

VIGILS READINGS AT GETHSEMANI ABBEY 23rd Week in Ordinary Time

September 10-16, 2017

NT-MT40

09.10.17

A commentary on Matthew by St. John Chrysostom [1](#)

The Apostle says: *Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

You will be doing everything for the glory of God if, when you leave this place, you make yourselves responsible for saving a brother or sister, not just by accusing and rebuking him or her, but also by advising and encouraging, and by pointing out the harm done by worldly amusements, and the profit and help that come from our instruction. You will also be preparing for yourself a double reward, since as well as greatly furthering your own salvation, you will be endeavoring to heal a fellow member of Christ's body. It is the Church's pride, it is the Savior's command, not to be concerned only about our own welfare, but about our neighbor's also.

Think to what high honor you raise yourself when you regard someone else's salvation as a matter of extreme importance. As far as is humanly possible you imitate God Himself, for listen to what he says through the prophet: "Whoever leads another from wrong to right *will be as my own mouth.*" In other words, "Whoever tries to save those that are negligent, and to snatch them from the jaws of the devil, is imitating me as far as a human being can." What other work can equal this? Of all good deeds this is the greatest; of all virtue this is the summit.

And this is perfectly reasonable. Christ shed his own blood for our salvation; and Paul, speaking of those who give scandal and wound the consciences of people seeing them, cried out: *Because of your knowledge a weak brother or sister is destroyed – someone for whom Christ died!* So if your Lord shed his blood for that person, surely it is right for each of us to offer at least some words of encouragement and to extend a helping hand to those who through laxity have fallen into the snares of the devil.

But I am quite certain that you will do this out of the tender love you bear your own members, and that you will make every effort to bring your neighbors back to our common Mother, because I know that through the grace of God you are able to admonish others with wisdom.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – NY – 1999 – pg 122

OT-TOB02

09.11.17

A Commentary on the Book of Tobias by Dom Damasus Winzen ¹

The heart of the Book is reached in young Tobias' marriage with Sarah. The Old Testament gives to the relationship between husband and wife a deeply spiritual meaning, lifting it up to be a sign of the union between God and his people. God cannot be shut out from human wedlock, because the love which urges a man to leave father and mother and to cleave to his wife is an image of the love which caused the Son of God to leave his Father's glory to become one flesh with his bride, the Church. The story of young Tobias' wedding with Sarah is really a prophecy of the messianic marriage between Christ and his Church. Who else can the seven former husbands be but those who love mankind in the selfish spirit of the world, and thus deliver themselves up to the deadly power of the prince of this world? The seemingly superstitious manipulation with the entrails of the fish Tobias had caught in the river Tigris receives a completely new and spiritual meaning as soon as we remember that the fish is a symbol of Christ in his life-giving passion and death. The heart, liver and gall are in the Old Testament always the symbols of the innermost life and emotions. The liver and heart of the fish burnt on coal are the symbol of the sacrifice of Christ, who on the cross gave up his spirit into the hands of his Father and thus destroyed the dominion of the devil.

When we read about Raguel and his servants digging a grave for Tobias, and the maid who was sent in the early morning to their chamber, found the young couple safe and sound, and hurried to bring the good news to the parents, we are reminded of the empty tomb on Easter morning and the women who, when the sun was rising, received the glad tidings of the resurrection and brought them to the apostles. Tobias and Sarah's return to Tobias' home reads like a prophecy of the final reunion between the Church of the gentiles and the Jewish people, whose blindness will be healed by the light which radiates from the sacrificial love of Christ, represented symbolically in the gall of the fish. In the light of this faith old Tobit sees the glory of the New Jerusalem and hears the eternal Alleluia sung in its streets.

The depth of spiritual meaning hidden in the book of Tobit should not make us overlook, however, the wealth of practical wisdom which it has to offer to this present day and age, in which we witness such an appalling disintegration of family life. The deeply religious character of matrimony naturally requires spiritual kinship in the unity of faith between husband and wife, with God himself joining them together and fulfilling his blessing in them. At the same time this supernatural bond requires a sound natural foundation through a written agreement about the juridical and financial rights of husband and wife. "And afterward they made merry, blessing God" (7:14). A marriage blessed by God has nothing puritanical about it. It is the lovely flower of true humanity, which makes the husband the savior of his wife, enthrones the wife in his care and protection, gives honor and peace to the parents, and fuller praise to God in children.

