

08SN0603

08.06.17

From a Homily by St. Gregory Palamas

The Savior took with him just Peter, James and John and led them up a high mountain where, before their eyes, he was transfigured. What does “He was transfigured” mean? It means that it was his good pleasure to give them a small glimpse of his divine nature. He let the disciples see God dwelling within him.

Saint Luke says that as he was praying the appearance of his face changed. Matthew writes that it shone like the sun. But he did not say that it was like the sun to make us think of that light as of something perceptible to the senses, but rather to teach us that what the sun is to those who live on the level of sense perception and whose vision is limited to sense perception, that Christ in his divine nature is to those who live by the spirit and see in the Spirit; nor do those who are like God need any other light by which to see God. Those who enjoy eternal life have no other light but him: why should they want another light when they have the greatest?

It is in prayer that he shone like this in the company of the preeminent prophets, revealing in some indescribable way that indescribable light to his chosen disciples, to show that that blessed vision was the fruit of prayer, and to teach us that drawing near to God by virtue and mental union with him is what causes this radiance to appear. It is given to all and seen by all who by pure prayer and the conscientious performance of good works continually reach out to God.

Chrysostom says that the true beauty, the most exquisite beauty of the blessed Godhead is to be seen only by those whose minds have been purified. By gazing at its dazzling beauty they receive some share in it, some bright beam as it were that lights up their own faces. Thus the face of Moses too became resplendent when he talked with God. Do you not remember how he too was transfigured when he went up the mountain, and so saw the glory of the Lord? But his transfiguration came not from himself but from Another, whereas our Lord Jesus Christ possessed that splendor by nature. He had therefore no need of prayer to make his body

shine with divine light, but he prayed to show what would enable the saints to receive and behold the divine splendor. For *the righteous too will shine light the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. And so, having become all divine light, as children of divine light they will see Christ in his unspeakable and divine splendor, the splendor proceeding naturally from his divinity, in which his body shared because of his unity of person, as was shown on Mount Tabor. Such was the light that made his face shine like the sun.

1. A Word in Season – vol. IV – Augustinian Press – 1991 – pg. 132

St. Cajetan - Taken from Butler=s Lives of the Saints¹

St Cajetan (Gaetano) was son of Caspar, Count of Thiene, of the nobility of Vicenza, where he was born in 1480. Two years later his father was killed, fighting for the Venetians against King Ferdinand of Naples. Cajetan went for four years to Padua University, where he distinguished himself in theology, and took the degree of doctor in civil and canon law in 1504. He then returned to his native town, of which he was made senator. In pursuance of his resolve to serve God as a priest he received the tonsure. In 1506 he went to Rome. Soon after his arrival Pope Julius II conferred on him the office of protonotary, with a benefice attached. On the death of Julius Cajetan refused his successor=s request to continue in that office, and devoted three years to preparing himself for the priesthood. He was ordained in 1516, being thirty-three years old, and returned to Vicenza in 1518.

Cajetan had re-founded a confraternity in Rome called Aof the Divine Love@, which was an association of zealous and devout clerics who devoted themselves to labor with all their power to promote God=s honor and the welfare of souls. At Vicenza he now entered himself in the Oratory of St. erome, which was instituted on the plan of that of the Divine Love but consisted only of men in the lowest station of life. This circumstance gave great offence to his friends, who thought it a reflection on the honor of his family. He persisted, however, and sought out the sick and the poor throughout the whole town, served them and cared for those who suffered from the most loathsome diseases in the hospital of the incurables. He founded a similar oratory at Verona and then went in 1520 to Venice where he took up his lodgings in the new hospital of that city. He remained in Venice for three years. He introduced exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in that city, as well as continuing the promotion of frequent communion.

The state of Christendom at this time shocked and distressed Cajetan, and in 1523 he went back to Rome to confer with his friends of the Oratory of Divine Love. They agreed that little could be done other than by

¹ Butler=s Lives of the Saints, revised edition by Michael Walsh, Harper, San Francisco, 1991, pg. 240

reviving in the clergy the spirit and zeal of those holy pastors who first planted the faith, and a plan was formed for instituting an order of regular clergy upon the model of the lives of the Apostles. The first associates of Cajetan were John Peter Caraffa, who later became pope under the name of Paul IV. The institute was approved by Clement VII, and Caraffa was chosen as the first provost general. From the name of his episcopal see of Theatensis these clerks regular came to be distinguished from others as Theatines.

