

NT-MT51

11.26.17

A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by Hippolytus ¹

As the holy gospel clearly proclaims, the Son of Man will gather together all nations. *He will separate people one from another, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep he will place at his right hand, the goats at his left. Then he will say to those at his right: Come, my Father's blessed ones, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..* Come, you lovers of poor people and strangers. Come, you who have fostered my love, for I am love. Come, you who shared peace, for I am peace.

Come, my Father's blessed ones, inherit the kingdom prepared for you who did not make an idol of wealth, who gave alms to the poor, help to orphans and widows, drink to the thirsty, and food to the hungry. Come, you who welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, visited the sick, comforted prisoners, and assisted the blind. Come, you who kept the seal of faith unbroken, who were swift to assemble in the churches, who listened to my Scriptures, longed for my words, observed my law day and night, and like good soldiers shared in my suffering because you wanted to please me, your heavenly King. *Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Look, my kingdom is ready, paradise stands open, my immortality is displayed in all its beauty. Come now, all of you, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

Then, astounded at so great a wonder – at being addressed as friends by him whom the angels are unable clearly to behold – the righteous will reply, exclaiming:

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? Master, when did we see you thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you, whom we hold in awe, naked and clothe you? When did we see you, the immortal One, a stranger and welcome you? When did we see you, lover of our race. sick or in prison and come to visit you, You are the Eternal, without beginning like the Father, and co-equal with the Spirit. You are the One who created all things from nothing; you are the King of the angels; you make the depths tremble; you are clothed in light as in a robe; you are our maker who fashioned us from the earth; you are the creator of the world invisible. The whole earth flies from your presence. How could we possibly have received your lordship, your royal majesty, as our guest?

Then will the King of Kings say to them in reply: *Inasmuch as you did this to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.* Inasmuch as you received, clothed, fed and gave drink to these members of mine about whom I have just spoken to you, that is, to the poor, you did it to me. So come, enter *the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* enjoy forever the gift of my heavenly Father, and of the most holy and life-giving Spirit. What tongue can describe these blessings? *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – 1992 – pg 145

Commentary on the Prophecy of Daniel by St. Jerome ¹

Daniel saw two angels standing on either side of the bank of the river of Babylon. Although it is mentioned here without specifying its name, I suppose that in line with the preceding vision it would be the Tigris River. Yet Daniel does not address his question to those who were standing on either bank but rather to the one whom he had seen at the beginning, who was clothed in vesture of linen.

And this same angel was standing on the waters of the river of Babylon, treading in them with his feet. From this fact we understand that the former pair of angels whom he saw standing on the bank and did not question or deem worthy of interrogation were the angels of the Greeks and Persians. But this first angel was the gracious one who had presented Daniel's prayers before God during the twenty-one days while the angel of the Persians was opposing him. And Daniel was asking about these wonders spoken of in the present vision, as to the time when they would be accomplished.

The prophet wished to comprehend what he had seen, or rather what he had heard, and he desired to understand the reality of the things to come. For he had heard of the various wars of kings, and of battles between them and a detailed narrative of events, but he had not heard the name of the individual persons involved. And if the prophet himself had heard and did not understand, what will be the case with those people who presumptuously expound a book that has been sealed, and sealed until the time of the end, a book that is shrouded with many obscurities. But he comments that when the end comes, the ungodly will lack comprehension, whereas those who are learned in the teaching of God will be able to understand. "For wisdom will not enter the perverted soul."

Porphyry asserts that these 1,290 days were fulfilled in the desolation of the temple at the time of Antiochus, and yet both Josephus and the book of Maccabees record that it lasted for only three years. From the circumstance it is apparent that the three and a half years are spoken of in connection with the time of the antichrist, for he is going to persecute the saints for three and a half years, or 1,290 days, and then he shall meet his fall on the famous holy mountain. And so from the time of the removal of continual sacrifice, namely, the time when the antichrist shall obtain possession of the world and forbid the worship of God, until the day of his death, the three and a half years, or 1,290 days, shall be fulfilled.

He means that one is blessed who waits for 45 days beyond the pre-determined number, for it is within that period that our Lord and Savior is to come in his glory. For the reason for the 45 days of inaction after the slaying of the antichrist is a matter that rests in the knowledge of God; unless, of course, we say that the rule of the saints is

¹Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – Old Testament – vol. XIII – Inter-Varsity Press – Downers Grove, IL
– 2008 – pg 309

delayed in order that their patience may be tested. Porphyry explains this passage in the following way: that the 45 days beyond the 1, 290 signify the interval of victory over the generals of Antiochus or the period when Judas Maccabeus fought with bravery and cleansed the temple and broke the idol to pieces, offering blood sacrifices in the temple of God.

