

SUNDAY 04/15/18

A Commentary on the Gospel by St. Augustine [1](#)

Christ rose from the tomb with his wounds healed, though their scars remained. He knew it would be good for his disciples if he retained the scars, for those scars would heal the wound in their hearts. What wound do I mean? The wound of disbelief; for even when he appeared before their eyes and showed them his true body, they still took him for a disembodied spirit. So he showed himself to his disciples. When we say “himself”, what precisely do we mean? We mean Christ as head of the Church. He foresaw the Church extending throughout the world, a vision his disciples could not yet share. However in showing them the head, he was promising them the body too. What, in fact, were his next words to them? All these things I told you while I was still among you as a mortal among mortals. But now I no longer live among you as before; never again shall I have to die as mortals do. What I was telling you, then, was that everything that had been written about me had to be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the meaning of it all, explaining to them that *it had been decreed that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead*. But all this they had themselves seen: with their own eyes they had seen him suffer, seen him hanging on the cross, and now, after his resurrection, they could see him standing before them alive. What, then, can it have been that they were still incapable of seeing? It was his body, the Church. Him they could see well enough, but the Church not at all. The bridegroom they could see, but the bride was still hidden from them. Nevertheless he promised her to them. *Thus it is written: Christ must suffer and on the third day rise from the dead*. So much for the bridegroom, but what of the bride? *In his name repentance must be preached to every nation on earth for the forgiveness of sins, beginning at Jerusalem*. This is what the disciples had not yet seen: they had no vision yet of the Church spreading from Jerusalem over the whole world. But they could see the head before them, and when he spoke to them of the body, they believed him.

Now we too find ourselves in a situation not unlike theirs: we see something which was not visible to them, while they could see something not visible to us. We can see the Church extending throughout the world today, something which was withheld from them, but Christ, who in his human body was perceptible to them, cannot be seen by us. And just as they, seeing his human flesh, were enabled to believe in his mystical body, so now we, seeing his mystical body, should be able to believe in the head. Just as the sight of the risen Christ helped the disciples to believe in the Church that was to follow, so the spectacle of the same Church helps to confirm our faith in the resurrection of Christ. The faith of the disciples was made complete, and so is ours: theirs by the sight of the head, ours by the sight of the body. But to them and to us alike the whole Christ is revealed, though neither to them nor to us has it yet been granted to see him in his entirety. For while they could see the head alone with their physical eyes and the body only with the eyes of faith, we can see only the body and have to take the head on trust. Nevertheless, Christ is absent from no one; he is wholly present in all of us, even though he still waits for his body to be completed.

MONDAY 04.16.18

**A Reading about singing Alleluia,
From a Homily by Herman, Cistercian Abbot of Runes.¹**

The meditations of our present life should be in the praise of God, since the everlasting exultation of our future life will be the praise of God. But no one can become fit for that future life who has not exercised himself for it now. So let us praise God now, but let us also entreat Him. Our praise contains gladness, but our prayer has sighs and groans. For there is something promised us which we do not yet have; but since He Who promised is truthful, we rejoice in hope. Yet, since we still do not have it in reality, we sigh and groan with desire. It is good for us to persevere in desire till what was promised comes, and our sighing and groans pass away and only praise replaces it.

Because of these two times: that is, the one that exists now in the tribulations and temptations of this life, and that other time which will be then, in security and perpetual exultation, a celebration of these two times has been instituted for us: namely, the time before the Pasch, [before Easter Day], and the time after the Pasch. The time before the Pasch signifies the tribulation in which we now exist; but the time we live in starting from Easter day, the Paschal Feast, signifies that beatitude in which we will be after [this life]. Therefore we exercise ourselves in that former time [before Easter] with fasts and prayer; but in this latter time [after Easter], we relax our fasts and live in praise.

