Church**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Preface of Holy Pastors, & Eucharistic Prayer III**

**1:30 p.m.– 4:30 p.m. Confessions**

**5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Vigil of 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time**

**Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface II Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer III  
(Intention: )**

**Sunday 29 Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time**

**7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface II Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer II  
(Intention: )**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface II Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer III**

(Intention: )

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface II Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: )

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

Monday 30 Aug Day Off

Tuesday 31 Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> Week Ordinary Time

8:30 a.m. In Any Need, Preface & Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: Nathan Eric Weimer RIP)

6:30 p.m. Meeting

Wednesday 1 Sep 22<sup>nd</sup> Week Ordinary Time

6:30 a.m. Mass For the Church #1B, Preface for Weekdays II & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass For the Church #1B, Preface for Weekdays II & Eucharistic Prayer III

Thursday 2 Sep 22<sup>nd</sup> Week Ordinary Time

8:30 a.m. Mass Vocations to Holy Orders #9, Preface for Weekdays III , Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: Strengthening of Marriage & Families)

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass Vocations to Holy Orders #9, Preface for Weekdays III , Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: Ramon & Mercedes Cruz RIP)

Friday 3 Sep M St. Gregory the Great Pope, Doctor of the Church

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Preface of Holy Pastors, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Fred Britton RIP)

4:00 – 6:00 p.m. Adoration & Confessions

6:00 p.m. Mass Proper, Preface of Holy Pastors, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Erik Rocco D'Andrea RIP)

Saturday 4 Sep 22<sup>nd</sup> Week Ordinary Time

8:00 a.m. Mass BVM Proper Immaculate Heart of the BVM, Preface, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: In reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary)

1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Twenty-Third Sunday Ordinary Time

Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface IV Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Parish St. Stephen, Martyr)

Sunday 5 Sep Twenty-Third Sunday Ordinary Time

7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface IV Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: Alice Kirk RIP)

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Preface IV Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Paul Wilbanks RIP)

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface IV Sunday, Eucharistic Prayer III

(Intention: Jason Pfaff RIP)

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

