

NTMK21

12.10.18

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Origen ¹

Let us examine the scriptural texts foretelling the coming of Christ. One such prophecy begins with a reference to John the Baptist: *The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.* What follows, however, applies directly to our Lord and Savior, since it is by Jesus rather than by John that *every valley has been filled in.*

You have only to recall the kind of people you were before you put your faith in the Lord to see yourselves as deep valleys, as pits plunging precipitously into the lower depths. But now that the Lord Jesus has come and has sent the Holy Spirit in his name, all your valleys have been filled in with good works and the Holy Spirit's fruits. Love no longer tolerates the presence of valleys in your lives; if peace, patience, and goodness find a home in you, not only will each of you cease to be a valley, but you will actually begin to be a mountain of God.

Among the pagans we daily see this prophetic filling of every valley realized, just as among the people of Israel, now deprived of their former privileged status, we see the overthrowing of every mountain and hill. But *because of their offense, salvation has come to the pagans, to stir Israel to emulation.*

If you prefer you can visualize these fallen mountains and hills as the hostile powers that formerly raised themselves up in opposition to the human race. Such an interpretation is legitimate because, in order to fill in the kind of valleys we have been speaking of, the enemy powers – the mountains and hills – must be laid low.

Now let us turn to that part of the prophecy which also concerns the coming of Christ and see whether this too has been fulfilled. The text continues: *Every crooked way shall be straightened.* Each one of us was once crooked; if we are no longer so, it is entirely due to the grace of Christ. Through his coming to our souls all our crooked ways have been straightened out. If Christ did not come to your soul, of

what use would his historical coming in the flesh be to you? Let us pray that each day we may experience his coming and be able to say: *It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me.*

Jesus my Lord has come, then. He has smoothed out your rough places and changed your disorderly ways into level paths, making in you an even unimpeded road, a road that is absolutely clear, so that God the father may walk in you and Christ the Lord make his dwelling in you and say: *My Father and I will come and make our home in them.*

1Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – NY – pg 12

TM-ADV76

12.11.17

Sermon One for Advent by B. Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

You should know, dearest brothers, that this blessed season which we call *Adventum Domini* – the advent or the Coming of the Lord – represents two things to us. Therefore we should rejoice in both for both bring us benefit. This season makes present to us both comings of our Lord. First of all, that gentle coming when the son of God, *the fairest of the sons of the human family, the Longed-for of all nations*, gave to the world his visible presence in the flesh which had been long awaited and ardently desired by all the ancestors. At that time *he came into this world to save sinners*. And secondly, that coming which we must await with firm hope and indeed often call to mind with tears, when this same Lord of ours, who first came hidden in the flesh, will come manifested in all his glory. As we sing in the psalm: *God shall come manifestly*, and so on – that is, on the Day of Judgment when he comes manifestly to judge. His first coming was made known to only a few just persons. In his second coming he will appear manifestly to the just and to sinners alike, as the Prophet clearly implies when he says: *All flesh shall see the salvation of God*. Just as the day which we shall in a short time celebrate in memory of his birth presents him to us as having been born – that is to say, it more expressly signals that very day and hour when he came into this world – so this season we are observing in preparation for that day makes him present as longed for, that is, as the longing maintained by the holy Ancestors, those who lived before his coming.

Beautifully then is it provided in the Church that during this season we read the words of those who lived before the Lord's first coming and their longings are recalled. Nor do we celebrate their longing for only one day, but for quite a long time. This is because whenever we are kept waiting a while for something we greatly long for, when what we love does come it seems sweeter to us. It is up to us, then, dearest brothers, to follow the example of the holy Ancestors and to recall their longings and so to set our minds on fire with love of and desire for Christ.

You should know that it was for this reason that the observance of this season was enjoined on us: that we should consider the longing which our holy ancestors had for the first coming of the Lord. By their example let us learn to have a great longing for his second coming. We should reflect on what good things our Lord did for us by his first coming and what yet greater he will do for us by his second. And by considering this, we should love that first coming of his very much and very much long for the second.