GN-VOC08

11.28.17

A Reading about the vocation of John the Baptist, from a book by Jean Danielou.¹

Vocation is something completely personal. It does not make us merely creatures, subject to the general laws of human nature; rather, it confers on us a special name all our own, which expresses the particular call which belongs to each one of us. In this sense, God's act of giving a name to someone is his way of expressing that person's vocation. Thus the Lord changed Abram's name to Abraham. Thus Simon's name was changed to Peter. There was also a mystery surrounding the name of John: And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John."

For the evangelist to have put such importance on this event, the whole episode must have been filled with meaning. And in fact it brings out clearly the personal nature of election. John was not to have his father's name, as that would simply point him out as a member of a particular family. Rather God gave him a personal name which expressed his unique vocation and marked him out as one specially chosen by God. "He called me by name" (Is 49:1). This name expresses the single, unique reality possessed by every human person: the individual is not lost in the amorphous mass of humanity, but is loved with a personal love. Thus the name expresses that unique quality which God willed in creating each human person, that spiritual work which the person carries on within. This name expresses more the inner reality of the person: that hidden life of the soul which God alone knows and only he reveals: "I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev 2:17).

But this personal relationship between every human soul and God can be considered on two different levels. First of all, it is a constitutive element of existence itself. I exist only to the extent that God calls me, keeps me in existence very moment, gives me to myself. This personal relationship to God is not a second moment. It is a constitutive element of my being.

But there is a second relationship to God, which is found not only on the level of being but also on the level of action. And this is properly one's vocation. My name not only expresses what I am, but also what I have to do. Or perhaps it is another name: in this case God adds to the first a name which expresses one's vocation. But in John's case, the two names were given together. John did not have to change his name, for his vocation did not come to him later on in life, but began even before his birth. In this, too, his vocation sets a pattern for all. God does not call me only to exist, but also to do his work. He summons me especially for that purpose. And just as

my being is unique, so in my vocation: God calls me to it personally, and I respond to it personally.

[1](#) "The Work of John the Baptist", Baltimore, 1966, pp 15-16.

OT-DAN14

11.29.17

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

The book of Daniel is divided into two main parts: a “historical” section, recording five episodes from the life of Daniel that show the power of Yahweh over the king of Babylon, and a “prophetic” part, containing four visions which reveal the superiority of God over the empires of the world. Two additional stories, that of Susanna (ch 13) and that of Bel and the Dragon (ch. 14) are added in the Greek versions. The fact that the book is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldean, with the final two chapters in Greek 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 statue 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 peoples 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.

[1](#) Pathways in Scripture – Damasus Winzen – Word of Life – Ann Arbor, MI – 1976 – pg 223

11SN3001

11.30.2017

TAKING UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOWING CHRIST, from a Sermon by St Bernard²

Today we celebrate the festival of St Andrew, and if we ponder it lovingly we shall find much for the building up of our souls...

You will surely have noticed how St Andrew, when he reached the place where the cross was prepared, was strengthened in the Lord, and began to utter those burning words, through the Spirit whom he had received in tongues of fire, along with the other apostles... His mouth spoke from the abundance of his heart, and that love which burned in his heart flashed forth as bright flame in his voice. And what did blessed Andrew say, when as I said, he saw in the distance the cross which had been prepared for him? 'O cross,' he said, 'so long desired and now made ready for my eager spirit! With joy and confidence I come to you, therefore do you too receive me gladly, as the disciple of him who hanged on you; for I have always been your lover and have longed to embrace you'...

From where come such hitherto unknown joy and exultation? Whence such constancy in fragility? Whence, in a mere human, such spiritual ardor, such burning love, such vigor of soul? Far be it from us to imagine that it comes from his own strength. It is a perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights, for he alone does great wonders.(Ja 1:17) It was indeed the Spirit, beloved brethren, who came to the aid of his weakness, through whom that love strong as death was poured into our hearts, indeed it is stronger than death. May God give us a share in it!... If we grow weary and sleep at vigils, it is only because of our feeble spirit. If the Holy Spirit is present, doubtless he helps our infirmity; what he did for St Andrew on the cross and in his death, he will also do for us in our toil and penance: not only will he make these seem no longer burdensome, he will even make them a desire and a delight. 'My Spirit', says the Lord, 'is sweeter than honey', so that the bitterness of death, no matter how bitter, would not be able to lessen its sweetness...

