**Friday (Cardinal Basil Hume)**

There is so much to do, so much to face that we have become too absorbed in our own activity and not sufficiently concerned about God. The hustle and bustle of life can squeeze him out of our thoughts and very far from our desires. Words like ‘hope’, ‘expectation’ and ‘looking forward’, have, wrongly in my view, been stolen by the young from the old. These are words proper to the elderly, because by the very nature of things they now look forward to the vision of God. That vision is the fulfilment of all they have ever wanted. If such fulfilment does not come at the end of a life well spent, then the toils of life have been in vain. The joys and peace which we have known from time to time in a fitful fashion will be ours totally and for all time. We were made for that and that alone.

**Scripture (1 Thess:5:1-2,4-5,9-11 )**

***About times and dates, there is no need to write to you for you are well aware in any case that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. But you do not live in the dark, that the Day should take you unawares like a thief. No, you are all children of the light and children of the day: we do not belong to light or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober. God destined us not for his retribution, but to win salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, awake or asleep, we should live united with him.***

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***33rd Week of Ordinary Time***

***The Kingdom, the power, the Glory… and you. Now.***

***Towards the end of Chapter 13, Jesus’ talk of cosmic events (sun darkening and moon losing its brightness) must have confused and deeply disturbed those listening, especially as he has just been talking about a time of huge distress, (wars, persecution, an abomination being set up in the Temple), the need for his followers to be ready to flee, and to ignore false prophets and people claiming to be Christ. He also tells them not to be alarmed! All of these terrible earthly events are not the end but a start, the ‘beginning of the birth-pangs’, (Mark 13:8).***

***What, then, is starting ‘after the time of distress’ (13:24)? The cosmic events and the Son of Man coming from heaven in great power and glory, with angels gathering the chosen from all over, seem to suggest it is the end of the world and Judgement Day, but ‘birth-pangs’ would then surely be ‘death rattle’, and the period of teaching and preparing the disciples to be his workers in the vineyard in recent chapters, as well as his instructions to go out into the world after his Resurrection, all point to these birth-pangs being part of God’s plans for his people.***

***The visions revealed to the prophet Daniel tell of the rise and fall of warring nations, and in Daniel 12, the ‘time of great distress’, refers to the reign of the immensely powerful and cruel Antiochus Epiphanes, a despot who has been particularly vicious towards the Jewish people, including installing abominations in the Temple. He has grown more and more powerful to the point where he considers himself greater than the gods. The appearance of the angel Michael at this point shows that this is far more than a history of warring empires: it shows that God is constantly working in human history and that these events will pave the way for the decisive intervention which will establish his reign on earth, a reign which will be over all nations.***

***When Jesus says, ‘You will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power’, he is quoting Daniel 7. In doing so, he is saying that the events which are about to unfold, (his crucifixion and resurrection) are this decisive moment in our history. The Gospel writers pick this up when they describe the sun darkening and the veil of the Temple being torn at the point of Jesus’ death.***

***The early Christians must have felt they were well and truly living through the times of great distress with the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, and the terrible persecution they were living through. Jesus’ Parable of the Fig Tree would have been hard to take, as Jesus was saying that his disciples must not see the troubles they are living through as failure, as the plan ‘gone wrong’, but as the birth pangs, a stage of growth. They would feel that God’s plans must surely have been thwarted had been defeated or had left the scene, but they were to continue the work of Jesus in building the Kingdom he had established, confident that somehow, God would prevail and the Kingdom would grow.***

***It would be easy to feel we are living in the time of great distress with the increasing violence and suffering in our world. Like the early Christians, we might feel God’s plans are being thwarted by forces opposed to Him. But we profess a belief in the resurrection as victory – Jesus didn’t ‘fail’: the Kingdom has arrived, Jesus is present in our divided and suffering wold. We have work to do, carrying on the work of Jesus, with him present, redeeming and sanctifying our broken world.* Martin Bennett**

**Monday (Fr. Richard Rohr)**

Christ, the “image of the unseen God” is not a problem -solving Christ, not a denominational or cultural Christ, not a Christ domesticated by the churches. This Christ names in his life and person what *matters*, what *Iasts and finally what is.* He reveals the redemptive pattern of what we call the life and death of things and holds the meaning and value of our lives *outside of ourselves.* Because we no longer worship such a Christ, we are condemned to worship smaller stories. We try to replace him with colourised myths, strong worldly leaders, but none of them are big enough or real enough to give universal order and meaning.

**Scripture (Hebrews 10:32-36 )**

***Remember the great challenges of the sufferings that you had to meet after you received the light, in the earlier days; sometimes by being yourselves publicly being exposed to humiliations and violence, and sometimes as associates of others who were treated in the same way. For you not only shared in the sufferings of those who were in prison, but you accepted with joy being stripped of your belongings, knowing that you owned something that was better and more lasting. Do not lose your fearlessness now, then, since the reward is so great. You will need perseverance if you are to do God’s will and gain what he has promised.***

**Tuesday (Oscar Romero)**

History will not fail; God sustains it. That is why I say that insofar as historical projects attempt to reflect the eternal plan of God, to that extent they reflect the kingdom of God. The great task of Christians must be to absorb the spirit of God’s kingdom and, with souls filled with the kingdom of God, to work on the projects of history. It’s fine to be part of any group, as long as you are a Christian who carries the reflection of the kingdom of God and tries to establish it where you are working. My dear Christians, I have always told you that the true liberators of our people must come from the people of God.

**Scripture (Psalm 1:1-5)**

***How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread, nor a seat in company with cynics, but who delights in the law of the Lord and murmurs his law day and night. Such a one is like a tree planted near streams; it bears fruit in season and its leaves never wither, and every project succeeds. How different the wicked, how wicked. Just like chaff blown in the wind the wicked will not stand firm at the Judgement, nor sinners at the gathering of the upright.***

**Wednesday (St. Francis de Sales)**

Let us, then, consider the inconstancy and uncertainty of success both in temporal and spiritual things, so that in the event of sudden circumstances, which from being quite new and unforeseen, might give a shock to our minds, we may not lose courage, nor suffer ourselves to be carried away by unevenness of temper amid the unevenness of things that happen to us. Rather, submitting to the guidance of the reason that God has implanted in us, and to his Providence, let us remain, firm constant and unchangeable in the resolution we have made to serve God steadfastly, boldly, and fervently.

**Scripture (Psalm 16:5-11)**

***O Lord, it is you who are my portion and my cup; it is you yourself who are my prize. I keep the Lord ever in my sight: since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm. And so my heart rejoices and is glad; even my body shall rest in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor let your beloved know decay. You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence, at your right hand happiness for ever.***

**Thursday (C.S.Lewis)**

When the author walks on to the stage, the play is over. God is going to invade alright: but what is the good of saying you are on his side when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and you have no choice anyway? This time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. This will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen. Now, today, is our chance to choose the right side.

**Scripture (Mark13:24-27, 32)**

***But in those days, after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the******moon will not give its light, the stars will come falling out of the sky and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send the angels to gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of the sky. But as for the day or the hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father.***