

SUN 06/24/18

A Homily on the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist by Johannes Tauler<sup>1</sup>

When the Baptist said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord," he refers to the path of the virtues. This path is very straight. And again he says that he is to prepare the Lord's paths. Footpaths reach the goal faster than public roads. The shortcut across the fields is indeed rougher and may lead one astray; and yet it is more direct than the open road.

Beloved! Whoever would discover the paths leading to the ground, he would take the shortest and most direct way, keeping all his energies to himself so as to be very attentive. For these paths are rugged, dark, and alien to our nature, and only those who are sufficiently skilled can take them. If they are aware of this, they will not be put off by hurdles and hindrances or any other human anguish. Quite the opposite: Everything will point to the ground, beckon, and draw them there.

In the same manner we should straighten the paths within ourselves, the paths which lead our spirit to God, and God to us. These relations also require skill, and their difficulties are of a hidden nature. At this point many give up and begin to run after exterior devotions and activities. They are like people starting for Rome and taking the road to Holland. The more they advance, the farther they get away from their destination. And when they return, they are old and spent and no longer up to the tempestuous work of love.

Beloved, when we find ourselves in the tempests of love, we should not dwell on our sins and failings. Our only concern should be that love's work be accomplished. We can be overcome by this tempest even when our hearts appear cold, disinterested and hard. Now more than ever we must adhere to love, clinging to it in perfect faith, freed and stripped of everything that is not love. Constantly long for it, put your whole trust in it, cleave to it, and your experience will be as powerful and overwhelming as is possible in this life. If your faith in love is imperfect, your desire will fade away. Love will be extinguished, and nothing will come of it all.

This may seem very hard to you. The devil will allow you all the marks of a spiritual life, but he will do everything in his power to deprive you of love's true witness. He will leave you with all kinds of treacherous love which many will mistake for the real thing. If they looked deeply into their ground, they would see whether their love was true or false. The one thing necessary is to give access to the ground in order to be able to enter its depth. There you would find that grace which would incessantly raise you up.

But we often resist that voice until we make ourselves unworthy to ever receive it again. This is due to complacency. If only we would respond to the glance of grace, it would lead us to find such union with God that we would experience in time the joy that will be ours in eternity, as some have done before us.

May God grant that we may all experience this. AMEN

<sup>1</sup>The Classics of Western Spirituality. Johannes Tauler, "Sermon 44 - Feast of John the Baptist". Paulist Press, 1985, pp. 151-152.

MON 06/25/18

A Sermon on Death by Fr. Matthew Kelty <sup>1</sup>

When we stand before the Mystery of death we are at a complete loss. It is beyond us. It is mystery in the classic sense – a truth which surpasses human understanding. It is as mysterious as life itself. In fact, birth is a kind of analogy of death. The child in the womb is blissfully happy, content to be where it is. But one day it necessarily must leave the womb for a life it knows nothing about, in no way can conceive or understand.

The passage to that new life can be very painful. So can death. We have no particular desire to leave a world we know and love, the only world we know. Yet leave we must, often painfully, to enter into a new life far surpassing any human understanding – eternal glory in the bliss of God's presence.

We have that in faith. It is not fantasy, make-believe, a mere wish. It is a matter of faith made possible in Christ. He, too, was born. He lived, suffered, died and rose from the dead. That whole history reveals in full the purpose of life and its possibility. In that faith we take our stand. However sad, death is birth to life, a passage to glory through the passion, death and rising of Christ.

Death, then, is a call to faith, faith in a most stressful situation, in the depth of sorrow. The grace of that faith freely given by God makes it possible to pass through tears to joy that the one we love is born to eternal happiness. We join him in his passing with our prayer that he be born already now into life with God forever. To witness death and believe in life is to respond in depth to the very purpose of one's existence – is the key to assuaging our grief and strengthening our faith.

During the forty days after the rising of Christ from the dead, it is not particularly difficult to imagine what the disciples did. They surely gathered in groups large and small and talked together about what had happened since the Lord entered their lives. There is healing in sharing, and in this sharing something new is created. The Gospel story began to take shape and the genesis of the Church, that creative gestation before the coming of the spirit and the birth of the Church on earth.

We can see at this distance the marvel that was shaping their days. Call it the beginning of the liturgical life, if you will. We, too, gather as they did, we reminisce, as they did. We tell again the familiar story, as they did, and then act it out in the memorial meal, as they did.

Yet it is far more than mere memory. We know what they cannot have grasped yet, that Christ lives on in His mysteries, and in the events of His life. It is not just memory, not even when the story took particular shape and was put down in writing. We do not merely read the story or hear it read, we do it. In that sense we mourn the death of Jesus for a lifetime, and we celebrate His birth and all else to the Rising, over and over, each time hopefully in grace and gift, grasp just a bit more of what it all means.

