

NT-JN28

05.21.17

A Commentary on the Gospel of John by St. John Chrysostom ¹

If you love me, said Christ, *keep my commandments*. I have commanded you to love one another and to treat one another as I have treated you. To love me is to obey these commands, to submit to me your beloved. *And I will ask the father, and he will give you another Counselor*. This promise shows once again Christ's consideration. Because his disciples did not yet know who he was, it was likely that they would greatly miss his companionship, his teaching, his actual physical presence, and be completely disconsolate when he had gone. Therefore he said: *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor*, meaning another like himself.

They received the Spirit after Christ had purified them by his sacrifice. The Spirit did not come down on them while Christ was still with them, because this sacrifice had not yet been offered. But when sin had been blotted out and the disciples, sent out to face danger, were preparing themselves for the battle, they needed the Holy Spirit's coming to encourage them. If you ask why the Spirit did not come immediately after the resurrection, this was in order to increase their gratitude for receiving him by increasing their desire. They were troubled by nothing as long as Christ was with them, but when his departure had left them desolate and very much afraid, they would be most eager to receive the Spirit.

He will remain with you, Christ said, meaning his presence with you will not be ended by death. But since there was a danger that hearing of a Counselor might lead them to expect another incarnation and to think they would be able to see the Holy Spirit, he corrected this idea saying: *The world cannot receive him because it does not see him*. For he will not be with you in the same way as I am, but will dwell in your very souls, *He will be in you*.

Christ called him the Spirit of truth because the Spirit would help them to understand the types of the old law. By *He will be with you* he meant, *He will be with you as I am with you*, but he also hinted at the difference between them, namely, that the Spirit would not suffer as he had done, nor would he ever depart.

The world cannot receive him because it does not see him. Does this imply that the Spirit is visible? By no means; Christ is speaking here of knowledge, for he adds: *or know him*. Sight being the sense by which we perceive things most distinctly, he habitually used this sense to signify knowledge. By *the world* he means hear the wicked, thus giving his disciples the consolation of receiving a

special gift. He said that the Spirit was another like himself, that he would not leave them, that he would come to them just as he himself had come, and that he would remain in them. Yet even this did not drive away their sadness, for they still wanted Christ himself and his companionship. So to satisfy them he said: *I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you.* Do not be afraid, for when I promised to send you another counselor I did not mean that I was going to abandon you for ever, nor by saying that he would remain with you did I mean that I would not see you again. Of course I also will come to you; *I will not leave you orphans.*

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – NY – 1992 – pg 66

TM-EST81

05/22/17

A sermon on Easter by St Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

At the time when the sons of Israel were leaving Egypt, it was prescribed in the Law that a lamb was to be slaughtered and eaten. This was called the paschal feast. It was also prescribed that for seven days they should eat unleavened bread – that is, bread without leavening. And this was called the feast of the unleavened bread, and not only the feast of the unleavened bread, but also the pasch. The Evangelist brings this out when he says: *The festival of unleavened bread, called the pasch, was approaching.* The first feast, when they killed the lamb, was called only the pasch; this latter was called both the pasch and the feast of unleavened bread. It seems to me then that this first feast symbolizes the Lord's passion and the latter his resurrection. That the first symbolizes the Lord's passion is sufficiently well known. In it the true lamb was slain and by his blood we have all been saved from the hand of Pharaoh – in the spiritual sense, the devil. The feast is called the pasch – that is, the passing over – because Christ in his passion passed over from this world. As the Evangelist says: *Before the day of paschal feast Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father.*

Yet let us take a look at how the other feast symbolizes the Lord's resurrection. And first of all let us reflect on how profoundly that divine majesty humbled himself and to what depths he descended for us. He who was the Creator, made himself a creature. He who was Lord, made himself a servant. He who was rich, made himself poor. He who was great, made himself little. And *the Word was made flesh.* He was bread and he fed the angels. But he did not feed us. And so we were wretched, because a rational creature is always wretched if she is not fed this bread.

We were, however, so weak that in no way could we taste that bread in all its purity. We had within us a corrosive leaven that robbed us of our pristine strength. We had become so unlike that pure and untainted bread that we could not taste it at all. This leavening which we had within us was twofold. We had within us the leavening of mortality and we had within us the leavening of iniquity.

