



Virtue of Serenity

Serenity is the harmonisation of several virtues. It blends trust in God (faith and hope), wisdom, prudence, moderation and courage. Serenity is the grateful sense

of security one feels in God, convinced that our lives are in God's hands. It puts things in perspective, so that all sufferings and difficulties are seen against the background of God's loving kindness. St Paul tells the Romans that "nothing can come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ" (8:38-39). The prophet Habakkuk prays: "For even though the fig does not blossom, nor fruit grow on the vine; even though the olive crop fail ... [the list of disasters goes on!] ... yet I will rejoice in the Lord and trust in God my saviour." (3:17-18)

A German mystic of the 14th Century, Henry Suso, often prayed for the virtue of serenity. God's answer came to him in the form of a lesson from life. He had been falsely accused of a crime and sent to a tower prison. One day looking outside he saw a little dog playing with a rag, tossing it into the air, catching it, tearing at it and shaking it around. Watching this, his heart grew warm and he prayed: "If you are the one, Lord, who is playing with me as that dog is playing with that rag, then just keep on playing!" From that point on he was filled with a serenity that never left him.

We pray for many things, usually personal favours or favours for others. Of course, we can get caught out for being selfish in the process.

After an intense drought that has caused major water shortage, you still find people praying that it won't rain on their daughter's wedding day. Jesus teaches that truly humble

prayer seeks to be in conformity with God's will. This is a sign of the virtue of serenity at work. It enables a person to be anchored in God's will at all times – even on wedding days – where they know they are perfectly secure. They have a sense of proportion, seeing things in proper perspective, against the bigger picture. Let's watch this at work as an Easter virtue.

Mary Magdalene was the first of the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord. She did not know that at first, until she heard him utter her name, "Mary." Overcome with joy she rushed to him, but he gently told her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father." Jesus is enabling Mary Magdalene to let go of her previous earth-bound understanding of him in order to see him in the greater truth of his Ascension to the right hand of the Father. By recognising the Risen Mystery of Christ, through which she now knows that he is never far from her, Mary is left with a profound sense of serenity. Notice how, in Mary Magdalene, serenity blends together so many other virtues: faith, trust, joy, courage, moderation, wisdom, and most of all, her love of Jesus. Her pain at watching Jesus suffer, and her grief at his death, are all now seen in the light of the Resurrection – God's final victory over evil.



A picture of Blessed Henry Suso OP, 14th C mystic



SUNDAY MASS



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

Proclaim a joyful sound and let it be heard; proclaim to the ends of the earth: the Lord has freed his people, alleluia.

FIRST READING: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 66.

RESPONSE:

Cry out with joy to God, all the earth.

1. Cry out with joy to God, all the earth;
O sing to the glory of his name.
O render him glorious praise.
Say to God, 'How awesome your deeds!' R
2. 'Before you all the earth shall bow down,
shall sing to you, sing to your name!'
Come and see the works of God;
awesome his deeds among the children of men. R
3. He turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river on foot.
Let our joy, then, be in him;
he rules forever by his might. R
4. Come and hear, all who fear God;
I will tell what he did for my soul.
Blest be God, who did not reject my prayer,
nor withhold from me his merciful love. R

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 3:15-18.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! If a man loves me, he will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: John 14:15-21.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

If you love me, keep my commandments, says the Lord, and I will ask the Father and he will send you another Paraclete, to abide with you for ever, alleluia.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 18 May (St John I, PM)

Acts 16:11-15; Psalm 149; John 15:26-16:4

Throughout history, people have killed each other in the name of God. Jesus says that they do this because "they have not known either the Father or me". What is my own attitude towards different religions?

Tue 19 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 16:22-34; Psalm 138; John 16:5-11

Today's readings teach us that there is no one beyond God's mercy. There is no crime so grave that it places us beyond God's love. Criminal and executioner alike are rescued and transformed by God's mercy.

Wed 20 May (St Bernadine of Siena, Pr)

Acts 17:15,22-18:1; Psalm 148; John 16:12-15

When terrible things happen to us we don't need people to deflect our suffering with optimistic words. We need them to sit with us in the unbearable, excruciating stew of our pain. That's what Jesus would do.

Thu 21 May (Ss Christopher Magallanes, Pr & companions, Ms)

Acts 18:1-8; Psalm 98; John 16:16-20

Do we let the Lord guide our speech? Do we speak and then wish we had been silent? Or do we stay silent and then wish we had spoken?

Fri 22 May (St Rita of Cascia, R)

Act 18:9-18; Psalm 47; John 16:20-23

In order to combat our inner burdens it is helpful to remember that these adversities will not last forever. We tend to discover more peace and joy in our lives when we strive to possess an optimistic attitude.

Sat 23 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 18:23-28; Psalm 47; John 16:23-28

Think about the joy you feel when your friends show you that you have worth, that you are accepted and loved. But what a joy it is to know that we receive this same gift from our God every day.

Sun 24 May ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47; Matthew 28:16-20

St Paul reminds us that we all belong, that there is a place for each of us in the reign of God. God invites each of us to put our talents into service to build up the body of Christ in our time and place.

(KEY: **SOLEMNITY**: FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial) P=Pope; M=Martyr; Pr=Priest; R=Religious)