The gift of a long life means a repeated participation in the greatest of human events. Yet who can say even a lifetime of the mystical life is enough? Rather, only eternity will suffice. So we gather in prayer, we talk about Him, we hear the story again, and we break the bread and drink the cup and are seized up in the mystery of God among us. The salvation of the world is in it all.

<sup>1</sup>Gethsemani Homilies – Matthew Kelty – Franciscan Press – Quincy University – 2001 – pg 181

TUE 06/26/18

**A PEOPLE MADE FREE BY THE LORD,**  
**from Pathways in Scripture by Dom Damasus Winzen<sup>1</sup>**

Israel's fight for liberty against the kings reaches its climax in Deborah's rising against Jabin of Canaan. Tyranny always was, always is, and always will be the fruit of idolatry. The *baalim* of the Canaanites are local deities. They merge, therefore, with the local political power of the king. Israel's God, the one true God, stands for absolute justice for everyone. He frees his servants from the arbitrary rule of local tyrants. "Happy are you, O Israel! who is like you? A people made free by the Lord" (Deut 33:29). This spirit of freedom under God was in danger of being suppressed under the iron rule of Jabin. His general Sisera resided in the fortress which has the significant name of Harosheth-ha-goiim, "silence of the nations." Sisera had silenced the voice of free nations with his police force of nine hundred chariots of iron. All weapons had been confiscated. "There was no shield nor spear seen among forty thousand in Israel" (5:7). At this point a woman arose: "you did arise, Deborah, arise as a mother in Israel", just as in the beginning of the New Testament, when man is put to silence, the voice of a woman opens the gates of freedom for humankind (Luke 1:20-38). The song of Deborah breaks the silence of the nations. In the power of genuine inspiration, it praises the beauty of that freedom which only the spirit of God is able to release in the human soul: When the people offer themselves willingly, Bless ye the Lord! (5:2)

The service of the one true God is not a matter of violence and force. Those who serve him do so willingly, because he alone moves the hearts of men and women. His army is an army of volunteers. Deborah's trumpet-call aroused everything that was noble and generous and magnanimous in Israel. From all sides they responded and banded together on Mount Tabor against the kings. In the plain at the foot of the mountain Sisera's chariots held free sway, and the poorly armed peasants would not have had much of a chance, had not the Lord moved heaven and earth to help them. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (5:20). A sudden cloudburst turned the brook Kishon into a raging sea and the entire plain into a swamp. Thus horse and rider and chariot suffered the fate of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Alone, without his horse, Sisera found his way into the tent of Heber's wife, Jael, and there, at the hand of a woman, he met an inglorious death. In a masterful climax the song ends with a scene in the harem of Sisera's ancestral palace where we find his mother and his wives waiting for him to come back loaded with spoil. In the whole of human literature we do not find a more poignant picture of degraded womanhood that has lost freedom and dignity

than here where it forms the sharpest contrast to the noble, heroic attitude of the woman whom the Spirit of God has made "a mother in Israel." ..The true meaning of Deborah's song, is the praise of that freedom which the Word and the Spirit of God give to the Church. Deborah, the prophetess, whose name means "the talkative one" and also "the bee," who sends to Barack and calls him to rise against Jabin, represents the voice of God which, in the law and through the prophets, calls the Israelitic people to battle against the powers of this world. Victory, however, is completed, not by her but by Jael, who is described as the wife of a non-Jew and therefore foreshadows the Church of the gentiles.

[1](#) PATHWAYS IN SCRIPTURE, Dom Damasus Winzen (Word of Life, Ann Arbor MI 1976) pp. 100-102.

WED 06.27.18

From a letter by Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop <sup>1</sup>

That anyone could doubt the right of the holy Virgin to be called the Mother of God fills me with astonishment. Surely she must be the Mother of God if our Lord Jesus Christ is God, and she gave birth to him! Our Lord's disciples may not have used those exact words, but they delivered to us the belief those words enshrine, and this has also been taught us by the holy fathers.

In the third book of his work on the holy and consubstantial Trinity, our father Athanasius, of glorious memory, several times refers to the holy Virgin as "Mother of God". I cannot resist quoting his own words: "As I have often told you, the distinctive mark of holy Scripture is that it was written to make a twofold declaration concerning our Savior; namely, that he is and always has been God, since he is the Word, Radiance and Wisdom of the Father; and that for our sake in these latter days he took flesh from the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and became man."

Again further on he says: "There have been many holy people, free from all sin. Jeremiah was sanctified in his mother's womb, and John while still in the womb leaped for joy at the voice of Mary, the Mother of God." Athanasius is a man we can trust, one who deserves our complete confidence, for he taught nothing contrary to the sacred books.

