

11.05.17

NT-MT46A

Commentary on the Gospel by Paschasius Radbertus ¹

Christ is called master, or teacher, by right of nature rather than by courtesy, for all things subsist through him. Through his incarnation and life upon earth we are taught the way to eternal life. Our reconciliation with God is dependent on the fact of his being greater than we are. Yet, in having told his disciples not to allow themselves to be called master, or to love seats of honor and things of that kind, he himself set an example and was a model of humility. It is as though he said: *Even as I do not seek my own glory (though there is One who seeks it), so neither must you love to be honored above others, or to be called master. Look at me: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life for many.*

This was said not only for the instruction of his disciples, but also of those who are teachers in the Church. None of them must seek positions of honor; whoever wishes to be greater than the rest must first become the servant of all, as Christ himself did. If anyone wants a high office let him want the labor it entails, not the honor it will bring him. He should desire to serve and minister to everyone, and not expect everyone to serve and minister to him. For the desire to be served comes from the supercilious attitude of the Pharisees; the desire to serve from the teaching of Christ. Those who canvass for positions of honor are the ones who exalt themselves; and similarly it is those who of their own accord humble themselves who will be exalted by the Lord.

After specifically reserving the office of teaching to himself, Christ immediately went on to give as the rule of his teaching that whoever wants to be greatest should be the servant of all. And he gave the same rule in other words when he said: *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* Anyone therefore who wants to be Christ's disciple must hasten to learn the lesson he professes to teach, for a perfect disciple will be like his master. Otherwise if he refuses to learn the master's lesson, far from being a master himself, he will not even be a disciple.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – NY – pg 138

OT-DAN02

11.06.17

¹A READING FROM A COMMENTARY ON DANIEL, by Hippolytus, Priest.

Look well; behold three youths who have set an example for all. They were unafraid of the numerous satraps and of the words of the king; they did not tremble when they heard about the fiery flames of the furnace, but they spurned everyone and the whole world for they thought only of the fear of God...

You see how the spirit of the Father teaches eloquence to the martyrs, consoling them and exhorting them to despise death in this world, to hasten their attainment of heavenly goods. But those who are without the Holy Spirit are frightened of the struggle. They hide themselves, take precautions against a death that is only temporal, are afraid of the sword, fall into a panic at the thought of the torture. They no longer see any other thing than the world here below, worry only about the present life, prefer wife or husband to everything else, are bothered only about love for their children, and seek nothing but wealth.

Such people, because they are not endowed with heavenly strength, are quickly lost. That is why anyone who desires to come near the Word listens to the behest of the King and Lord of heaven: "Whoever does not bear his cross and follow me is not worthy of me and whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple."

Scripture tells us that after this "those three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego fell into the white-hot furnace and walked about in the flames, singing to God and blessing the Lord." The fire had no difficulty in devouring the fetters with which they had been bound by order of the king, but it did not touch "their coats, hats, shoes and other garments." This miracle brought out the wonderful power of God...

¹"Commentary on Daniel" II, XVIII. XXI. XXVIII. XXXV-XXXVII: Sources Chretiennes 14, 150-151. 156-157. 170. 184ff. (CR II p 243).

But someone might say: "Why did God rescue martyrs of old when he does not rescue martyrs of our own day? For we see that blessed Daniel was cast twice into the den, and that he was not devoured by the beasts, just as the three youths were cast into the furnace and suffered not the least damage from the fire."

Let us think it over! At that time, God saved those he wanted, in order that the wonders of his works might be revealed to the whole world. But those whom he desired to undergo martyrdom, he crowned and let them come to him. If he drew the three youths out of their predicament, it was to show the emptiness and folly of Nebuchadnezzar's boastfulness and prove at the same time that "what is impossible to men is possible to God." Nebuchadnezzar had proudly declared: "Who is the God that can deliver you out of my hands?" God proved to him that he can free his servants when he wishes to do so.

That is why it is improper for us to oppose the decisions of God. "For if we live, we live for the Lord. And if we die, we die for the Lord. Whether we live or whether we die, we belong to the Lord." He drew Jonah from the belly of a monster because he willed it. He rescued Peter from the hand of Herod and let him escape from prison because he wanted Peter to live somewhat longer. He received Peter and made him come near him at the appointed time, after he had been crucified for the Lord's name. This happened only when he wanted it.

OT-DAN03
11.07.17

A READING ABOUT THE PROPHET DANIEL, from the book Israel and the Ancient World by Daniel-Rops.²

Daniel is not known to us, as are Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, by his own writings. We read of his life in a narrative told in the third person, in a difficult text, part of which was written in Hebrew, part in Aramaean, during the third and second centuries [B.C.], and part again in Greek. His very name raises problems; in Ezekiel one has the impression that there had been, in antiquity, a man of the same name, perhaps the "Danel" whose wise deeds are recounted on the Phoenician tablets of Ras-Shamra. Historically, the Book of Daniel raises difficult questions; Belshazzar did not succeed Nebuchadnezzar who, moreover, was never mad; but one of his successors, Nabonide, was mad for seven years. "Darius the Mede," conqueror of Babylon, is unknown, and could not have been the great Darius, who was a Persian and reigned from 522 to 485. Some critics maintain that Daniel was a mythical personage, invented during the third or second century B.C.; St. Jerome describes certain episodes of the story as "fables"; most critics admit we are dealing here with facts whose veracity is certainly open to question.

