

TM-ASC13

05.13.18

A Sermon by Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

For some time now we have been keeping before our minds the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the same length of time that he spent in the world after his resurrection. Today we celebrate the day on which he showed us openly that all the things which he did and suffered in this world, he did to lead us from the death into which we fell through Adam to true life, and to raise us from this exile to our homeland for which we were created – that is, to heaven.

He died for our sins and rose for our justification and he ascended into heaven for our glorification. Through his death we received the remission of our sins. For what we could not do he accomplished in satisfaction for our sins. Through faith in his resurrection we are justified. Infidels, pagans and Jews knew about and accepted his death. But his resurrection, because they could not see that, they did not want to accept. Our faith, however, merits justification and awaits a great reward because we believe something we cannot see. This is why the Lord said to Thomas: *Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are they who have not seen and have believed.* That blessedness which we are awaiting, however, he wished to show forth in his own person by ascending into heaven. He did this so that we might be certain that we, who are his members, may ascend where he, who is our head, has ascended.

Therefore, dearest brothers, we ought to celebrate this day with great joy because there can be no greater glorification of the human person than what has been shown to us today. This nature of ours which had been so depraved and degraded that it was even compared to brute animals – as the Prophet says: *Man, when he was in honor did not understand and became comparable to stupid beasts* – this nature was in our Lord Jesus Christ so exalted that every other creature is beneath it and even the angels adore it as something beyond them. -over

As you have often heard, after his resurrection Our Lord willed to remain in this world in bodily form for forty days for many reasons. He wanted to confirm his resurrection and to demonstrate in many ways that he truly rose from the dead in the flesh. Therefore he often ate and drank with his disciples and he openly showed them his wounds. By his bodily presence he wanted to reassure his disciples, grieved beyond measure during his passion and almost in despair, and to prove to them on the authority of the Scriptures that it was necessary for him to die and to rise again. Moreover he opened for them the meaning of the Scriptures that they might understand them.

Besides this, after his resurrection our Lord willed to commend great mysteries to our attention by means of certain physical signs. During these days he appeared to his disciples as they were fishing and at his bidding they hauled to shore a net full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty-three – which symbolizes the happiness of those who at the future resurrection will be presented to Christ the Lord by his ministers. The meal too, which he willed to have with his disciples signified that banquet at which we shall eat and drink *at his table in his kingdom*.

During these days he gave his disciples, who were still on earth, the Holy Spirit whom afterwards he sent from heaven. And by this twofold giving of the one Holy Spirit he commended to us love of God and neighbor.

[1](#)Cistercioan Fathers Series - #58 – Aelred of Rievaulx – The Liturgical Sermons – Cistercain Publications – Kalamazoo - 2001 – pg 205 f

05SN1401
05.14.2018

A reading from a sermon by Bl. John Henry Newman on the feast of St. Matthias.¹

This is the only Saint's day which is to be celebrated with mingled feelings of joy and pain. It records the fall as well as the election of an Apostle. St. Matthias was chosen in place of the traitor Judas. In the history of the latter we have the warning recorded in very deed, which our Lord in the text gives us in word, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And doubtless many were the warnings such as this, addressed by our Lord to the wretched man who in the end betrayed him.

The reflection which rises in the mind on a consideration of the election of St. Matthias, is this: how easily God may effect His purposes without us, and put others in our place, if we are disobedient to Him. It often happens that those who have long been in His favor grow secure and presuming. They think their salvation certain, and their service necessary to Him who has graciously accepted it. Now, this feeling of self-importance is repressed all through the Scriptures, and especially by the events we commemorate today.

What solemn overpowering thoughts must have crowded on St. Matthias, when he received the greetings of the eleven Apostles, and took his seat among them as their brother! His very election was a witness against himself if he did not fulfill it. And such surely will ours be in our degree. We take the place of others who have gone before, as Matthias did; we are "baptized for the dead," filling up the ranks of soldiers, some of whom, indeed, have fought a good fight, but many of whom in every age have made void their calling. Many are called, few are chosen. The monuments of sin and unbelief are set up around us. The casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the Gentiles. The fall of one nation is the conversion of another. The Church loses old branches, and gain new. God works according to His own inscrutable pleasure....Thus the Christian of every age is but the successor of the lost and of the dead. How long we of this country shall be put in trust with Gospel, we know not; but while we have the privilege, assuredly we do but stand in the place of Christians who have either utterly fallen away, or are so corrupted as scarcely to let their light shine before others. We are at present witnesses of the Truth; and our very glory is our warning. By the superstitions, the profanities, the indifference, the unbelief of the world called AChristian,@ we are called upon to be lowly-minded while we preach aloud, and to tremble while we rejoice. Let us then, as a Church and as individuals, one and all, look to Him who alone can keep us from falling. Let us with single heart look

¹ *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987, pp. 300-301, 304-305.

up to Christ our Saviour, and put ourselves into His hands, from whom all our strength and wisdom is derived.