The success of the new congregation was not immediate, and in 1527, when it still numbered only a dozen members, the army of Emperor Charles V sacked Rome. The Theatines house was demolished and the members had to escape to Venice. Cajetan was sent to Verona, where both the clergy and the laity were opposing the reformation of discipline, which their bishop was endeavoring to introduce among them. A general improvement was the fruit of his example, preaching and labors.

Worn out with trying to appease civil strife in Naples, and disappointed at the suspension of the Council of Trent, from which he hoped so much for the Church's good, Cajetan had to take to his bed in the summer of 1547. The end came on Sunday, August 7. Many miracles wrought by his intercession were approved at Rome after rigorous scrutiny, and he was canonized in 1671.

08sn0803

08.08.2017

A reading about St. Dominic and his role in the Church, from a sermon by Ronald Knox. [1](#)

Two men, at the beginning of the 13th century, were raised up by God to season his Church, that seemed in danger of perishing through its own corruption....If you add the ages of St. Francis and St. Dominic together, they do not cover a full century. And the career of St. Dominic is particularly remarkably, because he did not find out what his life's work was to be until he was 35 years old, with only sixteen more years to live. That short time sufficed for doing the special thing God had called him to do; for meeting a particular situation, and warding off a particular danger from the gates of Christendom....

Two important heresies at that time threatened the peace, and perhaps the life of the Church; the Waldensian and the Albigensian heresies. The Waldenses...seem to have been among the most harmless of the sects, erring through their simpleness rather than through any constructive malice. Scandalized by the riches of the higher clergy, by the sight of so many priests living unpriestly lives, they formed themselves into a little Protestant community before the time of Protestantism was yet to come.... Their main false doctrine was that a priest living in mortal sin was no priest at all; and they thought to replace the ministry of the ordained clergy by a kind of lay ministry of their own.. They were, if such a phrase may be used, Nonconformists rather than heretics....

But the Albigenses, who resembled them outwardly because they too made a great parade of great simplicity and innocence, were the revival..of a very old and very dangerous heresy, the Manichean heresy.... In order to account for the existence of the evil in the world, the Manichean maintains a total divorce between matter and spirit, believing that matter is of its nature evil.... Accordingly, [they] reject the doctrine of the Incarnation.... They were the declared enemies of Christendom....

We remember St. Dominic and his order, in the first instance, for the intellectual protest which they opposed to that sinister outbreak of Oriental philosophy in the heart of Western Christendom. Heresies, after all, have their place in the elucidation of religious truth. ...Christian theology has at all times been a reaction to the assaults of heresy....When the germs of the Manichean heresy sought to find a lodgment in the healthy body of Christendom, the reaction of that healthy body was the great Dominican tradition of learning. It developed, we may well believe, beyond the saint's own hopes. Almost at the moment of his death another saint was being born to carry on his work: St. Thomas [Aquinas].

Those were times, it is sad to say, in which the Church seemed to have lost the salt wherewith Christ had commissioned it to season the world.... There were crying abuses; and, whereas the Albigenses, a purely destructive movement, deserve little of our sympathy, the poor Waldenses could at least claim that they had reason for the disaffection which made them the antagonists of the Church. An intellectual heresy can be met by the weapons of the intellect; a moral protest, such as that of the Waldenses, can only be met by a rival moral protest within the Church itself.

...The times in which we live... still need the intellectual protest, still need the moral. The old difficulty of reconciling God's omnipotence with his benevolence still presses upon us; and today, instead of trying so save the one at the expense of the other, like the medieval heretics, men are driven, by that apparent inconsistency, to deny his very existence.... We call...for an intellectual protest against the tendencies of the age, we call... for a moral protest as well. For the times are evil; and the world's mind would not have traveled so far from God if its heart had not traveled far from God first.

1"St. Dominic", *Occasional Sermons*, ed. by Philip Cara man, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960, pp. 34ff.