For the *Alleluia*, which we frequently sing for these fifty days, is translated: APraise the Lord. Hence the period after the Lord's resurrection is this time before [our own] resurrection, and signifies that future life which we do not yet have; for this period after the Lord's resurrection signifies that time which we will have only after our own resurrection, since in Christ, our Head, both times are signified, both are demonstrated for us. The Lord's Passion depicts for us this life of our present necessity in which we must labor and be in tribulation, and then finally die. But the resurrection and glorification of the Lord depicts that life which we are to receive when He shall come to repay to each whatever each is worthy of: evil things for the evil, good things for the good. Indeed, at present all the evil can still say the *Alleluia* with us: but if they persevere in their malice, though they can speak with their lips the canticle of our future life, they will be unable to obtain that life itself which will then be ours, since they refused to meditate on what was to come before it came.

We therefore exhort you, brethren, to praise God now. And this is what we all say to ourselves when we say: *Alleluia*, that is, Praise the Lord. But praise with all of yourselves, that is, praise God not only with your tongue and voice, but also with your conscience, your life, your deeds. And we indeed praise God when we are gathered in church; but when we depart, it seems as though we cease to praise Him. We stop praising God when we turn away from justice and from what pleases Him. For if we never turn away from a good life, even if our tongue be silent, our life cries out, and the ears

¹*Corpus Christianorum*, LXIV, p.107-108.

of God are [tuned] to our heart. For as your ears are [tuned] to our voice right now, so the ears of God are tuned to our thoughts.

It cannot be that he who has good thoughts should have evil deeds. For deeds proceed from our thoughts. Nor can anyone do something or move his limbs to do anything unless it was first preceded by his thought, as by an emperor who sits in his heart. If a good emperor bids good things, there follow good deeds; if a bad emperor bids bad things, there follow bad deeds. When Christ sits there in the heart, what can He bid but good things? But when the devil sits there, what can he bid but evil? God wanted us to decide for whom we would prepare that place: whether for God or the devil. When we have prepared it for whomever will possess it, he will be the one who rules there.

So, brethren, when we pronounce *Alleluia*, pay heed not only to the sound. When you praise God, praise with your whole self: let your voice sing, let your life sing, let your deeds sing. And if there is sighing, tribulation, temptation, we hope for all these things to pass away and for that day to come when we will praise God without ceasing.

TUESDAY 04/17/18

A sermon on Easter by St Aelred of Rievaulx [1](#)

At the time when the sons of Israel were leaving Egypt, it was prescribed in the Law that a lamb was to be slaughtered and eaten. This was called the paschal feast. It was also prescribed that for seven days they should eat unleavened bread – that is, bread without leavening. And this was called the feast of the unleavened bread, and not only the feast of the unleavened bread, but also the pasch. The Evangelist brings this out when he says: *The festival of unleavened bread, called the pasch, was approaching.* The first feast, when they killed the lamb, was called only the pasch; this latter was called both the pasch and the feast of unleavened bread. It seems to me then that this first feast symbolizes the Lord's passion and the latter his resurrection. That the first symbolizes the Lord's passion is sufficiently well known. In it the true lamb was slain and by his blood we have all been saved from the hand of Pharaoh – in the spiritual sense, the devil. The feast is called the pasch – that is, the passing over – because Christ in his passion passed over from this world. As the Evangelist says: *Before the day of paschal feast Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father.*

Yet let us take a look at how the other feast symbolizes the Lord's resurrection. And first of all let us reflect on how profoundly that divine majesty humbled himself and to what depths he descended for us. He who was the Creator, made himself a creature. He who was Lord, made himself a servant. He who was rich, made himself poor. He who was great, made himself little. And *the Word was made flesh.* He was bread and he fed the angels. But he did not feed us. And so we were wretched, because a rational creature is always wretched if she is not fed this bread.

We were, however, so weak that in no way could we taste that bread in all its purity. We had within us a corrosive leaven that robbed us of our pristine strength. We had become so unlike that pure and untainted bread that we could not taste it at all. This leavening which we had within us was twofold. We had within us the leavening of mortality and we had within us the leavening of iniquity.