05/15/18

A Reading about Pachomius' ministry to the brothers in the *Koinonia*, from the Bohairic Life of Pachomius.²

Theodore began to tell the brothers of the life of our father Pachomius from his childhood on and of all the labors he underwent from the beginning when he established the holy *Koinonia*. He told them of the temptations of demons and how he snatched away from them the souls which the Lord gave him and of the revelations which the Lord disclosed to him. And he told them everything he had heard from that saint's mouth as well as those things he had seen with his own eyes.

He spoke to them as follows: 'Listen to me, my brothers, and understand well the things I am telling you. For the man whom we are exalting is truly the father of us all after God. God established a covenant with him to save a great many souls by means of him. And us also the Lord has saved through his holy prayers. For he--I am speaking of our righteous father Pachomius--is also one of the holy people of God and one who did his will always and everywhere. I am fearful that we may forget his labors and actually be unmindful of who it was who made this multitude one spirit and one body. It was accomplished by means of him and of our other holy fathers who aided him in the establishment of this holy institution. We believe that the blessing of our father will remain with us and with those who come after us before God forever. Now then, let us not be negligent and forget his laws and his commandments, which he gave us while he was still with us in the body.

'Pachomius pursued in its entirety the way of life of the prophets and the way of service in which, according to the Gospel, our Lord walked. He was without blame before all, as you yourselves bear witness. You are also not unaware how he used to teach us frequently with tears, as Paul said in the book of the Acts of those whom he was teaching. You know how he used to gather us together daily and speak to us about the holy commandments so that we might observe each of the commandments in the holy Scriptures of Christ, and how he used first to put them into practice before giving them to us. It is through our contact with such a righteous man that we have learned the will of God even in such details as the manner of stretching our hands upward to the Lord and how one should pray to God. It is he who taught it to us. Is it not right for us to bless him next after the Lord who created us? Indeed, did God not say to Abraham, who had done his will, *I will bless him who blesses you and I will curse him who curses you?* Now then, my brothers, let us all say, "Blessed be God and our righteous father Pachomius who through the labors of his prayers has become for us a guide to eternal life" '.

²*Pachomian Koinonia*, Vol One, Trans., Armand Veilleux, Kalamazoo, 1980; pp 237-8.

5/16/18

THE ASCENSION AND CHRISTIAN PRAYER, from an Article, AThe Humanity of Christ in Monastic Prayer by Fr Thomas Merton³

At the Ascension, in the sight of the disciples, "the nature of humankind soared above the dignity of all the creatures of heaven" and "there was to be no limit to the advancement of Christ's humanity until, seated together with the eternal Father, it might share enthroned the glory of Him whose nature it shared in the son." And of course, the Fathers never ceased to remind their hearers that this same humanity of Christ which was enthroned with the Father in the divine glory, was to return and judge the world. "He set a limit to His bodily presence, and would remain at the right hand of the Father until He should return in the same flesh in which He had ascended." Monastic prayer is eschatological and is centered on the expectation of the Parousia, the advent of the "immortal and invisible King of ages" who is both "God alone" and the Christ, our Redeemer and Liberator.

In the meantime it is our nature which is enthroned in heaven with Christ. It is our nature which shares the divinity of Christ and of the Father. Hence St Leo puts these words into the mouth of the glorious Redeemer: "I have united you to myself and I became the son of man that you might become children of God." St Gregory adds that Christ has made us children of God by taking us to heaven with Him: "He has led captivity because he has swallowed up our corruption in the power of His incorruption." St Leo says that with Christ's ascension into heaven we have recovered possession of paradise, and not only that, "we have even penetrated, in Christ, into the height of heaven," we have been enthroned with Him because we are "one Body" with Him. This is the reason why we should rejoice at His going to the Father: "above all the heavens, your lowliness is raised, in Me, to be placed at the right hand of the Father." He is not separated from us unless we choose to remain bound to the earth by our passions. In contemplation we experience, at least obscurely, something of this mystery of our union with Him now in heaven.

