

## The Meditation

### The Second Sunday After Epiphany -A.D. 2016



**The Baptism of Christ**  
*Paolo Veronese (1528-1588)*  
*Italian Renaissance painter*

## Collect for the Second Sunday after Epiphany

**O** Almighty and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth;  
*Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and grant us thy peace all the days of our life;  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### ALL OUR ABILITY COMES FROM GOD

A person is truly humble when one admits their entire dependence on God, and abandons themselves in full trust to His Providence, and will always be under the influence of God's grace. St. Paul writes: *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament".* (II Corinthians; Ch. 3, Vss. 5 & 6.)

It should strike us; the way this great doctor of the gentiles speaks in his epistles of his own incapacity, and his natural weaknesses and misery. His own humble self-knowledge leads him to a humble self-contempt. He says of himself: *"And last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."* (I Cor.; Ch. 15, Vs. 8) and in another translation: *"the last child, that comes to birth unexpectedly"*. St. Paul adds: *"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."* (I Cor. Ch. 15, Vs. 9) St. Paul considers himself a "pitiable creature": *"for we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."* (Romans; Ch. 7: Vss. 14-25.).

This passage, may be difficult and/or confusing to follow, although we can clearly glean from it that St. Paul is profoundly convinced that he can do nothing good, except by the mercy of Him that has answered his prayer for deliverance. God tells Paul; *"My grace is sufficient for thee."* **Such is true humility** which makes the soul see itself in the light of God's infinite perfection and realize its own infirmity and unworthiness.

### 3.



*St. Angela of Foligno* (1248-1309), was an Italian third-order Franciscan mystic. She lived a very austere life of prayer and mortification and was favored with many visions. Due to the great respect these visions, as well as her writings engendered, she is known in the Church as the “Mistress of Theologians.” She was shown two great abysses in one such vision. One, *the abyss of divine being*: its supreme beauty, its infinite wisdom, its boundless power; and at the same time, she was shown *the abyss of human nothingness*, darkness, weakness, and sin.

St. Francis had this vision as well, and prayed: “*Who art thou, Lord, and who am I? You are my God and my all. I am a miserable sinner, a mere worm of the earth, ‘an unprofitable servant’.*”

“Francis bid his brothers to humble themselves in all things, never boasting, outwardly or inwardly, of the good they may have done in word or deed, by any work God has deigned to do in them or by them. They must be convinced that nothing but faults and sins can come from them. Very wise words of direction from the gentlest of saints for us to heed as well!

All the Saints are sure that they may attribute nothing to themselves; that all is an effect of God’s power and grace. They mistrust themselves, knowing all too well their own powerlessness, but join with St. Paul in saying: “*All our ability comes from God.*”

True humility mistrusts itself, but its confidence in God is without limits. Humility saves us from our self-conceit, from an exaggerated opinion of our natural abilities and powers, and makes us realize the futility of purely human activities. Humility despairs of self, but it is not crushed by that despair, since *all hopes are set on the Source from which all good comes* and outside of which none can exist. The humble soul can’t build on its own merits, but on the infinite goodness of God and the infinite merits of Christ.

Blessed Mary in her *Magnificat*, sings: “*For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden, For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath magnified me*”; not because of the greatness of her glory, but because of her lowliness. The reason for her blessedness does not lie in the gift she has received, but in the emptiness which enabled her to receive it. She says simply that her triumph is in proportion to her humility. Mary does the very same thing that St. Paul did: “*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*” (*II Cor.; Ch. 12, Vs.9*).

Here’s a question to ponder: Is it not mankind’s misery that provokes God’s mercy? “*Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither*” (in another translation: ‘*simple hearts draw near to me*’); says the Lord in Proverbs Chapter 9, verse 4. That’s why a man like St. Paul can say with certain truth: “*Therefore I can take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in*

#### 4.

*persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake : for when I am weak, then I am strong.” (II Cor. Ch. 12, Vs. 10). All good is the fruit of God's grace: “My grace is sufficient for thee” (II Cor. Ch. 12, Vs. 9) , “Our sufficiency is of God”( II Cor. Ch. 3, Vs.5) and “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phill.; Ch. 4, Vs. 13).*

It might be very good for us to include an acknowledgement to Almighty God in our daily prayers, that we know that we are weak, small, and in need of help, and that we can achieve nothing that is good except by the help of His grace. We will do our best to give to Him all that is good including the sincere admission that it all belongs to Him and He alone. Our hearts must be firmly convinced that without God's help we can do nothing. Let us throw ourselves, in our spiritual poverty, into His loving and almighty arms, in the certain hope that He will clothe, feed, protect, lead, and most importantly...sanctify us.