[1](#)Pathways in Scripture – Damasus Winzen – Word of Life – Ann Arbor, MI – 1976 -pg 142

09SN1201

09.12.2017

SAINT PETER, ARCHBISHOP OF TARENTOISE -from Butler's Lives of the Saints¹

St Peter of Tarentaise was born near Vienne in the French province of the Dauphine. He early displayed a remarkable memory, coupled with great inclination for religious studies, and at the age of twenty he entered the abbey of Bonnevaux. After a time, his father and the other two sons followed Peter to Bonnevaux, while his mother, with the only daughter, entered a neighboring nunnery.

He was not quite thirty when he was chosen superior of a new house built at Tamie, in the desert mountains of Tarentaise. It over looked the pass which was then the chief route from Geneva to Savoy, and the monks were able to be of great use to travellers. There, with the help of Amadeus III, Count of Savoy, who held him in high esteem, he founded a hospice for the sick and for strangers, in which he was wont to wait upon his guests with his own hands.

In 1142 came his election to the archbishopric of Tarentaise, and Peter was compelled by St Bernard and the general chapter of his order, though much against the grain, to accept the office. He found the diocese in a deplorable state, due mainly to the mismanagement of his predecessor, an unworthy man who had eventually to be deposed. In place of the cathedral clergy whom he found lax and careless, St Peter substituted canons regular of St Augustine. He undertook the constant visitation of his diocese; recovered property which had been alienated; appointed good priests to various parishes; made excellent foundations for the education of the young and relief of the poor; and everywhere provided for the due celebration of the services of the Church..

In 1155, after he had administered the diocese for thirteen years, Peter suddenly disappeared. Actually he had made his way to a remote Cistercian abbey in Switzerland, where, he was accepted as a lay-brother. Not until a year later was he discovered. His identity having been revealed to his new superiors, Peter was obliged to leave and return to his see, where he was greeted with great joy. He took up his duties more zealously than ever. He rebuilt the hospice of the Little St Bernard and founded other similar refuges for travellers in the Alps...

It was not granted to the saint to die among his mountain flock. His reputation as a peacemaker led Alexander III to send him in 1174 to try effect a reconciliation between King Louis VII of France and Henry II of England. St Peter, though he

was old, set out at once, preaching everywhere on his way. As he approached Chaumont in the Vexin, where the French court was being held, he was met by King Louis and by Prince Henry, the rebellious heir to the English throne. The latter, alighting from his horse to receive the archbishop's blessing, asked for the saint's old cloak, which he reverently kissed. Both at Chaumont and at Gisors where he interviewed the English king, St Peter was treated with utmost honor, but the reconciliation for which he labored did not take place until after his death. As he was returning to his diocese he was taken ill on the road near Besancon, and died as he was being carried into the abbey of Bellevaux. This St Peter was canonized in 1191.

1 BUTLER'S LIVES OF THE SAINTS, Ed. by Michael Walsh (Harper & Row, CA 1985) p. 138.

A reading about St. John Chrysostom, from *Historical Sketches* by John Cardinal Newman.¹

Whence this devotion to St. John Chrysostom, which leads me to dwell upon the thought of him, and makes me kindle at his name, when so many other great Saints...command indeed my veneration, but exert no personal claim upon my heart? Many holy people have died in exile, many holy people have been successful preachers; and what more can we write upon St. Chrysostom's monument than this, that he was eloquent and that he suffered persecution? He is not an Athanasius, expounding a sacred dogma with a luminousness which is almost an inspiration. Nor, except by the contrast, does he remind us of that Ambrose who kept his ground obstinately in an imperial city, and fortified himself against the heresy of a court by the living rampart of a devoted population. Nor is he Gregory or Basil, rich in the literature and philosophy of Greece, and embellishing the Church with the spoils of heathenism. Nor is he a Jerome, so dead to the world that he can imitate the point and wit of its writers without danger to himself or scandal to his brethren. He has not trampled upon heresy, nor smitten emperors, nor beautified the house or the service of God, nor knit together the portions of Christendom, nor founded a religious order, nor built up the framework of doctrine, nor expounded the science of the Saints; yet I love him, as I love David or St. Paul.

