

NT-MT46B

11.12.17

A Commentary on the Gospel by Anthony ¹

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, since purity of heart leads to perfection. Two things are connected within the heart – goodness which is natural to it and evil which is unnatural. This latter gives rise to such passions of the soul as murmuring, envy, detraction, and all the rest. Goodness, on the other hand, promotes knowledge of God and rids the soul of all these passions. If people honestly try to root out vice and avoid evil, if they repent with tears and sighs, devoting themselves humbly to a life of prayer, fasting, and watching, the Lord in his goodness will come to their aid and free them from all sinful inclinations.

Many who have lived a celibate life for a long time have failed to learn what purity of heart is, because instead of studying the teaching of the fathers, they have followed their own wayward desires. So evil spirits and rebel marauders of the air have prevailed against them, hurling invisible darts by day and night, and thus preventing them from finding rest anywhere. Moreover they fill their hearts with pride, vanity, jealousy, criticism, raging anger, strife and any number of other passions.

Such people are to be reckoned with the five foolish virgins because they have spent their time foolishly. They have not controlled their tongues nor cleansed their eyes and bodies from concupiscence. Neither have they purged their hearts of lust and other deplorable defilements. It is enough for them merely to wear a woolen garment signifying virginity. Consequently they lack the heavenly joy which would kindle their lamps, and the Bridegroom does not open the door to them, but repeats what he said to the foolish virgins: *Truly I say to you, I know you not*. My only reason for writing you this letter is my desire for your salvation. I want you to be free and faithful and pure brides of Christ, the Bridegroom of all holy souls; as Paul says: *I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste bride to Christ*.

Let us awake, then, while we are still in this body, and grieve over ourselves, lamenting day and night from the bottom of our hearts, so that

we may escape the bitter torment, the weeping, the wailing, and remorse that have no end. We must beware of entering through the wide gate and taking the easy road that leads to perdition, for many go that way. Instead we must enter by the narrow gate and take the path of sorrow and affliction that leads to life. Few people enter this gate, but those who do are real workers who will have the joy of receiving the reward of their labors and will, inherit the kingdom.

If we are prepared to set out, I do beg them not to delay and waste time, for they may be like the foolish virgins and find no one willing to sell them oil. These virgins burst into tears and cried out: *Lord, open to us.* But he answered: *Truly I say to you, I know you not.* And this happened to them simply because of their laziness.

I beg you by the grace of God to obey me as I also will obey you; and may we all obey the Lord who said by the tongue of the prophet: *Who longs for life and desires to see good days? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech. Turn away from evil and do good; seek and strive after peace.*

1Journey with the Fathers – vol. A – New City Press – NY – 1992 – pg 140

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11.13..2017

A reading from *The Golden Epistle* of William of St. Thierry in praise of the monastic vocation. 1

Surely it is right to feast in the Lord and rejoice because the fairest part of the Christian religion, which seemed to come into close contact with heaven, has returned to life after having died, has been found after being lost.

Our ears had heard tell of it, but we did not believe. We read in books of it and marveled at the ancient glory of the solitary life and at the great grace of God manifested in it; when suddenly we found it in the clearings of a wood, on God=s mountain, on the fertile mountain, where the fair places of the desert now wax fat on its richness and the hills are girt with exultation.

For there, through you it now offers itself to all and in you it displays itself. Hitherto unknown, it stands revealed in a few simple men. He who brings it among us is the same who by means of a few simple men subjected the whole world to himself, to the amazement of that world. *Y ADo not be afraid then, you, my little flock, @ says the Lord, Abut show utter trust, because your Father has determined to give you his kingdom@* (Lk 12.32)... It is not for you to concern yourselves feebly with the ordinary commandments nor to give your attention only to what God lays down as of obligation; you must seek his desires, fulfill in yourselves what is God=s will, the good thing, the desirable thing, the perfect thing.

It is for others to serve God, it is for you to cling to him; it is for others to believe in God, know him, love him and revere him; it is for you to taste him, understand him, be acquainted with him, enjoy him.

This is no slight matter, no easy goal; but he who, in his love, makes you such promises is almighty and good. He will be faithful in fulfilling them and

untiring in giving help. To those who in their great love for him pledge themselves to great things and, believing and trusting in his grace, undertake what is beyond their own strength, he imparts both the will and the desire; and he follows up the grace to will by bestowing also the power to achieve. Let the calumniator calumniate as he will: if a person faithfully does what is humanly possible for him to do, God himself in his mercy will give judgment for his poor one, will champion his cause, because the person did what he could.

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Yet, brethren, let all exaltation be far from the opinion you have of yourselves. Y Consider [others] as being far above you in strength and admire their glory, those who are mighty with both hands who use their left hand as readily as their right. As long as they are allowed, they love to stay inside and devote their leisure with all devotion to the contemplation of truth in charity; then when necessity summons or duty impels, they go out without a moment=s hesitation to give themselves to the practice of charity in truth.