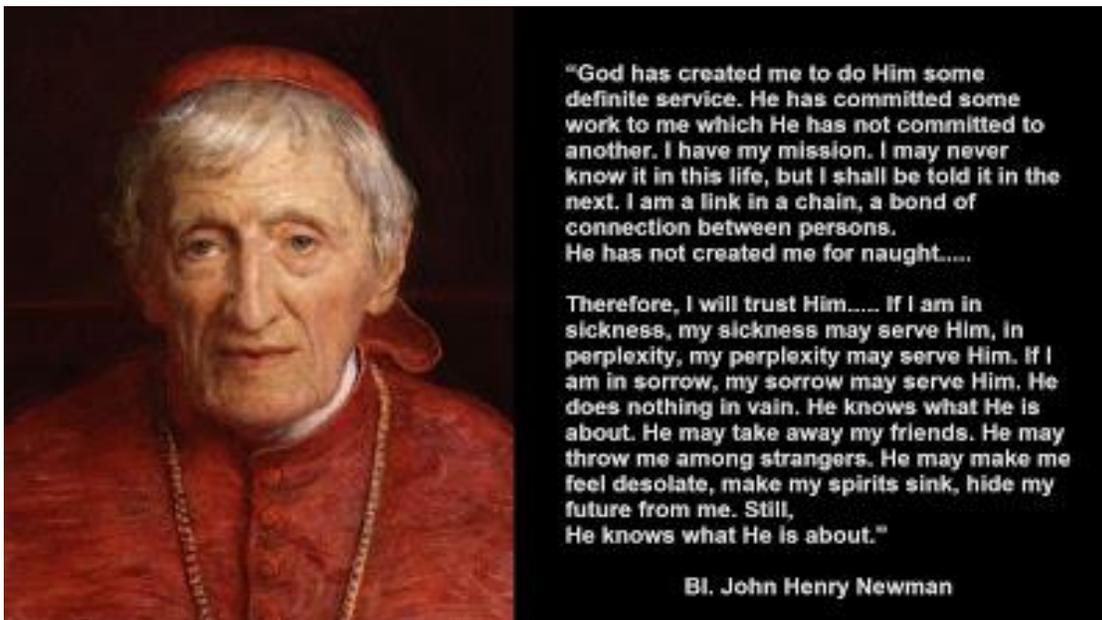
This can easily be done in the offering of a simple prayer that contemplative religious pray each day immediately upon rising from sleep:

I praise my God this day,  
I give thanks to God for this day  
I ask God's help this day.

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January 18<sup>th</sup> - January 25<sup>th</sup>

## The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 2016



## 5.

**The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** began in 1908 as **The Octave of Christian Unity** and focused on prayer for church unity. The dates of the week were proposed by Fr. Paul Wattson, co-founder of the Society of the Atonement (Graymoor Franciscan Friars). He conceived of a week beginning on the *Feast of the Confession of St. Peter*, the Anglican variant of the ancient *Feast of the Chair of St. Peter*, on January 18<sup>th</sup>, and concluding with the *Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul* on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

Pope Pius X gave official recognition to this concept, and Benedict XV “encouraged its observance throughout the entire Roman Catholic Church.” For a while, the observance was renamed the “*Chair of Unity Octave*” by Fr. Wattson, in order to emphasize the relationship between Christian unity and the Holy See (the papacy). The initial observances were mainly between Anglican and Roman Catholics, but groups of other Christian Churches began to also take part.

Protestant leaders in the mid-1920’s also proposed an annual octave of prayer for unity amongst Christians, leading up to Pentecost Sunday (the traditional commemoration of the establishment of the Church).