Let us seek this Spirit, my brethren, let us do our utmost to gain him, or to possess him more fully if he is not already in us. Because 'anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'(Rom 8:9). 'We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God'.(1Cor 2:12)

We must take up our cross with St Andrew, or rather, with him whom St Andrew followed, the Lord our Savior. The cause of his joy and exultation was that he was dying not only for his Lord but also with him, in like manner, that suffering with him he might reign with him. And we too, if we are to be crucified with him, let us listen with the ears of our heart to his voice saying: 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'... (Mt 16:24) For in the cross is our salvation, provided we cleave to it firmly. 'The word of the cross,' says the

²Deuxieme sermon pour la fete de St Andre, 1, 3-5, 7: PL 183, 509-512.

Apostle, 'is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God'.
(1Cor 1:18)

OT-DAN15

12.01.17

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

The walls of the catacombs are covered with Daniel. There is Susanna, represented standing between two wolves. Susanna is the symbol of the Church and of the soul before its judge. The wolves are the elders. The unbelieving Jews and gentiles. The garden is this world. The bath points to baptism. The two maids are faith and charity. Young Daniel stands for Christ, the deliverer. Likewise the story of the three youths in the fiery furnace was popular among the Christians of old, because they saw in them the likeness of themselves who, reborn in baptism, moved unharmed and free, in the presence of Christ (the angel) joyfully glorifying God amidst the flames of the furnace of this world. How often do we see Daniel standing in the lion's den, with his hands uplifted in prayer! The pit represents "the world yonder"; the lions, the enemy spirits. Daniel is the departed soul, saved through prayer in the name of Christ. Sometimes Habakkuk brings the bread of holy viaticum. Daniel in the lion's den is also a prophecy of Christ, his passion and resurrection. In Lent it refers to the faithful Christians, who, through fasting and penitential works, takes upon himself Christ's sufferings, is strengthened through the holy Eucharist, and will one day share in the resurrection.

Thus Daniel is in every way a representative of that new generation which grew up innocently. He points to that other new generation which has been born through Christ's death and resurrection. Unimpressed by the pomp of the world in which they live, they turn their back to the kings and empires and go up to the altar of Christ who is the joy of their youth.

¹Pathways in Scripture – Damasus Winzen – Word of Life – Ann Arbor, MI – 1976 – pg 225

MY-02.wpd

12.02.2017

A READING ABOUT MARY, THE FIRST ONE TO BE FULLY HUMAN, from a homily by Nicholas Cabasilas.³

³Homily for the Birth of the Mother of God, 16.18: Patrologia Orientalis, vol 19, "Byzantine Marian Homilies," pp 482-484; trans CR V p 294.

When the moment had arrived for a human nature to meet the divine nature and to become so intimately united with it that the two constitute only one person, each nature had of necessity to manifest itself already in its integrity. God, on his part, had revealed himself in a way that was suitable to God; and the Virgin was the only one to bring to light the human nature. And so, when Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, came into the world, the two natures of which he is constituted were both already clearly manifested.

In the beginning God had made the spiritual creature and after that the material creature. After that he had created human beings which were composed of two elements. Likewise, the Incarnate God was brought into the world at the end of the times whereas God existed from the beginning, and we had but recently appeared in the last ages. It seems, therefore, that if God has united himself to the human nature not from its origin but in the evening of the ages, it is because that nature was not yet fully born before this moment whereas now it has appeared for the first time in its integrity...

All this is what we have come to celebrate with solemnity today. The day of Mary's birth is also that of the birth of the whole world, for on that day has been born the first one to be fully human. Now, the "earth has" truly "yielded its fruits," that earth which, from all time, had produced only the corruption of sin, together with brambles and thorns. Now heaven knows that it has not been built in vain, because humanity, for which it was made, has seen the light of day....

That is why all creation addresses endless praises to the Virgin, why every language unanimously sings her glory, why humanity and all the choirs of angels ceaselessly create hymns to the honor of the Mother of God. We too sing to her and all together offer her our praise; a praise that falls below the honor we owe her or what we have the intention to give her with our lips. Great remains our debt in this respect!

It belongs to you, Virgin worthy of your praise, and to your love for us, to estimate the gift of grace we have acquired not by ourselves but through your generosity. Chosen from among all people of our race as a gift offered to God, you have adorned the rest of us with beauty. Sanctify our heart, therefore, which conceived the words we address to you, and prevent the field of our soul from producing any evil, through the grace and goodness of your only Son, the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ. To him is due all glory, honor, and adoration, as also to his eternal Father and to the most holy Spirit, all-good and life-giving, now and always, for all ages. Amen.