How am I to account for it? I consider St. Chrysostom's charm to lie in his intimate sympathy and compassionateness for the whole world, not only in its strength, but in its weakness; in the lively regard with which he views everything that comes before him, taken in the concrete, whether as made after its own kind or as gifted with a nature higher than its own. It is the interest which he takes in all things, not so far as God has made them alike, but as he has made them different from each other. I speak of the discriminating affectionateness with which he accepts everyone for what is personal and unlike others....

I speak of the kindly spirit and the genial temper with which he looks round at all things which this wonderful world contains; of the graphic fidelity with which he notes them down upon the tablets of his mind, and of the promptitude and propriety with which he calls them up as arguments or illustrations in the course of his teaching as the occasion requires. Possessed though he be by the fire of ardent charity, he has not lost one fibre, he does not miss one vibration, of the complicated whole of human sentiment and affection; like the miraculous bush in the desert, which for all the flame that wrapt it round, was not thereby consumed.

That loving scrutiny, with which he follows the Apostles as they reveal themselves to us in their writings, he practices in various ways towards all people, living and dead, high and low, those whom he admires and those whom he weeps over. He writes as one who was ever looking out with sharp but kind eyes upon the world of humans and their history; and hence he has always something to produce about them, new or old, to the purpose of his argument, whether from books or from the experience of life. Head and heart were full to overflowing with a stream of mingled "wine and milk", of rich vigorous thought and affectionate feeling. This is why his manner of writing is so rare and special; and why, when once a student enters into it, he will ever recognize him, wherever he meets with extracts from him.

In him I recognize a special pattern of that very gift of discrimination. He may indeed be said in some sense to have a devotion of his own for every one who comes across him, —for persons, ranks, classes, callings, societies, considered as divine works and the subjects of his good offices or good will, and therefore I have a devotion for him.

[1](#)*Historical Sketches*, II, pp. 284-287.

From a Sermon by St Chromatius of Aquilea ²

The Cross of Christ is our victory, because it has obtained victory for us. Who among us are so fortunate as to deserve to bear in themselves the cross of Christ? They bear the cross of Christ in themselves who die to the world and are nailed with Christ to the Cross. Listen to what the Apostle says: “With Christ I am crucified; I live, yet it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Those therefore who are free from the vices of the flesh and worldly desires are, as the Apostle says, crucified with Christ. Those on the other hand who are given over to vices of the flesh and worldly desires cannot say: “I am crucified with Christ”, for they do not live the way that Christ did, but according to the fashion of the world and the will of the devil.

The cross of Christ is the salvation of the world and the triumphal sign of heaven’s victory. In times past, when great kings had won a brilliant victory over vanquished nations, they used to set up a trophy of their victory in the form of a cross and hang spoils taken from the enemy upon it as a permanent reminder. The victory won by Christ’s cross is far different. The victory of those kings meant the extermination of peoples, the destruction of cities, the sacking of provinces. The victory of the cross means nations ransomed, cities saved, provinces liberated, the entire world made safe. Nothing is destroyed but the power of the devil, no one taken captive but the demons, for the cross of Christ redeemed the world and took the demons prisoner. It is spoils taken from the demons that are hung on the triumphal cross of Christ. Today the demons hang on the cross of Christ which has become their torment and torture; they are held captive by faith in the cross, by the sign of the passion.

Christ suffered evil and repaid it with good; he suffered death and gave life. Not without reason was he crucified on the spot where Adam’s body is said to have been buried; Christ was crucified where Adam was buried in order that life might thus rise out of death. Death came through Adam, life through Christ, who deigned to be crucified and to die precisely in order to destroy through the tree of the cross the sin that had been caused by a tree, and by the mystery of his death to put an end to the punishment of death.