The divinely inspired Scriptures affirm that the Word of God was made flesh, that is to say, he was united to a human body endowed with a rational soul. He undertook to help the descendants of Abraham, fashioning a body for himself from a woman and sharing our flesh and blood, to enable us to see in him not only God, but also, by reason of this union, a man like ourselves.

It is held, therefore, that there are in Emmanuel two entities, divinity and humanity. Yet our Lord Jesus Christ is nevertheless one, the one true Son, both God and man; not a deified man on the same footing as those who share the divine nature by grace, but true God who for our sake appeared in human form. We are assured of this by St. Paul's declaration: "When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the law and to enable us to be adopted as sons and daughters."

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<sup>1</sup> The Liturgy of the Hours - vol. III - Catholic Book Publishing Co - New York - 1975 - pg 1496

THUR

06.28.2018

**WHERE THE CHURCH IS, THERE IS THE SPIRIT OF GOD,  
from the writings of St Irenaeus<sup>2</sup>**

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So it is within reach of all who want to see the truth to discern the tradition of the apostles which has been manifested in the whole world. All we have to do is to list those who are appointed bishops in the churches by the apostles and their successors up to our own time who neither taught nor recognized anything like that which the heretics rave about. For even if the apostles would have known "secret mysteries" which they used to teach the "perfect" separately and secretly apart from the others, they would especially have passed these things down to those to whom they also were entrusting the churches themselves. For they wanted those whom they left as successors to be quite perfect and beyond reproach in all things, handing over to them their own place as teachers. To those who do what is right this would have great usefulness, but to those who fall away it would be great disaster. But since it would take too long in a volume such as this to list the successions of all the churches, we will indicate only those of the greatest and most ancient church of Rome, recognized by all and founded and established by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul. This church has the tradition handed down to us through successions of bishops. In this way we throw into confusion all who, in whatever way, gather in unauthorized meetings by reason of self-serving evil or vainglory or blindness and evil thought. For it is necessary that every church, that is, persons who are faithful everywhere to the tradition which has been handed down from the apostles which has been conserved by those who are everywhere, agree with this church on account of its more powerful origin [with these two apostles]...

We have shown how the preaching of the church is consistent everywhere and persists equally and has behind it the testimony of the prophets and the apostles and all the disciples through the beginning, middle, and end and through the whole saving plan (*oikonomia*) of God and that solid system which is in our faith which lends itself to human salvation. We keep what we have received from the church and what is always from the Spirit of God like some precious deposit growing in a good vase which also makes the vase it is in to grow. For this gift of God has been entrusted to the church, like the breath of creation, so that all the members receiving it may be made alive. And in it has been deposited the means of communicating with Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption and confirmation of our faith and ladder of ascent to God. "For in the Church," [Scripture] says, "God has appointed apostles, prophets, teachers" (1Cor 12:28), and all the other working of the Spirit. All who do not gather with the church but defraud themselves of life through evil thought and worse deed do not participate in the Spirit. For where the church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the church and every gift; and the Spirit is truth. Accordingly, those who do not participate in the Spirit are not nourished unto life by the mother's breasts nor do they receive that brilliant fountain which flows from the Body of Christ. Rather, they dig for themselves broken cisterns in dirty ditches and they drink putrid water from the dirt, fleeing the faith of the church, lest they be convicted, rejecting the Spirit that they may not be instructed.

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<sup>2</sup>UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH, Edited by Glenn Hinson (Fortress Press, Phila. PA, 1986) pp. 40-42.

FRI 06.29.18

**A Reading about the Pillars of the Earth, from a Sermon by St. Aelred of Rievaulx<sup>3</sup>**

*Though the earth and all who dwell in it may rock,  
it is I who uphold its pillars [Ps. 75(74):4]*

The pillars of the earth, my brothers, are the holy apostles, especially these two whose feast we celebrate today. They are the pillars who support holy Church through their doctrine, their prayers, and through the example of their patience. These are the pillars our Lord upholds. Previously, they were very weak and unable to support themselves or others. Yet this was a great dispensation of the Lord. For if they had always been strong, someone could think that they had always had this strength from themselves. For that reason our Lord wished to show first what they were of themselves, and then afterwards to uphold them, so that all might know that all their strength was from God. Again, because they were to be Fathers of the Church and physicians to cure the weak, they would not know how to have compassion for others=weaknesses unless they first had felt their own weakness. The Lord therefore upholds the pillars of the earth, that is, of holy Church.

For these pillars were very weak: obviously saint Peter was weak, for example, when the voice of one maidservant cast him down. Afterward, the Lord upheld that pillar: first, when He asked him three times, *Peter, do you love Me?* and three times Peter answered, *I do love you [Jn 21]*. For as Peter diminished that love of our Lord in himself when he denied Him three times, and therefore this pillar failed and was broken; so through Peter=s confessing his love three times, this pillar was upheld. That other pillar, Paul, was undoubtedly weak, too. For sins are a weakness of the soul, and hear how weak he was: *I who before was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and insulted Him [1 Tim 1]*. Again when he was prostrate and blind and led into the city; when Ananias came to him and instructed him, then he was weak. But hear how strong he was afterwards: *I am certain, he says, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor any other creature can separate me from the Love of God [Rom 8]*.