You see now how far removed we were from that bread in which there is neither mortality nor iniquity. How were we to ascend to it? How were we to taste it? What things are so contrary to one another as mortality and immortality, iniquity and justice?

We are mortals and sinners; he is immortal and just. How were we to come together? He saw this, he who is caring and merciful saw this. Because we could not ascend to him, he came down to us. He took upon himself one part of our leavening and so adapted himself to our weakness. He did not take to himself the whole leaven that was in us, but a certain part of it. If he had taken on the whole of it he would be as we are and he would not be able to help us. If he had taken none of it he would be so distant from us that we would not be able in any way to approach him. And so we would remain forever in our wretchedness. We have said that there was a twofold leavening in us: mortality and iniquity. The one he took on and by it was made like us. The other he avoided so that he could profit us.

The leavening of our mortality therefore he accepted, and abode in the purity of his justice, so that he would be the sort of being who could come down to us and yet remain the sort of being to whom we ought to ascend. You see now, brothers, how that pure bread is leavened for our sakes. To this leavening of mortality belongs hunger, thirst, sorrow, misery. All of this Our Lord took on himself. He chose to take on this leavening, but he was not obliged to remain in ferment. First he showed this leavening in himself through a wondrous compassion and then he purged himself of this leaven through a wondrous charity. He purged himself of this leavening in such a way as to show his wonderful charity for us. He knew that we had not only leavening which was extremely bad, but also a leavening which was far worse and death-dealing, which prevented us from uniting ourselves to this bread which is truly pure and untainted. Therefore he willed to purge himself from the leavening of mortality in the way in which we have to purge ourselves from the leavening of iniquity.

We ought to know that our iniquity is the cause of our mortality. And therefore when we are fully purged of iniquity we will doubtless also be purged of mortality. We ought meanwhile to realize that our iniquity is twofold. It comes from the nature in which we were born and from the evil which we later brought to it. From both of these the Lord purges us. He offered for us a sacrifice – his own blood – and through this sacrifice we are purged. And therefore what we suffer now from the corruption of nature is no longer iniquity but infirmity. From the corruption of our nature come the impulses of concupiscence which we suffer unwillingly. From this come the impulses of lust, anger, pride, ambition. But if we do not consent to them, God does not impute them to us, because that pure sacrifice was offered to offset the corruption of our nature. Note, then, by the workings of his compassion in us in baptism we are purged of all sins, both those which came from nature and those which we added voluntarily.

But have we kept ourselves in that untainted state? What then shall we do? He has taught us how we are to be cleansed. In the same way as he was purged of the leavening of

mortality we ought to be purged from the leavening of iniquity. Doubtless he could somehow have purged himself of mortality without suffering pain. But since we cannot be purged of our iniquity except by temporal pains, he willed to provide an example for us.

[1](#)Aelred of Rievaulx – The Liturgical Sermons – Advent – All Saints – Cistercian Publications – Kalamazoo - 2001 – pg 194

TM-EST83

05/23/17

A Continuation of the Easter Sermon by Bl Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

Remember now that we said that our Lord Jesus Christ is bread. Think of him before the passion. Notice that he was, as it were, bread with leavening in it. He was hungry and thirsty, he wept, he slept, he felt tired. All these things belong not to the leavening of iniquity but to the leavening of infirmity and mortality. All of them are various kinds of medicine that were characteristic of our infirmity. All of them, because they were characteristic of us in that he did not possess them himself, he took them on for us. But in us they are all mixed with sin. For our hunger and thirst are usually accompanied by evil obsessions, our sadness by complaining and despair or bitterness, our sleep by looseness, and our lethargy and laziness by listlessness. But our Lord untangled them and separated them. He rejected the sin and took on the infirmity. For a short time he hid what was his own and took upon himself what was ours. That is why Isaiah said: *That he may accomplish his work, his alien work; that he may accomplish his work, his work was foreign to him.*

That he may accomplish his work. What work? Many are the works of the Lord, but here he is speaking of a particular work which belongs especially to him. The angels, the archangels, and all the powers of heaven are his work. *Heaven, earth, the sea and all they contain* are his work. But we know how he accomplished these works; he did not undertake alien works to accomplish them. *He spoke and they were made.* What then is this work of his that is so special, so singular, so wonderful, so unheard of? Let us listen to what Scripture says: *His mercies are above all his works.* Therefore the work of his mercy is especially his work. It is his own work, his proper work, in which there appears to the utmost his goodness, his charity and his kindness.