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08.09.2017

**A reading about the mission of the prophet Elijah, from a book by
Adrienne von Speyr. 1**

This is primarily a mission of the contemplative life, that is, one of constant openness to what God may say at any moment. God speaks, and Elijah must listen. And listen each time in the precise manner that God=s word requires; apprehend in such a way as to enable God to recognize Elijah=s openness. It is not the case with him, as with others, that God must first overpower him in order to achieve his ends; rather, Elijah=s longing for obedience, for carrying out God=s will, is so strong as to result in a constant attitude of readiness. This readiness is childlike; he also experiences in a childlike way how God looks after his needs; for instance, in the years when God directly provides him with sustenance while he is devoted to prayer. He sees that his praying confirms his existence before God, that he inhabits a world transcending the confines of the earthly, that his contact with God remains a direct one. The way in which he is nourished favors the activity of prayer. And if God does not simply keep him alive without any nourishment at all, then this is in order that he might not entirely lose contact with the world, might not have only God=s being in eternity constantly before his eyes, but can also observe God=s workings within transient time. And through this observing, it is intended that his prayer will grow stronger, his faith increase, and his whole contemplative life be marked by an attitude of readiness.

Later on, this childlike aspect grows more mature: he becomes acquainted with anxiety. Anxiety about God, anxiety about the response that one makes to God C which, for Elijah, still takes the form of anxiety about his own life, about the fate that awaits him. This anxiety is the sign of a one=s level of maturity. It is an anxiety unknown to a child but one that befalls an adult because his knowledge is greater and because knowledge carries within itself the core of responsibility. This anxiety, like prayer, is a part of Elijah=s mission. Also belonging to it are all the blows of fate that strike

him, the sense of powerlessness he feels in himself, the being flung back and forth between his own unworthiness and the power C suggestive of utmost worthiness C that is bestowed on him. He is tossed in all directions, so as to be God=s servant in going as well as coming and to bear witness to his Lord. He has to deal with the mighty of this world but also with the dead boy; these, too, are poles of his mission whose outer aspects symbolize something inner that God has implanted in them.

08SN1001
08.10.2017

From a sermon by St Augustine on the feast of St Lawrence ¹

The Roman Church commends to us today the anniversary of the triumph of St. Lawrence. For on this day he trod the furious pagan world underfoot and flung aside its allurements, and so gained victory over Satan's attack on his faith. As you have often heard, Lawrence was a deacon of the Church at Rome. There he ministered the sacred blood of Christ; there for the sake of Christ's name he poured out his own blood. St John the Apostle was evidently teaching us about the mystery of the Lord's supper when he wrote: *Just as Christ laid down his life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* My brethren, Lawrence understood this and, understanding, he acted on it. Just as he had partaken of a gift of self at the table of the Lord, so he prepared to offer such a gift. In his life he loved Christ; in his death he followed in his footsteps.

Brethren, we too must imitate Christ if we truly love him. We shall not be able to render better return on that love than by modeling our lives on his. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps.* In saying this, the Apostle Peter seems to have understood that Christ suffered only for those who follow in his steps, in the sense that Christ's passion is of no avail to those who do not. The holy martyrs followed Christ even to the shedding of their life's blood, even to reproducing the very likeness of his passion. They followed him, but not they alone. It is not true that the bridge was broken after the martyrs crossed; nor is it true that after they had drunk from it, the fountain of eternal life dried up.

I tell you again and again, my brethren, that in the Lord's garden are to be found not only the roses of his martyrs. In it there are also the lilies of the virgins, the ivy of wedded couples, and the violets of widows. On no account may any class of people despair, thinking that Christ has not called them. Christ suffered for all. What the Scriptures say of him is true: *He desires all to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.*

Let us understand, then, how a Christian must follow Christ even though he does not shed his blood for him, and his faith is not called upon to undergo the great test of the martyr's sufferings. The apostle Paul says of Christ our Lord: *Though he was in the form of God he did not consider equality with God a prize to be clung to.* How unrivaled his majesty! *But he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, made in human likeness, and presenting himself in human form.* How deep his humility!