This has important implications for the life of prayer. The life of the monk, being that of a Christian, is a way of living in heaven. While living bodily in exile and in his earthly pilgrimage, the monk is already spiritually in paradise and in heaven where he has ascended with Christ. That is to say, although he is not physically present in heaven, he is free to come and go there as he pleases, in spirit, in prayer, in faith, in thanksgiving, praise and love, because he already "is" there mystically in Christ. "Let us therefore, exult with a worthy and spiritual joy, happy before God in thanksgiving, and let us lift up the free eyes of our heart to that height where Christ is."

³"The Humanity of Christ in Monastic Prayer", *Monastic Studies* 2, 1964, 11-13.

The Lord has already "made known to us all that He has heard from His Father"(Jn 15,15). St Gregory, commenting on this line, says that Christ has made us His friends by making known to us "the joys of interior charity and the festival of the heavenly country which He daily makes present in our minds by the desire of love." And St Gregory explains that this loving knowledge of heavenly things is very real indeed, no mere fancy: "for when, hearing of heavenly things, we love them, we already know the things we love, for our love itself is a way of knowing." It is by the charity of Christ in our hearts that we "are in heaven" and know the things of heaven.

The source of our freedom and the power that raises our prayer to the height of heaven is the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ and the Father after the God become flesh ascended into heaven. And faith in Christ's presence in heaven as one of us merits for us the grace of the Holy Spirit. The angels, says St Gregory, already rejoice to have us as their companions, while they adore the humanity of the God become flesh.

TM-ASCO3

05.17.2018

A Reading by Gilbert of Hoyland on the Eternal Dwelling.⁴

As the Lord says: 'In my Father's house are many dwellings': dwellings obviously of lesser lights, because God himself 'dwells in light inaccessible'. John understands this as a multitude of dwellings, not because there is one dwelling for each spiritual creature, since for some one or other there are many dwellings, as the Lord says in Luke, 'and you shall have authority over ten towns'. 'For star differs from star in splendor.' Yes, as the number of virtues increases, so the gift of splendors is multiplied, as the prophecy in Isaiah indicates: 'and the Lord shall fill your soul with splendors'. Blissful surely is the soul, which will be filled not only with one but with many splendors, those indeed of which it is said: 'Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in the splendors of the saints.' The most blissful splendors are those which the Lord pours upon his saints; the beginning of eternity, the day of truth, and the virtue of charity.

Who will grant me that my spirit may be enlightened with a ray of this triple splendor? that this most blessed number of days may complete, yes complete and contain my days? Who I ask, will grant me that my days may stretch out to that line of eternity, may shine in the splendor of truth and be inflamed with the spirit of charity? Unlike the dispensation which prevailed at the first creation of the world, when an alternating return of dawn and dusk set limits between the many days, then indeed there will be one unending day, one unbroken high noon. There at the first creation, only between morning and evening, so to speak, inauspicious night was banned, but in this new day high noon will replace dawn and dusk: the two limits of the day will no longer grow dim. As Zechariah says, 'in the evening there will be light, for then there will be no temporal 'variations, no shadow of change'. Yet when, oh when, will this occur? When, O good Jesus, will you manifest yourself as you are in your high noon? For in you we shall see the Father, and it will be enough for us. How sluggish are our ears, how slow our hearts! slow to see, quick however to believe!

Scripturally, in each and every appearance after your blessed Resurrection, I do not recall ever having read of your appearance at midday. You appeared either when the day had hardly begun or was already ending, that one might understand that here below all light of truth is obscured by some shadow of ignorance. At the same time, a pleasant distinction should be noted in the fact that in the dawn's early light he showed himself at the tomb to the women seeking him anxiously, but that late on the same day, the first of the week, he showed himself to the disciples huddled at home.

⁴Treatise 1, The works of Gilbert of Hoyland IV, Cistercian Publications, Inc. 1981, CF34. p.11-13.