His work is in keeping with his name. What name? You know his name. What is the sound, the savor, the fragrance of his name? Oil. *Your name is oil poured out.* Why oil? Because his name savors of charity, it savors of mercy. How does that dear name of Jesus sound? It sounds our salvation, for he is my God and my Jesus – that is, my Savior, my well-being, and therefore my mercy. He accomplished the work of his wisdom when he created the world. But he had not yet accomplished the work of his mercy. For the work of his mercy corresponds to those who are wretched. Therefore the work of his mercy is properly said to be his work.

But how would he accomplish this work if not by saving the wretched? Therefore the work of our salvation is the work of his mercy – that is, the work that is properly *his* work. What is the property of our Savior – that is, Jesus – if not to save? He who is

wisdom willed to be, as it were, foolish. He who was strong willed to be infirm. That is why the apostle says: *The folly of God is wiser than the wisdom of mortals and the infirmity of God stronger than human strength.* That he may accomplish his work, his alien work, bread hungers, the fountain thirsts, strength grows tired and life dies.

But how does he accomplish his own work by means of this alien work? It is his hunger that feeds us, his thirst that inebriates us, his weariness that refreshes us, his death that brings us life. Our spiritual repletion, our spiritual inebriation, our spiritual refreshment, our spiritual vivifying is all the work of his mercy. By means of this alien work he accomplishes everything. Wisdom accomplishes this by means of folly, as the apostle says: *Because the world did not know God, it pleased God that through the folly of preaching those who believed were saved.* Therefore, as we said, wisdom accomplishes this its work by means of folly, strength accomplishes it by means of weakness, bread accomplishes it by means of hunger, might accomplishes it by means of weariness, life accomplishes it by means of death.

That he might accomplish the work of his mercy, he accepted the leaven of our mortality, something clearly foreign to the purity of his divinity. At length the time came when he willed to rid himself of this leavening. He applied fire – that is, his passion. In his passion all that leavening was destroyed, all corruption and all mortality were destroyed, and today he rose from the earth, unleavened bread, pure bread. Before his passion that flesh was mortal, it could be hungry, it could be thirsty, it could grieve; it could die. But after the passion it rose immortal, impassible and incorruptible.

Well, brothers, let us celebrate the feast of the unleavened bread. Let us eat of this bread without leaven. Our bread is the body of our Lord. It is without leavening because, as the apostle says: *Christ, once raised from the dead, is never to die again.* If we would eat this bread which is without leavening, we too must be free of leavening as the apostle commands. This leavening is sin. Because through our own negligence, we have contaminated ourselves after being purified, let us flee again to Christ's blood; that is, let us imitate his passion so that we may be able to share his resurrection here in soul and on the day of judgment in both body and soul. Because this cannot be brought about by our own efforts let us implore his mercy that he himself may deign to act in us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. [1](#)Aelred of Rievaulx -- The Liturgical Sermons – Cistercian Fathers Series #58 – Kalamazoo, MI – 2001 -pg 194

TM-EST84

05.24.17

From the Jerusalem Catecheses ¹

When you were baptized into Christ and clothed yourselves in him, you were transformed into the likeness of the Son of God. Having destined us to be his children by adoption, God gave us a likeness to Christ in his glory, and living as you do in communion with Christ, you yourselves are rightly called “Christs” or anointed ones. When he said: *Do not touch my anointed ones*, God was speaking of you.

You became “Christs” when you received the sign of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, everything took place in you by means of images, because you yourselves are images of Christ. Christ bathed in the river Jordan, imparting to its waters the fragrance of his divinity, and when he came up from them the Holy Spirit descended upon him, like resting upon like. So you also, after coming up from the sacred waters of baptism, were anointed with chrism, which signifies the Holy spirit, by whom Christ was anointed and of whom the blessed Isaiah prophesied in the name of the Lord: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor.*

Christ's anointing was not by human hands, nor was it with ordinary oil. On the contrary, having destined him to be the Savior of the whole world, the father himself anointed him with the Holy Spirit. The words of Peter bear witness to this: *Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit.* And David the prophet proclaimed: *Your throne, O God, shall endure forever; your royal scepter*

is a scepter of justice. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above all your fellows.

