

NT-MT42

10.01.17

A Commentary on the Gospel by St Clement of Alexandria [1](#)

The doors are open for all who sincerely and wholeheartedly return to God; indeed the Father is most willing to welcome back a truly repentant son or daughter. The result of true repentance, however, is that you do not fall into the same faults again, but utterly uproot from your souls the sins for which you consider yourself worthy of death. When these have been destroyed God will again dwell within you, since Scripture says that for the Father and his angels in heaven the festal joy and gladness at the return of one repentant sinner is great beyond compare. This is why the Lord cried out: *What I want is mercy, not sacrifice. I desire not the death of the sinner but his conversion. Even if your sins are like crimson wool I will make them white as snow; even if they are blacker than night I will wash them as white as wool.*

Although only God has power to forgive sins and cancel transgressions. The Lord commands us also to forgive our repentant brothers and sisters every day. So if we who are evil know how to give good gifts, how much more generous must be the Father of mercies, the good Father of all consolation, who is full of compassion and mercy, and whose nature it is to be patient and await our conversion! Genuine conversion, however, means ceasing to sin without any backward glances.

God pardons what is past, then, but for the future we are each responsible for ourselves. By repenting we condemn our past misdeeds and beg forgiveness of the Father, the only one who can in his mercy undo what has been done, and wipe away our past sins with the dew of his Spirit. And so, if you are a thief and desire to be forgiven, steal no more. If you are a robber, return your gains with interest. If you have been a false witness, practice speaking the truth. If you are a perjurer, stop taking oaths. You must also curb all the other evil passions: anger, lust, grief, and fear. No doubt you will be unable all at once to root out passions habitually given way to, but this can be achieved by God's power, human prayers, and the

help of your brothers and sisters, sincere repentance, and constant practice.

[1](#)A Word in Season – Vol. A – New City Press – NY – 1999 – pg 128

OT-JUDTH09

10/02/17

A Commentary on the Book of Judith by Fr John Craghan ¹

Judith sees continuity in the faith history of Israel. She appeals to Simeon's deed and employs it as a precedent for God's action now against the Assyrians. Israel's existence is at stake. The author seems to evoke the image of Israel as Yahweh's bride, but a bride who is in danger of being defiled. Judith's honor and Israel's honor are interwoven. However Judith's integrity suggests that Israel will maintain her integrity.

Judith's deed will be the Exodus revisited. In Simeon's retaliation God struck down "slaves along with princes, and princes on their thrones". This is precisely God's action in the Exodus when he strikes down the first-born, even the first-born of Pharaoh who sits upon his throne. Verse 7: "The Lord who crushes wars; the Lord is thy name" is the Greek text of Exodus 15:3, the song which celebrates Yahweh's defeat of Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the Red Sea. The sending of wrath on the Assyrians echoes Yahweh's action in the same song. When the very life of God's people is at stake, Judith uses phrases which capture God's action at the very beginning of his people in Egypt. Yahweh who confronted and defeated Pharaoh can thus confront and defeat the new Pharaoh, the divine Nebuchadnezzar in the person of his general.

The chapter suggests Judith's course of action against Holofernes, namely, a sword wielded by the "weak" hand of a woman. It also implies the humiliation which will befall Holofernes. To be killed by a woman is the greatest insult. Thus in Judges 9:54 Abimelech tells his armor-bearer: "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him'".

The weakness/strength motif appears in Judith's prayer. The author contrasts the display of power of the armies with Yahweh's awesome might. Paradoxically, Yahweh shows his might in weakness, for he is the "God of the lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder of the weak". It is only a situation of powerlessness that will show Yahweh's true power and concern for his people.

[1](#)Old Testament Message – vol. 16 – Michael Glazier, Inc – Wilmington, DE
– 1982 – p 85

CH-UNITY01

10.03.2017

The Unity of the Church. From a Sermon by John Henry Newman.¹

That all Christians are, in some sense or other, one, in our Lord's eyes is plain, from various parts of the New Testament. In his mediatorial prayer for them to the Almighty Father, before His Passion, He expressed His purpose that they should be **one**. St. Paul, in like manner, writing to the Corinthians, says, "As the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, **so also** is Christ... Now you are **the Body** of Christ, and members in particular." To the Ephesians, he says, "There is **one Body**, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."

And, further, it is to this one Body, regarded as one, that the special privileges of the Gospel are given. It is not that this person receives the blessing, and that one, but one and all, the whole body, as one being, one new spiritual reality, with one accord, seeks and gains it. The Holy Church throughout the world, "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," is one, not many, and the elect souls are all elected in her, not in isolation. For instance: "He is our peace who has made both (Jews and Gentiles) one,... to make in himself **one new humanity**." In the same epistle, it is said, that all nations are "**fellow-** heirs, and of **the same body** and **fellow-partakers** of His promise in Christ;" and that we must "one and all come," or converge, "in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect creation, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;" that as "the husband is the head of the wife," so "Christ is the Head of the Church," having "loved her and given Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word." These are

¹ **Parochial and Plain Sermons**. John Henry Newman. Ignatius Press. San Francisco.1987.p.1538.

a few out of many passages which connect Gospel privileges with the circumstance or condition of unity in those who receive them; the image of Christ and token of their acceptance being stamped upon them **then**, at that moment, when they are considered as **one**; so that henceforth the whole multitude, no longer viewed as mere individuals, become portions or members of the indivisible Body of Christ Mystical, so knit together in Him by Divine Grace, that all have what He has, and each has what all have.

The same great truth is taught us in such texts as speak of all Christians forming one spiritual building, of which the Jewish Temple was the type. They are temples one by one, simply as being portions of that one Temple which is the Church. "You are **built up**," says St. Peter, "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Hence the word "edification", which properly means this building up of all Christians in one, has come to stand for individual improvement; for it is by being incorporated into the one Body, that we have the promise of life; by becoming members of Christ, we have the gift of His Spirit.