Oh that you would appear to us also, O Lord, here in our dawn or in our dusk, for you are above dawn and dusk, the brightest high noon. In that high noon we shall recline at table in your fatherland. Meanwhile as we are journeying on, let us pray, O Lord, that you may warm us with the last ray of evening light. Now we are concluding our discourse with the onset of a day but we do not exclude you: rather we close with you as we opened with you. In the morning let us give thanks, breaking into that song of the Canticle: 'I rested in the shade of the one I longed for.'

TM-ASC12
05/18/18

From A Sermon by Ogier, Cistercian Abbot of the Monastery of Locedio 5

Let us note the Lord's two dwelling-places: the one along the way, the other in his heavenly home; the one temporal, when he dwelt with us in the flesh, the other eternal, where we shall dwell with him glorified in soul and in body. Of the first he says, *'I have said these things to you while still with you – present in the body. But a time is coming when I shall withdraw from you in my bodily presence and will thereafter speak to you through the spirit. The Paraclete, the Holy spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. He will teach you,'* says the Lord Jesus *'what I have told you.'* Not that the son says one thing and the spirit teaches another, for whatever Christ says and teaches the Trinity says and teaches. Because God is triune, each person of the godhead must establish himself in our hearts. We should hear each distinctly and understand them inseparably. Thus when we say *'the Father, Son and Holy spirit'*, we do not say these words simultaneously, yet those whom we name are simultaneous and could not be otherwise. When the Lord speaks of the Comforter whom the Father will send, we are to understand: *'I am leaving you in my bodily presence but not in the presence of the Spirit. The body I received on earth I now raise up to heaven, but through my Spirit I will remain with you until the end of time. The Father sent me so that I might appear visible in the flesh, but the hour has come for me to pay death's due, and, rising from the dead, ascend to the Father, and there be seated at his right hand. Henceforth the world will no longer see me in the mortal guise of the flesh. But the Paraclete, the spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will comfort you in my bodily absence by the abundance of his sweetness. He will be your teacher, not noising his words abroad but teaching the heart within. He will prompt you and teach you everything I have told you through him, all that I will have inspired in you. You will not be able to lament my bodily absence so long as the spirit remains in your hearts.'*

O Lord Jesus, may your Spirit come, my God and Master! May He enter my heart and so flood me with your love that I should seek no other love than yours, that I may love no other beauty than yours, that I may taste no other sweetness! For you are honey and honeycomb: the honey of God the Father, in the honeycomb of the Virgin Mary; honey in the bosom of the Father, honeycomb broken on the cross; honey reigning with the Father and the Holy Spirit in heaven and throughout the universe, blessed through endless ages. Amen

TM-ASC05

05.19.2018

**A Reading on the Holy Spirit and the Gift of Knowledge,
By St. Symeon the New Theologian.⁶**

What is the key of knowledge other than the grace of the Holy Spirit given through faith? In very truth it produces knowledge and understanding through illumination and opens our closed and veiled mind through many parables and symbols.

The door is the Son, for, says He, "I am the door." The key of the door is the Holy Spirit, for He says, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." The house is the Father, for "in My Father's house are many mansions." Pay careful attention, therefore, to the spiritual sense of the Passage. Unless the key opens - as He says, "To him the porter opens" - the door is not opened. But if the door is not opened, no one enters into the Father's house, for Christ says, "No one comes to the Father, but by Me."

The Holy Spirit is spoken of as a key because through Him and in Him we are first enlightened in mind. We are purified and illuminated with the light of knowledge; we are baptized from on high and born anew and made into children of God. As Paul says, "The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words", and again, "God has given His Spirit in our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" This indicates to us that the door is light; the door shows us the He who dwells in the house is Himself unapproachable light. He who dwells therein is no other than God, His house is nothing else but light. Likewise the light of the Godhead and God are not two different things. He is one and the same, the house and He who dwells in it, just as the light and God are the same. In theological terms we use the term **house** of the Son, even as we use it of the Father, for He says, "Thou, O Father, are in Me, and I in them, and they in Me, and I, O Father, in Thee, that we may be One." Similarly, the Spirit says, "I will live in them and move among them." "I and the Father will come and make our home with him." This He says through the Spirit, as Paul says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit." If, the, the Lord is the Spirit, and the Father is in Him and He is in Him, and we likewise are in Him, then He is with God the Father and God is in Him.

⁶Symeon the New Theologian, the Discourses. CWS, Paulist Press, 1980 Tr. C.J. deCatanzaro. Cp. XXXIII, 90-108, 155-176.