The oil of gladness with which Christ was anointed was a spiritual oil; it was in fact the Holy Spirit Himself, who is called *the oil of gladness* because he is the source of spiritual joy. But you also have been anointed with oil, and by this anointing you have entered into fellowship with Christ and have received a share in his life. Beware of thinking of this charism as merely ordinary oil. As the eucharistic bread after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer ordinary bread but the body of Christ, so also the oil after the invocation is no longer plain ordinary oil but Christ's gift which by the presence of his divinity becomes the instrument through which you receive the Holy Spirit. While symbolically, on your foreheads and organs of sense, your bodies are anointed with this oil that we see, your souls are sanctified by thye holy and life-giving Spirit.

05SN2502

05/25/17

A Reading About the Descent of the Holy Spirit, by The Venerable Bede.!

In order to proclaim to the world the glory of the indivisible Trinity, the Holy Spirit descended appropriately at the third hour. And since it was said "They were persevering in prayer," they quite rightly received the Holy Spirit at the hour of prayer, so that it might be shown to readers that it is not easy to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit unless the mind is raised from material things by concentration on the things which are above. Now we read that three times a day Daniel bent his knees and prayed, and the church understands these to have been the third, sixth, and ninth hours. Also the Lord sent the Holy Spirit at the third hour, he himself ascended the cross at the sixth, and he yielded up his soul at the ninth. He thus saw fit to enjoin there same hours preeminently upon the rest of us and to sanctify them.

I will pour forth of my spirit on all flesh. The word effusion shows the lavishness of the gift, for the grace of the Holy Spirit was not to be granted, as formerly, only to individual prophets and priests, but to everyone in every place, regardless of sex, state of life, or position. The prophet subsequently explains what all flesh may be, saying, Your sons and daughters will prophesy and so forth, and I will give prodigies in heaven above and signs on the earth beneath - prodigies in heaven when with the Lord's birth a new star appeared, and with his ascending of the cross the sun was dimmed and heaven itself was covered with darkness; signs on the earth when, with the Lord's breathing forth of his spirit, the earth trembled violently, broke open sepulchers, split apart rocks, and brought forth alive again the bodies of many of the saints who had fallen asleep.

Blood and fire and vapor of smoke - the blood of the Lord's side; the fire of the Holy Spirit; the vapor of compunction and tears, because just as smoke is produced from fire, so vapor is produced from the ardor of the Holy Spirit. And as for blood flowing in a vigorous stream from the Lord's dead flesh, because this is contrary to the nature of bodies it remains for us to believe that this was done for a sign. A sign of what, to be sure, if not of our salvation and the life which is born from his death? It is also possible to understand the fire as the enlightening of the faithful, and the vapor of smoke as the blindness of the Jews who did not believe. Whence also when about to give the law the Lord descended in fire and smoke because through the brilliance of his manifestation he enlightened the humble, and through the murky smoke of error he dimmed the eyes of the proud.

[1The Venerable Bede:Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, The Venerable Bede, Tr. Lawrence T,Martin. Cistercian Publications, 1989](#)

**A reading about the Apocalypse and the resurrection of the universe,
from a book by Fr. Romano Guardini. ¹**

Saint Paul says that the existence and the rule of the invisible God can be seen from the visible life of material things. And in profound imagery he proclaims the mystery of the world that waits and yearns to be born again. All these things are signs that God values the things of this world, that He loves them and loves them dearly. This mystery shines forth in all its radiance in the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse. There the glory of the love of God flows through all things, most profoundly of all in the wonderful phrase "*a new heaven and a new earth*" in which all pain and all oppression and hatred will be no more and all the "*former things*" and everything that stems from sin will pass away. Everything will be free. Everything will be open. Everything will be changed.

The Resurrection of the Lord—and what took place before on the Mount of Transfiguration—reveals the glowing, divine center of this transformation. The body of the Lord was transfigured as the outward expression of His inner glory. But the transfigured Lord is alive. He lives and acts. He draws the world unto Himself. He wants to make it a single great mystery of His own mysterious transfigured body; not only the human race but all creatures, so that "*everything that is in heaven and on earth and under the earth may be summed up in Him as the head.*" All creation a unity, permeated by the power of His divine-human life. All life! All light! Everything one in the beauty of love!