Abbe (Father) Paul Couturier of Lyons, France, who has been called “the father of spiritual ecumenism”, had a slightly different approach than that of Father Wattson (Wattson eventually converting to the Roman Catholic Church in 1909, from the Episcopal Church along with his confreres at Graymoor, the first Anglican religious order to do so since the English Reformation). Father Couturier advocated prayer “*for the unity of the Church as Christ wills it, and in accordance with the means he wills*” thereby enabling other Christians with differing views of the Petrine ministry to join in prayer. In 1935, he proposed re-naming the observance the “**Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**,” a proposal officially accepted by the Catholic Church in 1966. Fr. Couturier’s message and writings on this subject deeply influenced a young Sardinian Cistercian nun, Blessed Maria Gabriella of Grottaferrata Abbey, a Trappistine monastery outside Rome. Sr. Maria Gabriella offered herself and her vocation as a victim for Christian Unity, and for the rest of her short life, lived in prayer, sacrificial devotion, and deep mortification for this unity. This total commitment led to Sr. Maria Gabriella to establishing a deep spiritual relationship and correspondence with the Anglo-Catholic Benedictine Abbey of Nashdom, in Buckinghamshire, England. The Benedictines at Nashdom instituted regular prayer for unity every Thursday, when a special “unity candle” was lit and burned all day in the Abbey church. So, we can see that this special week now honored and observed in the Universal Church shares its roots with the Anglo-Catholic movement of which this Priory is also a part.



**Blessed Maria Gabriella Sagheddu (1914-1939)**  
[Trappistine Nun dedicated to Christian Unity](#)

## 6.

One of the basic pinions on which Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory was established on is that of Christian unity. We pray for the one-day re-union of all separated Christians, but our work in this cause has led us to focus primarily on reunion with the Holy See in Rome. Perhaps the main reason for this is the common observance of the Holy Rule of St. Benedict that all Benedictines adhere to. It is from that common point that our community has cultivated wonderful friendships with Roman Catholic contemplative communities of Benedictines, Cistercians, and those of the ancient and venerable Maronite Church. We all share in the great sadness of separation, but pray fervently when at a time known only to Almighty God, we will all come together at the Lord's Holy Altar as one.

The recent establishment of the *Anglican/Roman Catholic Ordinariate* under the auspices of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI shows that there is action as well as prayer going on. *The Traditional Anglican Communion* (the TAC) the jurisdiction we are affiliated to, was one of the main players in this undertaking. In the early days, our former archbishop John Hepworth engaged in dialogue with the then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI). When the *Ordinariate* was officially given sanction, many Anglicans sought entry, but not all. It is still a work in progress, and it's important to understand a work that has never been attempted in this form before, so a big "learning curve" is involved and patience accorded. This shouldn't be considered as a failure, *but an excellent first start*. Bishops remaining within *the Continuum* (as the Continuing Church Movement is called) are currently working towards interior unity among the many continuing jurisdictions that sprang out of the Episcopal and Anglican Churches. This certainly will take time, as sadly egos and opinions are involved, but this merits our prayers, for every Christian knows that "*nothing is impossible with God*" and so it is with unity as well. A united *Continuum* meeting with the Holy See would certainly be an accomplishment via workings of the Holy Ghost and not men alone. As Anglicans share such a close relationship with Rome in history and theology, a coming-together of the two would no doubt in time spread to other Christian denominations like waves in a pond created by a stone that has been dropped into it.

It all comes down, dear friends *to prayer*, and that's something everyone can do to be a part of a solution, perhaps not as we may want to see it, but as Christ does. "*Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*"

*"To His mercy I entrust my frailty."*

*"The Lord put me in this path, He will remember to sustain me in battle."*

*"In simplicity of heart I gladly offer everything, O Lord."*

*-Sr. Maria Gabriella, O.C.O.*

## Priory Kalendar

For the week of January 17<sup>th</sup> to January 24<sup>th</sup> - A.D. 2016  
In Epiphany-tide

**Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup> . . . The Second Sunday After Epiphany... comm St. Anthony: Ab. 4<sup>th</sup> cent.**  
**Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup> . . . . . Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins today.**  
**Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup> . . . St. Wulfstan (Ulfstan); B. & C. O.S.B. - 11<sup>th</sup> cent. England.**  
**Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> . . Sts. Fabian ( Po.) & Sebastian; Myrs. 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> cent. Rome**  
**Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup> . . . St. Agnes; V & Myr. 4<sup>th</sup> cent. Rome**  
**Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> . . . . St. Vincent: Dcn. & Myr. 4<sup>th</sup> cent. Spain**  
**Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> . . . Saturday of our Lady: Mass and Offices observed. Note 1**  
**Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup> . . . . Septuagesima . . . Pre-Lenten Season Begins.**

**NOTE 1: January 23<sup>rd</sup> :** At the end of Vespers today: we bid farewell to the “Alleluia” which will not be chanted again until Easter eve. This observance is of great antiquity and tradition. At the conclusion of the Office of Vespers the verse is intoned: “Let us Bless the Lord”, and the response “Thanks be to God” is given, followed by a triple “Alleluia”... the office is concluded and all depart the choir in silence.