² A Word in Season – vol IV – Sanctoral – Augustinian Press – 1991 – p 167

09SN1503

09.15.2017

From a Sermon in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Amadeus of Lusanne (CF 18:105-106)

With deep calling to deep, two loves had come together into one and from the two loves was made a single love when the Virgin mother gave to her Son the love she gave to God, and showed her love for her son in loving God. Therefore the more she loved, the more she grieved and the greatness of her love brought the increase of her suffering.

What was she doing when she stood on Calvary and saw the cross, the nails, the wounds of the One who was dying in innocence and the insatiable cruelty of the Pharisee afire with malice? [Jesus] hung there atoning not for his sins but for ours, and the Pharisees with the Scribes, mocking him, struck him on the head and offered to his lips vinegar mingled with gall that there might be fulfilled the prophecy of David, saying in the person of Christ, 'They added to the pain of my wounds.' In the midst of this the Mother of God was distressed in mind, and sorrows seized upon her as upon a woman in childbirth. There are groans, sobs, sighs, sorrow, grief, agony, distress of heart, fires, a death more cruel than death. There life is not taken away yet the bitterness of death is suffered. O memory to be revered, full of devotion and tears, to recall how that glorious holy soul suffered, and what anguish she endured in the death of Christ. The pale face of Jesus reflected the bloodless face of his mother. He suffered in the flesh, she in her heart. Finally the insults and scoffing of the wicked came back upon his mother's head. The Lord's death was to her more bitter than her own [would have been]. Although, taught by the Spirit, she would not doubt the resurrection, yet she had to drink the Father's cup and to know the hour of her own passion. Concerning this, the venerable Simeon prophesied to her: 'A sword shall pierce your soul.' O Lord Jesus, terrible in your counsels beyond the sons of men, you did not spare your mother from the sword piercing her soul. By this road must we all pass by the fiery sword turning this way and that to the tree of life which is in the midst of paradise.

But to return: Blessed Mary was able to cry out that which was especially appropriate to Christ: 'O all you who pass by, behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow. What a sorrow and how great! And in that sorrow what was Mary like? Alas, as she was then, how different from the girl who had once tended her son amid a choir of angels while shepherds worshiped and Magi adored him with an offering of mystic gifts. Very different, not indeed in virtue but in sadness, not in grace but in grief. For she increased in virtue and grew in grace. For set in the midst of adversity she neither relaxed her modesty nor lost the strength of her constancy.

From a letter by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr 3

Cyprian sends greetings to his brother Cornelius. My very dear brother, we have heard of the glorious witness given by your courageous faith. On learning of the honor you had won by your witness, we were filled with such joy that we felt ourselves sharers and companions in your praiseworthy achievements. After all, we have the same Church, the same mind. The same unbroken harmony. Why then should a priest not take pride in the praise given to a fellow priest as though it were given to him? What brotherhood fails to rejoice in the happiness of its brothers wherever they are?

Words cannot express how great was the exaltation and delight here when we heard of your good fortune and brave deeds: how you stood out as a leader of your brothers in their declaration of faith, while the leader's confession was enhanced as they declared their faith. You led the way to glory, but you gained many companions in that glory; being foremost in your readiness to bear witness on behalf of all, you prevailed on your people to become a single witness. We cannot decide which we ought to praise, your own ready and unshaken faith or the love of your brothers who would not leave you. While the courage of the bishop who thus led the way has been demonstrated, at the same time the unity of the brotherhood who followed has been manifested. Since you have one heart and one voice, it is the Roman Church as a whole that has thus borne witness.

Dearest brother, bright and shining is the faith which the blessed Apostle praised in your community. He foresaw in the spirit the praise your courage deserves and the strength that could not be broke,; he was heralding the future when he testified to your achievements; his praise of the fathers was a challenge to the sons. Your unity, your strength have become shining examples of these virtues to the rest of the brethren.

Divine providence has now prepared us. God's merciful design has warned us that the day of our own struggle, our own contest, is at hand. By that shared love which binds us closely together, we are doing all we can to exhort our congregation, to give ourselves unceasingly to fastings, vigils and prayers in common. These are the heavenly weapons which give us strength to stand firm and endure; they are the spiritual defenses, the God-given armaments that protect us.

Let us then remember one another, united in mind and heart. Let us pray without ceasing, you for us, we for you; by the love we share we shall thus relieve the strain of these great trials.