All the same, through the singular episodes, of which he is the hero, Daniel stands out clearly enough. His "character," as a literary critic would say, is convincing. The Bible presents him to us young, fervent, and grave, as Michelangelo has depicted him...

With wisdom beyond his years, Daniel combined occult gifts. The wise prophet expounded dreams as Joseph had done for Pharaoh. Nebuchadnezzar summoned him to interpret a dream which had troubled him extremely. A colossal statue with a head of gold, arms of silver, thighs of brass, and feet part iron, part clay, which fell at the blow of a stone from the mountains, symbolized the successive kingdoms of Mesopotamia. Daniel predicted Cyrus, Alexander and Rome, and the ultimate ruin of them all. Full of admiration, the king loaded the prophet with honors, but many enemies attacked him. On one occasion one of his closest friends accused him of treason because he had refused to worship the image of the king; and he

²Israel and the Ancient World, Daniel-Rops, London 1949. pp.221-222.

was condemned to be burned to death. On another occasion his enemies had him flung into a lion's den. But God preserved his intrepid servant; for at the command of the prophet the fire abated its heat, and the young man, condemned, in the furnace, sang the glory of the Creator; while the lions, as gentle as domestic pets, lay down at Daniel's feet. As for the king, stricken with a mysterious affliction, he lived for seven years in the fields, eating grass, and out of his mind.

It was not only from these miracles that the people of Israel derived hope. Daniel, in visions like those of Ezekiel, prophesied the end of their sufferings, and return to the land of their heart's desire, divine forgiveness, and prosperity. In seventy weeks of years, the great liberator of Israel would be born; an "Anointed," a "Messiah," who was to redeem sins, expiate iniquity, and bring in a rule of eternal justice; but whose life would be cut short.

OT-DAN07

11.08.17

THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL AND THE FATE OF THE GENTILE NATIONS, from Pathways in Scripture by Dom Damasus Winzen³

The fact that the book [of Daniel] is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldean indicates its supernatural character, which becomes still more evident when we examine the contents of the prophecy. The book is not concerned with the fate of the chosen people, of Jerusalem, and of the temple, but with the fate of the gentile nations. Daniel emphasizes the universality of the messianic kingdom. He sees how the "stone cut without hands" --Christ born of the virgin Mary--smashes the stature of the king and becomes a "great mountain" which fills the whole earth--the universal Church. A similar idea is expressed in the vision of the four empires, which culminates in the coming of the "son of man," who does not rise out of the sea, as the empires do, but descends from above on the clouds of heaven. A little further on this "son of man" is identified with "the people of the saints of the Most High," indicating that the messiah and his people are one, as head and body form one individual.

According to the interpretation of most of the Fathers, this vision also defines the time of the coming of Christ in world history. The first empire is usually considered to be the Assyro-Babylonian empire which was conquered in 538 B.C. by Cyrus, the founder of the Medo-Persian empire, which in turn succumbed to the Greco-Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. The empire of Alexander, after his sudden death in 323, disintegrated into various rival kingdoms until Rome took over the entire east. Rome is, therefore, the fourth empire of Daniel's vision, the one which sees the beginning of the kingdom of Christ. The famous prophecy of the seventy weeks seems to determine the coming of the messiah with still greater accuracy. The archangel Gabriel reveals to Daniel the true meaning of Jeremiah's prophecy that the captivity of the people would last seventy years (Jer 25:11-12). The seventy years, he says, stand for the seventy weeks of years, i.e. 490 years. This period is the final fourth of Jewish

³PATHWAYS IN SCRIPTURE, (Word of Life, Ann Arbor MI, 1976) pp. 223-224.

history, reaching from the building of the second temple to the advent of Christ, whose coming was announced to Mary by Gabriel (Lk 1:26).

11sn090
11.09.2017

A reading about the origins of the Basilica of Saint John the Baptist, commonly known as the Lateran. 1

The blessed Pope Sylvester I instituted the rites which the Roman Church observes in consecrating churches and altars. For although from the ages of the apostles places had been dedicated to God where assemblies were held every Sabbath, yet those places had not been consecrated by a solemn rite before this. Up to the time of Sylvester an altar was not erected under title, which, anointed with chrism, symbolizes our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Altar, our Victim, our Priest.

But when the Emperor Constantine obtained health and salvation through the sacrament of Baptism, then for the first time, by an edict published by him, the Christians throughout the world were permitted to build churches; he himself encouraged this holy building by his own example, as well as by this edict. For in his own Lateran palace he dedicated a church to the Savior and founded adjacent to it a Basilica, under the tile of St. John the Baptist, on the very spot where he had been baptized by St. Sylvester and cleansed from the leprosy of unbelief. This basilica the same Pope consecrated on November 9, and the memory of this consecration is celebrated today, when, for the first time, a church was publicly consecrated at Rome, and there appeared to the Roman people an image of the Savior depicted on the wall.