Christ humbled himself. Christian, that is what you must make your own. *Christ became obedient.* How is it that you are proud? When this humbling experience was completed and death itself lay conquered, Christ ascended into heaven. Let us follow him there, for we hear Paul saying: *If you have been raised with Christ, you must lift your thoughts on high, where Christ now sits at the right hand of God.*

1The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – pg 1305 – Catholic Book Publishing Co
– New York - 1975

08SN1101

08.11.2017

From a Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague by St Clare ¹

Happy indeed is she who is granted a place at the divine banquet, for she may cling with her inmost heart to him whose beauty eternally awes the blessed hosts of heaven; to him whose love inspires love, whose contemplation refreshes, whose generosity satisfies, whose gentleness delights, whose memory shines sweetly as the dawn; to him whose fragrance revives the dead, and whose glorious vision will bless all the citizens of that heavenly Jerusalem. For he is the splendor of eternal glory, *the brightness of eternal light, and the mirror without cloud.*

Queen and bride of Jesus Christ, look into that mirror daily and study well your reflection, that you may adorn yourself, mind and body, with an enveloping garment of every virtue, and thus find yourself attired in flowers and gowns befitting the daughter and most chaste bride of the king on high. In this mirror blessed poverty, holy humility and ineffable love are also reflected. With the grace of God the whole mirror will be your source of contemplation.

Behold, I say, the birth of this mirror. Behold his poverty even as he was laid in the manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. What wondrous humility, what marvelous poverty! The King of angels, the Lord of heaven and earth resting in a manger! Look more deeply into the mirror and meditate on his humility, or simply on his poverty. Behold the many labors and sufferings he endured to redeem the human race. Then in the depths of this very mirror, ponder his unspeakable love which caused him to suffer on the wood of the cross and to endure the most shameful kind of death. The mirror himself, from his position on the cross, warned passersby to weigh carefully this act, as he said: *All of you who pass by this way, behold and see if there is any sorrow like mine.* Let us answer his cries and lamentations with one voice and one spirit: *I will be mindful and remember, and my soul will be consumed within me.* In this way, queen of the king of heaven, your love will burn with an even brighter flame.

Consider also his indescribable delights, his unending riches and honors, and sigh for what is beyond your love and heart's content as you cry out: *Draw me on! We will run after you in the perfume of your ointment,* heavenly spouse. Let me run and not faint until you lead me into your wine cellar; your left hand rests under my head, your right arm joyfully embraces me, and you kiss me with the sweet kiss of your lips. As you rest in this state of contemplation, remember your poor mother and know that I have indelibly written your happy memory into my heart, for you are dearer to me than all the others.

[1](#)The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – pg 1310 – Catholic Book Publishing Co
– New York - 1975

8/12/17

**A Reading about the Mary, the Model of Christian Death & Resurrection,
from a book by Fr Hans Urs von Balthasar.²**

Just as Mary was redeemed in advance so that the Word could become Flesh, so too--now that heaven is accessible to us through Christ's death and resurrection--the holy City, the universal Church, the Communion of Saints is there already in full perfection, so that those who are sanctified can be incorporated into it. All of this results from an in-depth meditation on the biblical texts if they are seen alongside each other and if their interior consequences are thought through. It is not of moment that the insight into this perfecting of Mary cannot be traced back to the very earliest Christian centuries: the thorough reflection on revelation and its deeper implications requires a certain span of time. And the hidden truth concerning Mary-the Church entered very early as an essential aspect of the truth about the Son of the Father and the conditions for his incarnation not only into the consciousness of isolated theologians, but of the Christian people which has the instinct for the faith.

Surely it cannot be doubted that Mary really died a human death; she did not simply pass from an earthly into a heavenly state. Even if death, as we know it today, "came into the world through sin", nevertheless Christ took precisely this death of sin upon himself in order to expiate it from within and transform it into an act of free self-surrender to the Father.

If we learn to die from her who learned to die in the manner of her Son, then we need not be worried about what will become of our human totality after our death. It will be God's business that we reach him not as mere halves of ourselves, but as whole persons. With Christ and with Mary the created world has already been taken up into transformation and transfiguration, and the Last Day has already begun. World history does indeed continue still, but in eternal life there is no time that corresponds to historical time. We cannot, of course, plumb the mystery of our bodily

²"The Threefold Garland", San Francisco, 1982, 129-132.

resurrection; it is quite enough for us to know that the heavenly City-- Christ, Head and Body, Christ, Bridegroom and Bride--will be there corporeally when we make our crossing to take us up into itself. And just as this Christ in heaven is, at the same time, the Christ who distributes himself eucharistically on earth and thus builds up the earthly Church, so even our heavenly joy will in part consist in our working with Christ in the perfecting of our earthly brothers and sisters and in our being connecting links between earth and heaven.