And note that when Peter answered, *I do love you*, the Lord immediately said to him *Feed My sheep [ibid.]*; as if to say: Show me the love you have for Me in this way: by feeding My sheep. Therefore, my brothers, he who does not wish to feed Christ=s sheep, falsely says that he loves God.

But someone may say: What is all this to us? This pertains to bishops, to abbots, to priests who have the care of souls. That is true, my brothers, it does pertain to them; but it also pertains to you. For Christ=s sheep are fed in two ways: by word and by example. Certainly there are many prelates or superiors in the Church who can sufficiently feed Christ=s sheep by their words; but because they live badly, they would feed them better if they were silent or physically went away. They would thus give the sheep an example of humility, of poverty, abstinence, chastity and the other virtues. Yet that prelate or superior who does both does better, i.e., he feeds the sheep both by his word and by his example. If a prelate or superior cannot do both, it is better to feed Christ=s sheep by his example than by his words. Therefore, my brothers, if you love our Lord, live so that the sheep of Christ may be fed by your example, as the Lord

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<sup>3</sup>Sermo XVI in Die SS. Petri et Pauli, Migne PL 299-300, 301 & 302.

says: *So let your works shine before men, that they may glorify your Father Who is in Heaven [Matt 5].*

But in each soul our Lord also has some sheep, that is, some virtues which he who loves Christ must feed. These sheep are: charity, humility, spiritual joy, and the like. We feed these sheep when we do works that make these virtues grow in us. And each one of us must also feed these sheep, these virtues, in the others. We do this if we so conduct ourselves before our brothers that their charity, their joy, their humility and patience grow by our example. For how do I feed humility in my brother, if I am proud before him, if I speak proudly, answer him proudly, walk proudly? How do I feed obedience in my brother, if he sees me contrary and disobedient? How do I feed his patience if I grumble, am irascible, or speak or make signs harshly before him? He who does these things before his brother does not feed Christ=s sheep in him; but so far as he can, he destroys and kills them, because he scandalizes his brother. But he who scandalizes his brother, sins against his brother. And who sins against his brother, as the Apostle says, sins against Christ [1 Cor 8]. Therefore if you love Christ, my brothers, feed Christ=s sheep, and you will belong to these pillars which are upheld by Christ=s love. And let us place before our eyes the life and death of these saints and their reward, my brothers; let us think that if we imitate their sufferings as we can, without doubt we will be joined to their lot. May the Lord grant us this through their merits. Amen.



SAT 06.30.18

**From a Sermon by Saint Sophronius, bishop.<sup>1</sup>**

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you." What joy could surpass this, O Virgin Mother? What grace can excel that which God has granted to you alone? What could be imagined more dazzling or more delightful? Before the miracle we witness in you, all else pales; all else is inferior when compared with the grace you have been given. All else, even what is most desirable, must take second place and enjoy a lesser importance.

"The Lord is with you." Who would dare challenge you? You are God's mother; who would not immediately defer to you and be glad to accord you a greater primacy and honor? For this reason, when I look upon the privilege you have above all creatures, I extol you with the highest praise: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you." On your account joy has not only graced us, but is also granted to the powers of heaven.

Truly, "You are blessed among women." For you have changed Eve's curse into a blessing; and Adam, who hitherto lay under a curse, has been blessed because of you.

Truly, you are blessed among women. Through you the Father's blessing has shone forth on humankind, setting them free of their ancient curse.

Truly, you are blessed among women, because through you your forebears have found salvation. For you were to give birth to the Savior who was to win them salvation.

Truly, you are blessed among women, for without seed you have borne, as your fruit, him who bestows blessings on the whole world and redeems it from that curse that made it sprout thorns.

Truly, you are blessed among women, because, though a woman by nature, you will become, in reality, God's mother. If he whom you are to bear is truly God made flesh, then rightly do we call you God's mother. For you have truly given birth to God.

Enclosed within your womb is God himself. He makes his abode in you and comes forth from you like a bridegroom, winning joy for all and bestowing God's light on all.

You, O Virgin, are like a clear and shining sky, in which God "has set his tent." From you "he comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber." Like a giant running his course, he will run the course of his life which will bring salvation for all who will ever live, and extending from the highest heavens to the end of them, it will fill all things with divine warmth and life-giving brightness.

<sup>1</sup>[Oratio 2, in sanctissimae Deiparae Annuntiatione, 21-22.26: PG 87, 3, 3242, 3250](#)