You see now how far removed we were from that bread in which there is neither mortality nor iniquity. How were we to ascend to it? How were we to taste it? What things are so contrary to one another as mortality and immortality, iniquity and justice? We are mortals and sinners; he is immortal and just. How were we to come together? He saw this, he who is caring and merciful saw this. Because we could not ascend to him, he came down to us. He took upon himself one part of our leavening and so adapted himself to our weakness. He did not take to himself the whole leaven that was in us, but a certain part of it. If he had taken on the whole of it he would be as we are and he would not be able to help us. If he had taken none of it he would be so distant from us that we would not be able in any way to approach him. And so we would remain forever in our wretchedness. We have said that there was a twofold leavening in us: mortality and

iniquity. The one he took on and by it was made like us. The other he avoided so that he could profit us.

The leavening of our mortality therefore he accepted, and abode in the purity of his justice, so that he would be the sort of being who could come down to us and yet remain the sort of being to whom we ought to ascend. You see now, brothers, how that pure bread is leavened for our sakes. To this leavening of mortality belongs hunger, thirst, sorrow, misery. All of this Our Lord took on himself. He chose to take on this leavening, but he was not obliged to remain in ferment. First he showed this leavening in himself through a wondrous compassion and then he purged himself of this leaven through a wondrous charity. He purged himself of this leavening in such a way as to show his wonderful charity for us. He knew that we had not only leavening which was extremely bad, but also a leavening which was far worse and death-dealing, which prevented us from uniting ourselves to this bread which is truly pure and untainted. Therefore he willed to purge himself from the leavening of mortality in the way in which we have to purge ourselves from the leavening of iniquity.

We ought to know that our iniquity is the cause of our mortality. And therefore when we are fully purged of iniquity we will doubtless also be purged of mortality. We ought meanwhile to realize that our iniquity is twofold. It comes from the nature in which we were born and from the evil which we later brought to it. From both of these the Lord purges us. He offered for us a sacrifice – his own blood – and through this sacrifice we are purged. And therefore what we suffer now from the corruption of nature is no longer iniquity but infirmity. From the corruption of our nature come the impulses of concupiscence which we suffer unwillingly. From this come the impulses of lust, anger, pride, ambition. But if we do not consent to them, God does not impute them to us, because that pure sacrifice was offered to offset the corruption of our nature. Note, then, by the workings of his compassion in us in baptism we are purged of all sins, both those which came from nature and those which we added voluntarily.

But have we kept ourselves in that untainted state? What then shall we do? He has taught us how we are to be cleansed. In the same way as he was purged of the leavening of mortality we ought to be purged from the leavening of iniquity. Doubtless he could somehow have purged himself of mortality without suffering pain. But since we cannot be purged of our iniquity except by temporal pains, he willed to provide an example for us.

WEDNESDAY 04/18/18

A Sermon by Bl Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

At the time when the sons of Israel were leaving Egypt, it was prescribed in the Law that a lamb was to be slaughtered and eaten. This was called the paschal feast. It was also prescribed that for seven days they should eat unleavened bread – that is, bread without leavening. And this was called the feast of unleavened bread, but also the pasch. The Evangelist brings this out when he says: *The festival of unleavened bread, called the pasch, was approaching.* It seems to me, then, that the first feast symbolizes the Lord's passion and the latter his resurrection. That the first symbolizes the Lord's passion is sufficiently well known. In it the true Lamb was slain and by his blood we have been saved from the hand of Pharaoh – in the spiritual sense, the devil. The feast is called the pasch – that is, the passing over – because Christ at his passion passed over from this world. As the Evangelist says: *Before the day of the paschal feast, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father.*

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Note, then, the workings of his compassion in us. In Baptism we are purged of all sins, both those which came from nature and those which we added voluntarily. But have we kept ourselves in that untainted state? What then shall we do? He has taught us how we are to be cleansed. In the same way as he was purged of the leavening of mortality we ought to be purged from the leavening of iniquity. Doubtless, he could somehow have purged himself of mortality without suffering pain. But since we cannot be purged of our iniquity except by temporal pains, he willed to provide an example for us.