And if we do not have a good enough conscience to dare to long for his coming, we should at least fear his coming and by that fear correct our faults. Then, even though we may not be able not to fear him now, we shall at least not fear him when he comes, but may be confident. It is indeed true, brothers, that those who pay careful attention to themselves now and fear the day of judgment before it comes will undoubtedly have no fear then when it does come.

1 Aelred of Rievaulx: The Liturgical sermons – Cistercian Fathers
Series #58 – Cistercian Publications – Kalamazoo – 2001 – pg 57f

**The appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Guadalupe, Mexico:
a reading from the first account in the Aztec Tongue.¹**

Upon his reaching the top of the hillock, Juan Diego catches sight of a woman, one who has been taking her stand there. She beckons him to come on, closer up to herself. Upon reaching her presence, he greatly marvels at her extreme, her surpassing, her perfect wonderfulness.

Her garments are as the sun, gleaming, glittering. Even the boulder, the crag, on which she takes her stand sparkles in resplendence, like fine emerald jade or a bangle when it shines, like the swarming glow of a rainbow in the gloom. Even the soil, the brambles and prickles and the rest of the varied weeds that struggle to survive there are shining like emerald, like divine turquoise, to the tip of every leaf; are glittering like the golden scourings of the gods up every stalk and twig and thorn.

In her presence he prostrates; he listens to her utterance, her declaration. These are as of one who sets others at ease, one whose manner is to attract, one whose attitude is to esteem. She addresses him: "Do listen to me, my littlest one, Juanito! Whither are you betaking yourself?"

He in turn makes reply: "My sovereign, O Woman, my Maiden, it is yonder that I am bound, to your dwelling in Mexico-Tlatilolko, in pursuit of things divine which they minister to us, which they teach to us, those representatives of the Person of our Sovereign, who are our priests." Forthwith she informs him, she presents to him her sacred wish. She addresses him: "Do know this, do be assured of it in your heart, my littlest one, that I myself, I am the entirely and ever Virgin Saint Mary, Mother of the True Divinity, God Himself: Because of

¹ GUADALUPE, a translation of the NICAN MOPOHUA by Fr Martinus Cawley, OCSO; CARA Studies on Popular Devotion, vol.II; Guadalupan Studies Monograph No. 6.

Him, life goes on, Creation goes on; His are all things afar, His are all things near at hand, things above in the heavens, things here below on the earth. How truly I wish it, how greatly I desire it, that here they should erect me my temple! Here would I show forth, here would I lift up to view, here would I make a gift of all my fondness for my dear ones, all my regard for my needy ones, my willingness to aid them, my readiness to protect them. For truly I myself, I am your compassionate mother, yours, for you yourself, for everybody here in the land, for each and all together, for all others too, for all folk of every kind, who do but cherish me, who do but raise their voices to me, who do but seek me, who do but raise their trust to me.

For here I shall listen to their groanings, to their saddenings; here shall I make well and heal up their each and every kind of disappointment, of exhausting pangs, of bitter aching pain."

12SN1302

12.13.17

**REGAINING THE VIRGIN-MIND IN OUR LIVES,
from a book by Caryll Houselander²**

The whole process of contemplation through imitation of Our Lady can be gone through, in the first place, with just that simple purpose of regaining the virgin-mind, and as we go on in the attempt we shall find that over and over again there is a new emptying process; it is a thing which has to be done in contemplation as often as the earth has to be sifted and the field ploughed for seed.

At the beginning it will be necessary for each individual to discard deliberately all the trifling unnecessary things in his life, all the hard blocks and congestions; not necessarily to discard all his interests for ever, but at least once to stop still, and having prayed for courage, to visualize himself without all the extras, escapes, and interests other than Love in his life: to see ourselves as if we had just come from God's hand and had gathered nothing to ourselves yet, to discover just what shape *is* the virginal emptiness of our own being, and of what material we are made. We need to be reminded that every second of our survival does really mean that we are new from God's fingers, so that it requires no more than the miracle which we never notice to restore to us our virgin-heart at any moment we like to choose.