Rather, in fear and trembling work out your own salvation. Do not wonder what others are like but, to the best of your ability, what they may become through your influence; not only those who are now alive but also those who will come after you and take you as their models in the pursuit of their vocation. For it is from you, from your example, from your authority that all the future of this holy Order in these parts will derive its character.

OT-DAN09

11/14/17

A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by St. Jerome ¹

Jeremiah had predicted seventy years for the desolation of the temple, at the end of which the people would again return to Judea and build the temple and the city of Jerusalem. However this fact did not render Daniel careless but rather encouraged him to pray that God might through his supplications fulfill that which he had graciously promised. Thus he avoided the danger that carelessness might result in pride, and pride cause offense to the Lord. Accordingly we read in Genesis that prior to the deluge, 120 years were appointed for humankind to come to repentance; and as they refused to repent even within so long an interval of time as a hundred years, God did not wait for the remaining twenty years to be fulfilled but brought on the punishment earlier than he had threatened for a later time. So also Jeremiah is told, on account of the hardness of heart of the Jewish people: "Pray not for this people, for I will not hearken to you." Samuel also was told, "How long will you mourn over Saul? I also have rejected him." And so it was with sackcloth and ashes that Daniel requested God to fulfill what he had promised, not because Daniel lacked faith concerning the future, but because he would rather avoid the danger that a feeling of security might produce carelessness, for carelessness in turn might produce an offense to God.

Concerning the same God of whom Daniel had previously said, "To you, O Lord, belongs justice," he now says (since the Lord is not only just but also merciful): "To you belongs mercy." He says this in order that he might call on the judge to show mercy after his sentence has been imposed. That is, you have not poured out on us all your wrath, for we should not have been able to bear it, but you have poured forth a mere droplet of your fury, in order that we might return to you once we have been enmeshed in your snare.

Whenever we are rebuked because of our sins, God is keeping watch over us and visiting us with discipline. But whenever we are left alone by

¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – vol XIII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2008 – pg 260

God and we do not suffer judgment but are unworthy of the Lord's rebuke, then he is said to slumber. And so we read in the Psalms as well: "The Lord has risen up as one who was slumbering ." For our wickedness and iniquity enflames God and whenever it is rebuked in our case, God is said to be keeping careful watch and to rising up out of his drowsy sleep, in order that we who are drunken with sin may be made to pay careful heed to righteousness.

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11.15.2017

A reading from *The Narrative of the Late Abbot Eutropius Of the Foundation of the Trappist Monastery at Gethsemani, Kentucky.*²

We left Louisville on the twentieth of December, and were to arrive that evening at Bardstown. Here we were to call on the Jesuit Fathers who conducted the College of St. Joseph, and to whom we had a letter of introduction from Monsignor Flaget. We should arrive by daylight at Bardstown, which was twelve miles from Gethsemani; but the unfavorable weather delayed us very much, and we were yet nine miles from the town, when a dark and dreary night set in. We did not stop to take any nourishment by the wayside, but refreshed ourselves as best we could, in the wagons, with bread, cheese and fruit. The good God supplied the drink. The rain did not cease to fall abundantly the entire day, so that, alighting from the wagons, we resembled water rats that came out of the river. To complete our misfortune, about eight o'clock in the evening one of our wagons broke down. It was useless for any further service. The strongest and most vigorous in the other two wagons alighted and gave place to the most feeble in the broken one. One-third of the colony made the rest of the journey on foot to Bardstown.

We arrived at eleven o'clock. The streets were so full of water and mud that we were knee-deep therein. We went directly to St. Joseph's College. Our guides, weary and hungry, left us at its walls and went to a hotel. Our difficulty was to find the entrance. We knocked again and again, but no answer. Not knowing what to do, we called aloud together the word ATrappist.@ In this we were successful.

The following day, having heard Holy Mass and received Holy Communion, our conductors arrived, with a new wagon, borrowed by them at Bardstown. After thanking our hosts for their kind hospitality, we installed ourselves in the wagons and pursued our way to Gethsemani. About two o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived at the entrance of a large forest, after passing the little village of New Haven on the Nashville Railroad. We were

² Documents Relating to Gethsemani's History in the Scriptorium, Gethsemani Abbey.

informed that this was the beginning of our property. It is difficult to express the feelings that this announcement produced in our souls. I had the wagons stop. Falling on our knees we recited a APater and Ave@ to salute the good guardian angels of Gethsemani; and we kissed the earth soon to be watered by our sweat and even by our tears. We passed a small stream. We climbed a hill on which are situated wooden cottages, declining with age. We were told that these were the places destined for our dwellings. I was glad at the thought that we were going to find at last the crib of our Divine Savior at Bethlehem. Such, too, were the thoughts of all our religious. They were in transports of joy in beholding these ten or twelve cottages, thrown here and there on the sloping hillside, facing the sun. These composed the entire monastery of Gethsemani.

11SN1603

11/16/17

FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. GERTRUDE THE GREAT³

O love, the fruition of you is that worthiest coupling of your Word and the soul which is brought about by perfect union with God. To use you is to become intertwined in God. To enjoy you is to be one with God. You are that peace which surpasses all understanding and you are the road by which one comes to the inner chamber.