How inspiringly the Apocalypse speaks of all this! How vision after vision rises before us! It speaks of the noise of a great multitude, like the noise of water in flood, or the noise of deep thunder; of choirs of figures in white robes and golden crowns prostrate and adoring; of immense multitudes of singers praising God; of towering lamps burning before the high throne standing on gold and crystal and sapphire; of the heavenly city: its walls

¹Romano Guardini, *The Living God*, New York, 1957, pp. 110-112.

made of precious stones, its twelve gates twelve single pearls, one pearl for each gate, and the street of the city of pure gold like transparent glass—an excess of glory which the writer strives to convey in words that stagger the imagination. There is no need of sun or moon, for the Lamb is the light thereof and the light of God flows through it. Its food is the fruit of the tree of eternal life which grows by the pure river of water of life—images, parables of that beauty which is to break forth from the whole creation in the transformation brought about by God, when the glory of the children of God has been revealed.

That beauty which is the delight of God, from which, as the Apocalypse proclaims, the Holy City will descend and go forth like a bride to meet the Lamb.

Sometimes in the late afternoon when the day has been very clear an hour comes when the air is utterly pure and everything seems transparent; a gentle and powerful beauty reigns over all: an earthly image of "*the new heaven and the new earth.*" It seems to transfigure all things. But such earthly beauty is a mere promise of things to come. One day the light of God's heart will break forth from all things and they will be radiant and the meaning of God's love for His creation will be revealed to us.

A reading on the mission to the "Angles", according to the Venerable Bede.¹

Augustine, strengthened by the confirmation of the blessed Father Gregory, returned to the work of the word of God, with the servants of Christ, and arrived in Britain. The powerful Ethelbert was at that time king of Kent; he had extended his dominions as far as the great river Humber, by which the Southern Saxons are divided from the Northern.

On the east of Kent is the large Isle of Thanet containing according to the English way of reckoning, 600 families, divided from the other land by the river Wantsum, which is about three furlongs over, and fordable only in two places, for both ends of it run into the sea.

In this island landed the servant of our Lord, Augustine, and his companions, being, as is reported, nearly forty men. They had, by order of the blessed Pope Gregory, taken interpreters of the nation of the Franks, and sending to Ethelbert, signified that they were come from Rome, and brought a joyful message, which most undoubtedly assured to all that took advantage of it everlasting joys in heaven, and a kingdom that would never end, with the living and true God. The king having heard this, ordered them to stay in that island where they had landed, and that they should be furnished with all necessaries, till he should consider what to do with them. For he had before heard of the Christian religion, having a Christian wife of the royal family of the Franks, called Bertha; whom he had received from her parents, upon condition that she should be permitted to practice her religion with the Bishop Luidhard, who was sent with her to preserve her faith.

Some days after, the king came into the island, and sitting in the open air, ordered Augustine and his companions to be brought into his presence. For he had taken precautions that they should not come to him in any house, lest, according to an ancient superstition, if they practiced any magical arts, they might impose upon him, and so get the better of him. But they came furnished with Divine, not with magic virtue, bearing a silver cross for their banner, and the image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a board; and singing the litany, they offered up their prayers to the Lord for the eternal salvation both of themselves and of those to whom they were come.

When he has sat down, pursuant to the king's commands, and preached to him and his attendants there present, the word of life, the king answered thus: -"Your words and promises are very fair, but as they are new to us, and of uncertain import, I cannot approve of them so far as to forsake that which I have so long followed with the whole English nation. But because you are come from far into my kingdom, and, as I conceive, are desirous to impart to us those things which you believe to be true, and most beneficial, we will not molest you, but give you favorable entertainment, and take care to supply you with your necessary sustenance; nor do we forbid you to preach and gain as many as you can to your religion." *(over)*

¹Hist. Ecc., 1:25, Trans. J.E.Giles, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England (London: J.Bohn, 1847), pp.36-38

Accordingly he permitted them to reside in the city of Canterbury, which was the metropolis of all his dominions, and, pursuant to his promise, besides allowing them sustenance, did not refuse them liberty to preach, It is reported that, as they drew near to the city, after their manner, with the holy cross, and the image of our sovereign Lord and King, Jesus Christ, they, in concert, sung this litany: "We beseech thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thy anger and wrath be turned away from this city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Hallelujah."