Our own effort will consist in sifting and sorting out everything that is not essential and that fills up space and silence in us and in discovering what sort of shape this emptiness in us, is. From this we shall learn what sort of purpose God has for us. In what way are we to fulfill the work of giving Christ life in us. Are we reed pipes? Is He waiting to live lyrically through us? Are we chalices? Does He ask to be sacrificed in us? Are we nests? Does He desire of us a warm, sweet abiding in domestic life at home? These are only some of the possible forms of virginity; each person may find some quite different form, his own secret... It is the purpose for which something is made that decides the material which is used...

The purpose for which human beings are made is told to us briefly in the catechism. It is to know, love and serve God in this world and to be happy with Him for ever in the next. This knowing, loving, and serving is far more intimate than that rather cold little sentence reveals to us. The material which God has found apt for it is human nature; blood, flesh, bone, salt, water, will, intellect. It is impossible to say too often or too strongly that human nature, body and soul together, is the material for God's will in us. There are many people in the world who cultivate a curious state which they call "the spiritual life." They often complain that they have very little time to devote to the "spiritual life." The only time that they do not regard as wasted is the time they can devote to pious exercises: praying, reading, meditations, and visiting the church.

All the time spent in earning a living, cleaning the home, caring for the children, making and mending clothes, cooking, and all the other manifold duties and responsibilities, is regard as wasted. Yet it is really through ordinary human life and the things of every hour of every day that union with God comes about.

12SN1404

12.14.17

The Mystery of God Made Flesh. From the Poems of St. John of the Cross.³

Far away in the beginning
Dwelt the Word in God most High
And in God His bliss eternal
Had He everlastingly.

That same Word was God almighty,
And Beginning was His name,
For He dwelt in the beginning,
Out of no beginning came.

He Himself was that beginning
Wherefore He Himself had none.
He that sprang from that beginning
Was the Word, called also Son.

Everpast has God conceived Him
And conceives Him evermore,
Gives Him ever of His substance
Ever shares it as of yore.

Thus His glory in the Father
Is the glory of the Son:
All His glory had the Father
In His best beloved One.

As Beloved dwells in Lover
Each in other did reside,
And that same love that unites Them
Did in both of Them abide;

3 □ Counsels of Light and Love of St. John of the Cross, edited by Thomas Merton. Carmelite Monastery. Wheeling, W.VA., 1953.p.78.

Each was equal to the Other
And in worth ranked equally.
Thus there were in that tri-union
One Beloved, Persons three.

(over)

One the love that did unite Them,
One the Lover in all Three:
Lover that is the Beloved,
In Whom each dwelt equally.

For the Being of three Persons
They possess'd the Same Each One,
Each One loving both the Others
Since They had it as Their own.

This same Being is each Person:
Naught but this conjoin'd them well
In a tie so strange and wondrous
That its nature none can tell.

Infinite and everlasting
Was the love that bound them so.
One alone this love that bound Them
Which as Essence we may know,
And the more this love had oneness,
More the love that thence did grow.

TM-ADV77

12.15.17

Continuation of a Sermon of BI Aelred of Rievalux on Advent ¹

The Lord came the first time to free us from our sins, but at his second coming he will heal *all our infirmities*. So it is that the person who bids his soul bless the Lord also gives the reason: *Who forgives all your iniquities*, he says, *who heals all your infirmities*. The one refers to the Lord's first coming; the other to his second. For by his first coming he eradicated our sins, but we still suffer great infirmities in punishment for those sins. Who can count all the infirmities of this life: hunger, thirst, toil, pain, disease, lethargy, weariness? Yet these apply to the body. How many infirmities of the soul there are! How much concupiscence, how many temptations! All these infirmities – and all the others which we cannot pause to mention – the Lord will heal by his second coming. Then will be fulfilled the apostle's words: *This perishable body must be clothed in incorruptibility*, and so on.

By his first coming our Lord raised us up only in soul; by his second coming he will raise us up in body, too. As we now serve God with both – the body and the soul – so then in both we shall enjoy perfect happiness with God. At his first coming he gave us the faith that enables us to believe in him. At his second coming he will endow us with the capacity to see him, not as the wicked will see him on the day of judgment – for on the day of judgment the good and the bad alike will all see him in the likeness in which he bore his sufferings for us and in which he rose and ascended into heaven – but we shall see him as those who are pure of heart will be able to see him. For the Lord says: *Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God*. That is to say, we shall see his godhead too, that excellence and that beauty which now the angels see. For we shall be *like the angels of God in heaven*. Yet if we love him now and long for him and scorn all worldly pleasures and honors, then surely we shall see him confidently in the likeness in which he shall judge *the living and the dead*. And we shall have the happiness of seeing him in that likeness in which he will show himself only to the good whom he will take with himself from judgment into the kingdom.

