

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY: VIGILS READINGS

Tenth Week in Ordinary Time

June 10-16, 2018

Sunday, June 10, 2018

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by an Unknown Greek Author of the 5th century ¹

The signs of the Lord's resurrection are obvious: deception has ceased, envy has been banished, strife is despised. Peace is held in honor, and war has been done away with. No longer do we bewail the Adam who was fashioned first; instead we glorify the second Adam. No longer do we reproach Eve for transgressing God's command: instead we bless Mary for being the Mother of God. No longer do we avert our eyes from the wood of the tree: instead we carry the Lord's cross. We no longer fear the serpent: instead we revere the Holy Spirit. We no longer descend into the earth: instead we reascend into heaven. We are no longer exiles from paradise: instead we live in Abraham's bosom. We no longer hear, "I have made your day like night": instead, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we sing: *This is the day which the Lord has made: let us keep it with gladness and rejoicing*. Why should we do so? Because the sun is no longer darkened: instead everything is bathed in light. Because the veil of the temple is no longer rent: instead the Church is recognized. Because we no longer hold palm branches: instead we carry the newly enlightened.

This is the day which the Lord has made: let us keep it with gladness and rejoicing. This is the day, this and no other, for there is only one queen, and not a throng of princesses. This is the day in the truest sense: the day of triumph, the day custom consecrates to the resurrection, the day on which we adorn ourselves with grace, the day on which we partake of the spiritual Lamb. This is the day on which milk is given to those born again, and on which God's plan for the poor is realized. *Let us keep it with gladness and rejoicing*, not by running off to the taverns, but by hastening to the martyrs' shrines; not by esteeming drunkenness, but by loving temperance; not by dancing in the marketplace, but by singing psalms at home. This day is a day of resurrection, not of revelry. No one can ascend to heaven dancing; no one in a state of drunkenness can attend upon a king. Let none of us, therefore, dishonor this day.

This is the day on which Adam was set free, and Eve delivered from her affliction. It is the day on which cruel death shuddered, the strength of hard stones was shattered and destroyed, the bars of tombs were broken and set aside. It is the day on which the bodies of people long dead were restored to their former life, and the laws of the underworld, hitherto ever powerful and immutable, were repealed. It is the day on which the heavens were opened at the rising of Christ the Lord, and on which, for the good of the human race, the flourishing and fruitful tree of the resurrection set forth branches all over the world, as if the world were a garden. It is the day on which the lilies of the newly enlightened sprang up, the streams that sustained sinners ran dry, the strength of the devil is drained away, and demonic armies are scattered.

This, then is the day which the Lord has made: let us keep it with gladness and rejoicing by the grace of Christ. By his resurrection he has illuminated the whole world, which was in darkness and in the shadow of death. May glory and adoration be given to him together with the Father and the Holy Spirit for endless ages. Amen.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1999 – pg 88

Monday, June 11, 2018

HOW THE WEAKNESS OF ST BARNABAS MAY HELP US, from a Sermon by Blessed John H. Newman¹

On two occasions the conduct [of St Barnabas] is scarcely becoming an Apostle, as instancing somewhat of that infirmity which uninspired persons of his peculiar character frequently exhibit. Both are cases of indulgence towards the faults of others, yet in a different way; the one, an over-easiness in a matter of doctrine, the other, in a matter of conduct. With all his tenderness for the Gentiles, yet on one occasion he could not resist indulging the prejudices of some Judaizing brethren, who came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Peter first was carried away; before they came, "he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch, that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation."(Gal 2:12) The other instance was his indulgent treatment of Mark, his sister's son, which occasioned the quarrel between him and St Paul. "Barnabas determined to take with them," on their Apostolic journey, "John,

whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."(Acts 15:37)

Now it is very plain what description of character, and what kind of lesson, is brought before us in the history of this Holy Apostle. Holy he was, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith; still the characteristics and the infirmities of man remained in him, and thus he is "unto us for an example," consistently with the reverence we feel towards him as one of the foundations of the Christian Church. He is an example and warning to us, not only as showing us what we ought to be, but as evidencing how the highest gifts and graces are corrupted in our sinful nature, if we are not diligent to walk step by step, according to the light of God's commandments. Be our mind as heavenly as it may be, most loving, most holy, most zealous, most energetic, most peaceful, yet if we look off from Him for a moment, and look towards ourselves, at once these excellent tempers fall into some extreme or mistake. Charity becomes over-easiness, holiness is tainted with spiritual pride, zeal degenerates into fierceness, activity eats up the spirit of prayer, hope is heightened into presumption. We cannot guide ourselves. God's revealed word is our sovereign rule of conduct; and therefore, among other reasons, is faith so principal a grace, for it is the directing power which receives the commands of Christ, and applies them to the heart.

[1](#) PAROCHIAL & PLAIN SERMONS, John. H. Newman (Ignatius Press, CA 1987) pp. 401-403.