Oh, if only it happened to me, too, miserable as I am, to repose for a moment under your dearest cloak of cherishing-love so that my heart might be emboldened by one consolatory utterance of your living Word, or that my soul might hear this good and pleasant word from your mouth: 'I am your salvation; behold, now the bedchamber of my heart is open to you.'

Why, then, O love so unwavering, have you deeply loved someone so foul, so ugly, if not to make her beautiful in you? Your loving-kind charity attracts and allures me, O tender flower of the virgin Mary.

Let me not be confounded in my expectation but grant me to find rest for my soul in you. I have found nothing more desirable, I have judged nothing more lovable, I have wished for nothing more dear than to be held tight, O love, in your embraces, to rest under the wings of my Jesus, and to dwell in the tabernacle of divine charity.

O love, O radiant noonday, I would die a thousand times to be at rest in you. If only you would bend to me your face of such beautiful cherishing-love, O dearest one.

³SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, by St Gertrude the Great, Trans. by G. J. Lewis & J. Lewis (Cistercian Publications Kalamazoo 1989) pp. 78-79.

Oh, if I were granted to come exceedingly close to you so that I might now find myself not only next to you but within you. Then, through you, sun of justice, flowers of all the virtues might arise in me, who am dust and ashes. With you as a husband, my Lord, such fecundity might enter my soul that the renowned offspring of total perfection would be born in me. Then, having been snatched from the valley of this misery, I might be able to glory in you forever in the presence of your desirable face; for you, mirror without spot, have not scorned to be, in truth, coupled with a sinner like me.

OT-DAN10

11/17/17

A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by Primasius ¹

This is what Daniel says when he talks about the seventy weeks: “Seventy weeks will be for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and sixty-two weeks until Christ the Prince. After the sixty-two weeks the Christ will be killed, and he will have nothing. And a people with their leader will come and destroy the city and the sanctuary.” A little later: “He will confirm a covenant with many for a week, and in the middle of the week the offering and sacrifice will fail, and there will be an abomination of desolation.” Since these things must be understood to refer to Christ’s first coming, in which those things were done and also received their outcome, nonetheless that portion after the division of the weeks (which he distributed in a rather secret manner of heavenly inspiration), first making mention of seven, then sixty-two, finally one, which he also divided into two parts), that is, the final week is aptly applied to the end of the first coming of Christ and to the beginning of his second coming. To state it more clearly, I think that it necessarily must apply to both comings in an interpretation that applies harmoniously to both. For after seven and sixty-two weeks the Christ would come and be killed, and he would reprove those who killed him, just as it was said that the same people would not be his. And as for his confirming a covenant with many during one week, one would rightly understand that all the words of the Old Testament and the actions that foretold by type the Christ’s coming have been fulfilled by the truth of his presence, who is the end of the law. Nonetheless, I think that the intention of this week most aptly pertains to the end of the world, since I hear soon thereafter, “And in half a week offering and sacrifice will come to an end.

¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – vol. XIII – InterVarsity Press
– Downers Grove, IL – 2008 – pg 268

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In her hiddenness we find Mary's greatness; from a book by Thomas Merton.⁴

In all the great mystery of Mary, then, one thing remains most clear: that of herself she is nothing, and that God has for our sakes delighted to manifest his glory and his love in her.

It is because she is, of all the saints, the most perfectly poor and the most perfectly hidden, the one who has absolutely nothing whatever that she attempts to possess as her own, that she can most fully communicate to the rest of us the grace of the infinitely selfless God. And we will most truly possess him when we have emptied ourselves and become poor and hidden as she is, resembling him by resembling her.

And all our sanctity depends on her maternal love. The ones she desires to share the joy of her own poverty and simplicity, the ones whom she wills to be hidden as she is hidden, are the ones who share her closeness to God.

It is a tremendous grace, then, and a great privilege when a person living in the world we have to live in, suddenly loses his interest in the things that absorb that world and discovers in his own soul an appetite for poverty and solitude. And the most precious of all the gifts of nature or grace is the desire to be hidden and to vanish from human sight and be accounted as nothing by the world and to disappear from one's own self-conscious consideration and vanish into nothingness in the immense poverty that is the adoration of God.

This absolute emptiness, this poverty, this obscurity holds within it the secret of all joy because it is full of God. To seek this emptiness is true devotion to the Mother of God. To find it is to find her. And to be hidden in

⁴ *New Seeds of Contemplation*, New Directions, 1961, pp. 173-75.

its depths is to be full of God as she is full of him, and to share her mission of bringing him to all peoples.

Yet all generations must call her blessed, because they all receive through her obedience whatever supernatural life and joy is granted to them. And it is necessary that the world should acknowledge her and that the praise of God's great work in her should be sung in poetry and that cathedrals should be built in her name. For unless Our Lady is recognized as the Mother of God and as the Queen of all the saints and angels and as the hope of the world, faith in God will remain incomplete. How can we ask him for all the things he would have us hope for if we do not know, by contemplating the sanctity of the Immaculate Virgin, what great things he has power to accomplish in us.