10/4/17

THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN, by St Francis of Assisi.²

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no one is worthy to mention Your name.
Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather
through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste,
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.
Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living being can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks

²Francis and Clare, New York, 1982, pp 38-39.

and serve Him with great humility.

OT-JUDTH

10/5/17

A Commentary on the Book of Judith by Dom Damasus Winzen [1](#)

The theme of Judith is “God has given salvation into the hand of a woman”. Woman appears in Scripture as God's natural ally in his struggle against a selfish world. She is made to receive new life, to rear it patiently, to suffer that it may prosper, to decrease that it may increase. In this she represents the love described in the New Testament, love “which seeks not its own”. The enmity which God set between the woman and the serpent after the fall represents the struggle between the human order of selfishness and tyranny and the divine order of grace and charity. The victory was won when Mary the virgin, “full of grace”, gave to God's call the answer that only a woman could give: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to your word.” The whole history of the chosen people, the “virgin daughter of Israel”, had been a constant preparation for this, its fulfillment in Mary. It is the Book of Judith however, which singles out this aspect of sacred history and lifts it up into the sphere of the typical.

The very name Judith (Jewess) is typical. The widow of Bethulia represents the virgin daughter of Israel. The clash between God's people and heathenism appears as the clash between “man's world” and “woman's world”. The former is depicted in the first chapters of the book as a world of power, of tremendous fortresses, immense armies, vast empires, mighty rulers who are constantly scheming to overthrow one another. These men hate liberty and independence. The use of power makes them thirsty for more power. The rights of others they consider as an insult to themselves. Using the cowardly submissiveness and adulation in those who are subject to their rule, they build up gigantic war machines which like irresistible steamrollers crush all resistance in their path. At the moment of crisis, however, all this power may suddenly come to naught. Because the whole system is built on the absolute power of one leader, it is unable to work without him. Then all the boastfulness turns into panic, and of those who marched to conquer the world, each now runs to save his own skin.

Against the power of man Judith rises in the totally different strength of the woman. Her strength is her faith, and her faith is trust in the mercy of God. "For God will not threaten like man, nor be influenced in anger like the son of man: let us seek God with tears, that according to his will he would show mercy to us: that as our heart is troubled by their pride so we may also glorify him in our humility". Because God is love "his power is not in a multitude, nor his pleasure in the strength of horses, nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to him, but the prayer of the humble and the meek has always pleased him." Therefore the Lord decided that the mighty Holofernes should not fall by giants, but by the hand of a woman.

1Pathways in Scripture – Damasus Winzen – Word of Life – Ann, Arbor MI – 1976 – pg 143

From a letter to his Carthusian sons by St. Bruno 3

From the frequent and pleasant reports of our most blessed brother, I know of your reasoned and truly praiseworthy discipline, carried out with unwavering rigor. Since I have heard of your holy love and constant pursuit of honesty and virtue, my spirit rejoices in the Lord. I rejoice and am drawn to praise and give thanks to God, and still I long to love him. I rejoice, as I should, in the growing fruits of your strength, and yet I grieve and am ashamed that I lie idle and senseless in the mire of my sins.

Therefore rejoice, my dearest brothers, because you are so blessed and because of the bountiful hand of God's grace upon you. Rejoice, because you have escaped the various dangers and shipwrecks of the stormy world. Rejoice, because you have reached the quiet and safe anchorage of a secret harbor. Many wish to come into this port, and many make great efforts to do so, yet do not achieve it. Indeed many, after reaching it, have been thrust out, since it was not granted them from above.

Therefore, my brothers, you should consider it certain and well-established that whoever partakes of this desirable good, should he in any way lose it, will grieve to his death, if he has any regard or concern for the salvation of his soul.

My dearest lay brothers, of you I say: "My soul magnifies the Lord". For I have learned of the generosity of his mercy toward you from the report of your Prior and dearest father; he rejoices and takes great pride in you. And let us rejoice that since you are acquainted with the knowledge of letters, almighty God will inscribe in your hearts with his finger not only his love but also the knowledge of his holy law. By your work you show what you love and what you know. When you observe true obedience with prudence and enthusiasm, it is clear that you wisely pick the most delightful and nourishing fruit of divine Scripture.

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10/07/17

From the Apostolic Letter of St. John Paul II on the Rosary⁴

The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millenium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless saints and encouraged by the magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millenium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which after 2,000 years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to “set out into the deep” (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even to cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, “the way, and the truth and the life” (Jn.14:6), the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn.

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium. It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation that began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people sit at the school of Mary and are led to contemplate the beauty of the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the mother of the Redeemer.

The Rosary, reclaimed in its full meaning, goes to the very heart of Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the people of God, and the new evangelization. But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery that I have proposed as a genuine training in holiness. What is needed is a Christian life distinguished above

⁴ **Rosarium Virginis Mariae** of Pope John Paul II - The Pope Speaks - vol. 48, #2, March, April, 2003

all in the art of prayer. Inasmuch as contemporary culture, even amid so many indications to the contrary, has witnessed the flowering of a new call for spirituality, due also to the influence of other religions, it is more urgent than ever that our Christian communities should become genuine schools of prayer.

The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the prayer of the heart, or Jesus prayer, that took root in the soil of the Christian East. *over*

The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way, the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance that points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted themselves to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to Him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring His every word: She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Lk 2:19). The memories of Jesus, impressed on her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the rosary that she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.

Even now, amid the joyful songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the reasons for her thanksgiving and praise remain unchanged. They inspire her maternal concern for the pilgrim Church, in which she continues to relate her personal account of the Gospel. Mary constantly sets before the faithful the mysteries of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.