Let us think a moment, so far as we can, about how much joy we shall have and how much happiness if – on that day when heaven and earth are in flames, when the Lord comes with such power and might – we can be confident and not only not fear him when he comes but love him very much and look to him with confidence. And therefore, brothers, if we want to enjoy that gladness and confidence then, let us strive to love our Lord greatly. Whom should we love so much as our Creator and our Lord, and above all our Redeemer? There is this further point, that we can love nothing else with as much confidence, for whatever else we love we shall surely have to lose. If we take delight in things we must lose, then, when the time comes for us to lose them, we shall feel distress equal to our former delight. Let us, therefore, love confidently him who is eternal and who is eternally good in the same way and always delightful in the same way. Let us love him so much now, brothers, that when we see him coming *from heaven with his angels* we may have no fear of his coming but may immediately, with great longing, run to him as to a cherished friend.

[1](#)Aelred of Rievaulx: The Liturgical Sermons – Cistercian Fathers
Series #58 – Cistercian Publications – Kalamazoo – 2001 – pg 59f

TM-ADV78

12.16.17

Continuation of a Sermon of Bl. Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

Would that you would burst the heavens, Lord, and come down. The mountains would dissolve before your face. What do you think the holy prophet was longing for by these words? Christ's first coming, surely, and with great longing. And immediately he states the reason for longing so ardently for him: *The mountains would dissolve before your face.* For that holy man saw how the devil, who fell from heaven through his own pride, held the whole human race in his possession. He saw how the devil swelled with pride and strutted because nearly every human person in the world was imitating his pride. This the prophet saw and it caused him great sorrow. The prophet knew that Providence had determined the time of his coming, but he found it very difficult to endure such delay. And therefore he longed for God, if it were possible, to anticipate the hour he had fixed. This is the meaning of the words: *Would that you would burst the heavens, Lord, and come down.*

It is as if he had said: I know, O Lord, that you are waiting for the time which you foresaw from the beginning. You are waiting until everything has been fulfilled which the holy ones have said must be fulfilled before your coming. But *would that you would burst the heavens, Lord* – that is, if only you would, if it were possible, break through that plan of yours which you have revealed to the heavens – that is, to your saints – and come. I see this devil's pride. He has lured the whole human race into his power and now he is laying his hands on the people whom you have chosen as your own. Why do you still linger? Why do you delay yet longer? Look how many years have passed since you first promised us that he would come and still he does not come. Hence this plea of Isaiah: *Would that you would burst the heavens, Lord, and come down.*

But what did Christ do in his compassion? Indeed he did not let the prophet suffer such grief for long without consolation. Listen to what the same prophet says a little further on: *You came down and the mountains dissolved before your face.* Why is this? In my opinion,

when holy Isaiah was in distress over the devil's pride and human wickedness, our Lord, to console him, *showed him in spirit* what we now see, namely that the whole world would believe in him and kings and princes adore him, that all idols should be destroyed and those who were proud made humble by the Lord's coming.

Oh dearest brothers, if only we, now that we see this fulfilled, could feel as much joy as he felt when he saw it still having to be fulfilled. We now see it. We can turn to our Lord and say with great joy: Lord, *you came down and the mountains dissolved before your face*. This has now been fulfilled just as David also desired when he said: *Touch the mountains and they will smoke*. Our Lord came down. By the grace of the Holy Spirit he touched the mountains – that is, the proud of the world. And look how they dissolved, that is, how they were humbled. They began to weep for their sins. Even if this does not happen before our eyes every day, it is happening every day in the holy Church.

1 Aelred of Rievaulx: The Liturgical sermons – Cistercian Fathers #58
-Cistercian Publications – Kalamazoo – 2001 – p 64f