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

A Commentary on the Book of Judges by St Methodius ¹

Now it is clear that these things are not said of trees growing out of the earth. Inanimate trees cannot be assembled in council to choose a king since they are firmly fixed in the earth by deep roots. But on the whole these things are narrated concerning souls that – before the incarnation of Christ – luxuriated too deeply in transgressions, who approach God as beggars asking for mercy so that they may be governed by his pity and compassion. This mercy is what Scripture expresses by the figure of the olive, because oil is of great advantage to our bodies; it takes away our fatigue and ailments and offers light. For all the lamplight increases when nourished by oil. So also God's mercies entirely dispel death, assist the human race

and nourish the light of the heart. Consider the laws which were in effect from the first created man successively on to Christ. Weren't they imaginatively set forth in these words by the Scripture, in opposition to which the devil has deceived humanity? In it the fig tree has been associated with the command given to the man in paradise, because when he was deceived, he covered his nakedness with the leaves of a fig tree; and the vine has been related to the instruction given to Noah at the time of the deluge, because he was mocked when overpowered by wine. The olive signifies the law given to Moses in the desert, because the prophetic grace, the holy oil, had failed from their inheritance when they broke the law. Lastly, the bramble aptly refers to the law that was given to the apostles for the salvation of the world; by their instruction we have been taught virginity, which is the only figure that the devil has not been able to make into a deceptive image. For this reason also, the four Gospels have been given, because God has four times given the gospel to the human race and has instructed them by four laws, the times of which are clearly known by the diversity of the fruits. For the fig tree, on account of its sweetness and richness, represents the delights of man, which he had in paradise before the fall. Indeed, as we shall afterwards show, the Holy Spirit frequently takes the fruit of the fig tree as an emblem of goodness. But the vine, on account of the gladness produced by wine and the joy of those who were saved from wrath and from the deluge, signifies the change produced from fear and anxiety into joy. Moreover, the olive, on account of the oil that it produces, indicates the compassion of God, who again, after the deluge, bore patiently when people turned aside to ungodliness, so that he gave them the law and manifested himself to some, and nourished by oil the light of virtue, which is now almost extinguished.

[1](#)Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. IV – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 1999 – pg 133

Wednesday, June 13, 2018

From a Sermon by St. Anthony of Padua ¹

¹ The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. III – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – pg 1470

The one who is filled with the Holy Spirit speaks in different languages. These different languages are different ways of witnessing to Christ, such as humility, poverty, patience and obedience. We speak in these languages when we reveal in ourselves these virtues to others. Actions speak louder than words; let your words teach and your actions speak. We are full of words but empty of actions, and therefore are cursed by the Lord, since he himself cursed the fig tree when he found no fruit but only leaves. Gregory says: "A law is laid upon the preacher to practice what he preaches." It is useless for a person to flaunt their knowledge of the law if they undermine its teaching by their actions.

But the apostles *spoke as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech*. Happy the one whose words issue from the Holy Spirit and not from himself! For some speak as their own character dictates, but steal the words of others and present them as their own and claim the credit for them. The Lord refers to such people and others like them in Jeremiah: *So, then, I have a quarrel with the prophets that steal my words from each other. I have a quarrel with the prophets, says the Lord, who have only to move their tongues to utter oracles. I have a quarrel with the prophets who make prophecies out of lying dreams, who recount them and lead my people astray with their lies and their pretensions. I certainly never sent them or commissioned them, and they serve no good purpose for this people, says the Lord.*

We should speak, then, as the Holy Spirit gives us the gift of speech. Our humble and sincere request to the spirit for ourselves should be that we may bring the day of Pentecost to fulfillment, insofar as He infuses us with his grace, by using our bodily senses in a perfect manner and by keeping the commandments. Likewise we shall request that we may be filled with a keen sense of sorrow and with fiery tongues for confessing the faith, so that our deserved reward may be to stand in the blazing splendor of the saints and to look upon the triune God.

Thursday, June 14, 2018

From St. Bernard's Lament for the Death of Gerard, his Brother.²

How much better for me, O Gerard, if I had lost my life rather than your company, since through your tireless inspiration, your unfailing help and under

²On The Song Of Songs II Sermon 26.III. tr. Kilian Walsh. Cistercian Publications 1976. p.62-4.

your provident scrutiny I persevered with my studies of things divine. Why, I ask, have we loved, why have we lost each other? O cruel circumstance! But pity pertains to my lot only, not to his.

And the reason, dear brother, is that though you have lost your loved ones, you have found others more lovable still. As for me, already so miserable, what consolation remains to me, and you, my only comfort, gone? Our bodily companionship was equally enjoyable to both, because our dispositions were so alike; but only I am wounded by the parting. All that was pleasant we rejoiced to share; now sadness and mourning are mine alone: anger has swept over me, rage is fastened on me. Both of us were so happy in each other's company, sharing the same experiences, talking together about them; now my share of these delights has ceased and you have passed on, you have traded them for an immense reward.