Although later on St. Sylvester decreed that from that time forward all altars should be built of stone, yet the altar of the Lateran Basilica was built of wood. This is not surprising. For since, from St. Peter down to Sylvester, because of persecutions, the Pontiffs could not dwell in any fixed abode, they offered the Holy Sacrifice [of the Mass] wherever necessity compelled

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adapted from *The Lessons of the Temporal Cycle and the Principal feasts of the Sanctoral Cycle According to the Monastic Breviary*, compiled and adapted for the Office of the Brothers of St. Meinrad's Abbey, St. Meinrad, IN, 1943, pp. 508-509.

them, whether in crypts or in cemeteries, or in the homes of the faithful, upon a wooden altar which was hollow like a chest.

When this altar had been placed in the first church, the Lateran, St. Sylvester decreed that from that time on, no one except the Roman Pontiff should celebrate Mass upon it, in honor of the Prince of the Apostles and of the rest of the Popes who had been accustomed to use it. This same church, having been destroyed by fires, pillaging, and earthquakes, and repaired by the laborious effort of the Supreme Pontiffs, was afterwards rebuilt anew. Pope Benedict XIII, a Dominican, consecrated it on April 28, 1726, by a solemn rite.

11SN1001
11.10.17

A Reading from a Sermon on Christian Sharing, by St. Leo the Great.⁴

It is a great and very precious thing, beloved, in the Lord's sight, when Christ's whole people engage together in the same duties, and all ranks and degrees of either sex co-operate with the same intent: when one purpose animates all alike of declining from evil and doing good; when God is glorified in the works of God's servants, and the Author of all godliness⁵ is blessed in unstinted giving of thanks.

The hungry are nourished, the naked are clothed, the sick are visited, and people seek not their own but "that which is another's," so long as in relieving the misery of others each one makes the most of one's own means; and it is easy to find "a cheerful giver," where one's performances are only limited by the extent of one's power.

By this grace of God, "which works all in all," the benefits and the deserts of the faithful are both enjoyed in common. For they, whose income is not like, can yet think alike, and when one rejoices over another's bounty, his feelings put him on the same level with him whose powers of spending are on a different level.

In such a community there is no disorder nor diversity, for all the members of the whole body agree in one strong purpose of godliness, and one who glories in the wealth of others is not put to shame by personal poverty. For the excellence of each portion is the glory of the whole body, and when we are all led by God's Spirit, not only are the things we do ourselves our own but those of others also over the doing of which we rejoice...

4 [□][Sermon 78, 4-5](#). cf. [Christian Readings II](#) p.311

5 [□]**Totius pietatis auctori**: cf. Collect for 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, which is based on that in the Gregorian Sacramentary.

But because we possess this greatness of heart, and yet it is truly a pious thing for each one not to forsake the care of one's own, we, without prejudice to the more perfect sort, lay down for you this general rule and exhort you to perform God's bidding according to the measure of your ability.

For cheerfulness becomes one who is benevolent, who should so manage liberality that while the poor rejoice over the help supplied, home needs may not suffer. "And he who ministers seed to the sower shall provide bread to be eaten and multiply your seed and increase the fruits of your righteousness."⁶

A Reading About St. Martin of Tours, from a letter of St. John 23rd.⁷

If St. Martin was a bishop and a zealous pastor who can well be imitated in the practice of charity, he was also and first of all a monk. You might even say that the only reason he was such a marvelous man of action was that he was first of all a man of prayer. And from this point of view too, he has a great lesson to give to the Christians of today.

Eager for solitude and union with God, this giant of the apostolate lived in constant prayer: "he never turned his mind away from prayer," according to the expression -later picked up by the liturgy- of his contemporary and first biographer Sulpicius Severus, who adds that once he was elevated to the episcopacy, the servant of God "remained what he had been before and bore the dignity of bishop without abandoning the design of life and the virtue of a monk."⁸

Was not his principal means of evangelization to found churches and monasteries everywhere?...And thus it was that, thanks to him, monasticism was introduced into France.

Throwing light on this side of the activity of the great convert-maker is a way of reminding [us]...of the immense benefits that the monks brought to their country; it is a way of drawing their attention, which is so easily distracted at the present time by the agitated pace of modern life,

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[□]Letter to the Archbp. of Tours on the occasion of the French "Martin of Tours Year," Dec. 10, 1960. Cf. Christian Readings II, p.312.

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[□]PL 20, 166.

back to the lasting greatness and beauties of monastic life; it is a way of inviting them to hold this form of life, and, in general, the grace of a religious vocation, high in their esteem...

The example of St. Martin, which has been confirmed by the experience of centuries, shows what invaluable instruments for spiritual elevation cloisters are in Christian society and what an effective contribution they make to the apostolate of the Church....

May the great Bishop, model of the monk and the pastor, succeed in stirring up a new spirit of fervor for the service of God.