THURSDAY 4.19.18

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FRIDAY

04.20.18

From a Sermon by St. Gregory of Nyssa [1](#)

The reign of life has begun, the tyranny of death is ended. A new birth has taken place, a new life has come, a new order of existence has appeared, our very nature has been transformed! This birth is not brought about by *human generation, by the will of human beings, or by the desire of the flesh, but by God.*

If you wonder how, I will explain in clear language. Faith is the womb that conceives this new life, baptism the rebirth by which it is brought forth into the light of day. The Church is its nurse; her teachings are its milk, the bread from heaven is its food. It is brought to maturity by the practice of virtue; it is wedded to wisdom; it gives birth to hope. Its home is the kingdom; its rich inheritance the joys of paradise; its end, not death but the blessed and everlasting life prepared for those who are worthy.

This is the day the Lord has made – a day far different from those made when the world was first created, and which are measured by the passage of time. This is the beginning of a new creation. On this day, as the prophet says, God makes a new heaven and a new earth. What is this new heaven? You may ask. It is the firmament of our faith in Christ. What is this new earth? A good heart, a heart like the earth, which drinks up the rain that falls on it and yields a rich harvest.

In this new creation, purity of life is the sun, the virtues are the stars, transparent goodness is the air, and the *depths of the riches of wisdom and knowledge*, the sea. Sound doctrine, the divine teachings, are the grass and plants that feed God's flock, the people whom he shepherds; the keeping of the commandments is the fruit borne by the trees.

On this day is created the true human person made in the image and likeness of God. *For this day the Lord has made* is the beginning of this new world. Of this day the prophet says that it is not like other days, nor is this night like other nights. But still we have not spoken of the greatest gift it has brought us. This day destroyed the pangs of death and brought to birth the firstborn from the dead.

I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God. O what wonderful good news! He who for our sake became like us in order to make us his brothers and sisters, now presents to his true Father his own humanity in order to draw all his kindred up after him.

SATURDAY 04/21/18

PRAYER OF ST. ANSELM TO ST. BENEDICT²

O holy and blessed Benedict, grace from on high richly endowed you with the blessing of virtues, not only in order to raise you up to the longed-for glory and blessed rest of heaven, but also in order that your admirable life should draw countless others to the same bliss, urging them on by your tender admonitions, instructing them with your sweetly reasonable doctrine, rousing them to action by the example of your miracles! I have recourse to you, O blessed one of God, whom the Lord blessed so abundantly. My soul prostrates itself before you in abjection and deep humility; it pours out its prayer with all the affection at its command; it implores your assistance with intense desire. For my soul's need is exceedingly great and unbearable.

I professed the reformation of my life in monasticism. I vowed it, and proclaim this conversion by bearing the name and wearing the habit of the monk. But I am far removed from such a life. My conscience accuses me of lying before God and angels and mortals. Come to my aid, O kind Father! Hear my prayer! I beg you not to stand in horror of one who is so completely given to vicious habits and deception, but to look with favor upon him who humbly acknowledges his sin. Have mercy on my sorrow--far beyond anything I have deserved...

Thus you can see, O blessed Benedict, how courageously this soldier of Christ wages the combat under your leadership! Look at the great progress this student of yours is making in your school! Consider the good monk who, having subdued his vices and the pleasures of the flesh by mortification, desires nothing else and lives for nothing else than the practice of virtue! Alas, see rather the false monk, devoid of virtue, overwhelmed by a whole array of vices, crushed by the weight of his sins...

Be troubled, my spirit, be disturbed in the depths of your being, my heart. Rise up and cry aloud, my soul: "O Jesus, good Master, *put an end to my affliction and my suffering, and take away all my sins.*(Ps 24:18) Be my helper, O Lord! Do not abandon

me, or despise me, but *teach me to do your will*, so that my life will give evidence of that which my heart and lips pronounce so readily.(Ps 142:10) *Heed my call for help, my king and my God*, through the merits and the intercession of your beloved St. Benedict, who is my kind leader and master."(Ps 5:3)

And you, my good leader, my gracious master, sweet and blessed father Benedict! I pray and beg you by the mercy that you have shown others and by that which God has shown you, have compassion on me in my misery, as I rejoice in your eternal blessedness.. O advocate of monks, act with the strength of that charity which made you solicitous as to how we should live; make it your concern that we have the zealous desire and the efficacious will to live as we are bound to live by our profession, so that you may rejoice in our discipleship and we in your guidance, before God, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.