It is now the Pre-Lenten period of **Septuagesima-tide**.

## CALENDAR KEY

Ab. = Abbot, Abs. = Abbess, Abp. = Archbishop, Anc. = Anchorite, Ancs. = anchoress, Ap. = Apostle, Bl. = Blessed, Br. = Brother, Bp. = Bishop, Card. = Cardinal, C. or Conf. = Confessor, Comm. = Commemoration, Dcn. = Deacon, Doct. = Doctor of the Church, Ev. = Evangelist, H. = Hermit, LBr. = Laybrother, LSr. = Laysister, K. = King, Mat. = Matron, M. = Monk, **M.M. = Month's Mind ( 30 day requiem for the recently departed )**, Myr. = Martyr, N. = Nun, Obl. = Oblate, P. = Priest, P. or Po. = Pope, Pr. = Prior, Prs. = Prioress, R. = Recluse, **RM = Requiem Mortorum, ( monthly requiem of the departed )**, Q. = Queen, Ven. = Venerable, Vir. = Virgin, W. = Widow.

**FASTING Key:** ..... A = Abstinence, F = Fast, F & A = Fast and Abstinence\_

**RELIGIOUS ORDERS:** C.O. = Congregation of the Oratory –Oratorians, C.P = Congregation of the Passion – Passionists, C.S.J. = Congregation of the Society of Jesus – Jesuits, Er. Cam. = Camaldolese Hermits, F.P.O. = Franciscans of the Primitive Observance, O. Car. = Carmelite Order, O. Cart. = Carthusian Order, O.C.D. = Order of Discalced Friars = Carmelites, O.F.A. = Augustinian Order, O.F.M. = Order of Friars Minor – Franciscans, O.F.M. Cap. = Capuchins, O.P. = Order of Preachers = Dominicans (Blackfriars), O. Praem. = Order of Canons Regular – Norbertines ( White Monks), OS.B. = Order of St. Benedict – Benedictines, O.S.U = Ursulines, O.C.O. = Order of the Cistercian Observance – Trappists, O.C.S.O. = Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance = Trappists.

8.



“To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often”  
Blessed John Henry Newman

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## Animal News from the Priory



“While we have time, let us do good unto all men” -Galatians; Ch. 6, Vs. 10

## BIRDS IN THE BARN



*Just as in any monastery, the barn has a night entrance for the birds to come and go. Can you find it?  
Hint: It's near where Reilley is standing!*

9.

Many years ago we were faced with a conundrum regarding birds coming and going from our barn. We have always welcomed birds in the barn but our concern, and the greatest puzzle came during the winter months. There were many times during inclement weather, that the barn doors had to be closed earlier than sundown to keep the much needed body heat in, and the winter air out. There were times during this period when Sister would see all the birds sitting just outside the barn in the bushes. She would invite them in and when they declined she closed the doors. The next morning, when the doors were opened again, one bird after the other, like little fighter jets, swooped out of the barn where they had apparently spent a warm and peaceful night. This was completely baffling, as the only hole in the barn was about an inch square gap between a window frame and the piece of glass with a cast iron wind chime just to the side of it for perching. This went on for a time until Sister decided to watch what went on at dusk. She sat in the truck and watched the front of the barn until, all at once, the first little bird flew to the wind chime, then the window and easily squeezed inside. He was followed by another, then another, and another until everyone was inside. The next day she told Father what she had discovered. He took a hole saw to the barn and sawed a larger hole into the barn wall, much closer to the wind chime and added a wooden perch, so that now birds, big and small, can come and go at will through their very own night entrance.

“All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The Lord, God, made them all...”

*Sr. Mary-Francis, O.S.B.*

UT UNUM SINT



I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one (Lat. ut unum sint), just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17.20-2

THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE

P A X