What harvest of joys, what a profusion of blessings is yours. In place of my insignificant person you have the abiding presence of Christ, and mingling with the angelic choirs you feel our absence no loss. You have no cause to complain that we have been cut off from you, favored as you are by the constant presence of the Lord of Majesty and of his heavenly friends. But what do I have in your stead? How I long to know what you now think about me, once so uniquely yours, as I sink beneath the weight of cares and afflictions, deprived of the support you lent to my feebleness! Perhaps you still give thought to our miseries, now that you have plunged into the abyss of light, become engulfed in that sea of endless happiness. It is possible that though you once knew us according to the flesh, you now no longer know us and because you have entered into the power of the Lord you will be mindful of his righteousness alone, forgetful of ours. Furthermore, "he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him," his whole being somehow changed into a movement of divine love. He no longer has the power to experience or relish anything but God, and what God himself experiences and relishes, because he is filled with God. But God is love, and the deeper one's union with God, the more full one is of love. And though God cannot endure pain, he is not without compassion for those who do; it is his nature to show mercy and pardon. Therefore you too must of necessity be merciful, clasped as you are to him who is Mercy; and though you no longer feel the need of mercy, though you no longer suffer, you can still be compassionate. Your love has not diminished but only changed; when you were clothed with God you did not divest yourself of concern for us, for God is certainly concerned about us. All that smacks of

weakness you have cast away, but not what pertains to love. And since love never comes to an end, you will not forget me for ever.

It seems to me that I can almost hear my brother saying: "Can a woman forget the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet I will not forget you." This is how it must be.

Friday, June 15, 2018

What IS God Calling You to do? From an Exhortation by St. John Paul II ¹

I turn especially to you, both the young and not so young, who find yourselves at the decisive moment of choice. I would like to meet you one by one, call you by your name, talk to your heart of things extremely important not only for yourself, but for the whole of humanity.

I would like to ask each one of you: What will you do with your life? What are your plans? Have you ever thought of committing your existence totally to Christ? Do you think that there can be anything greater than to bring Jesus to people and people to Jesus?

Our inner gaze extends to the limitless horizons of our hopes and aspirations. And in the midst of all life's contradictions, we search for life's true meaning. We wonder and ask, Why? Why am I here? Why am I alive at all? What must I do? None of you is alone in posing these questions. Humanity as a whole feels the pressing need to give sense and purpose to a world which is increasingly complicated and difficult to be happy in.

You are at the great crossroads of your lives and you must decide how your future can be lived happily, accepting the responsibilities which you hope will be placed squarely on your shoulders, playing an active role in the world around you. You ask me for encouragement and guidance, and most willingly I offer some words of advice to all of you in the name of Jesus Christ. In the first place I say this: you must never think that you are alone in deciding your future! And second, when deciding your future, you must not decide for yourself alone.

The conviction which we must share and spread is that the call to holiness is directed to all Christians. This is not a question of privilege or spiritual elitism. It is not a matter of some persons feeling inclined to heroic daring. Still less is it a question of seeking a quiet refuge adapted to certain forms of piety or certain natural temperaments. It is a question of a grace offered to all the baptized, but in varying ways.

Ask yourselves about the love of Christ. Acknowledge his voice resounding in the temple of your heart. Return his bright and penetrating glance which opens the paths of your life to the horizons of the Church's mission. It is a taxing mission, today more than ever, to teach all peoples the truth about themselves, about their end, their destiny, and to show faithful souls the unspeakable riches of the love of Christ. Do not be afraid of the radicalness of his demands, because Jesus, who loved us first, is prepared to give himself to you, as well as asking of you. If he asks much from you, it is because he knows that you can give much.

Christian holiness does not mean being sinless, but rather it means struggling not to give in and always getting up after each fall. Holiness does not stem so much from the effort of human will, as from the effort to never restrict the action of grace in one's own soul. And to be, moreover, grace's humble partner.

Every lay Christian is an extraordinary work of God's grace and is called to the heights of holiness. Sometimes, lay men and women do not seem to appreciate to the full the dignity and the vocation that is theirs as lay people. It is their specific vocation and mission to express the Gospel in their lives and thereby to insert the Gospel as a leaven into the reality of the world in which they live and work.

Follow Christ! You who are single or are preparing for marriage. Follow Christ! You who are young or old. Follow Christ! You who are sick or aging; you who feel the need of a friend. Follow Christ.

1The Meaning of Vocation in the Words of John Paul II – Scepter Publishers, Princeton, NJ – 1998 – pg 9

Saturday, June 16, 2018

From the Life of St. Lutgarde by Thomas Merton³

Born in 1182, Lutgarde reached maturity at the turn of the 13th century. She belongs to the age of St. Francis and St. Dominic, St Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. It was a great age. With the growth of the new social order came the development of a new spirit in Christian devotion and Christian living. Collective, liturgical prayer ceased to have the influence it had exercised in the ages of St. Augustine and St. Benedict. Spirituality became more imaginative, affective, individual. The sacred humanity of Jesus became a reality to which the saints of the 13th century were passionately devoted. It was fitting that the Cistercians should play an important part in this new growth, for Bernard of Clairvaux had done more than any other individual to set the movement going.

Lutgarde was born of a bourgeois father who, like the father of St. Francis of Assisi, cherished worldly ambitions for his children. However her mother favored a convent life. Even so, a young man fell in love with her while she was residing at the Benedictine convent of St. Catherine. Pleased and a little flattered by these attentions, she was content to have them continue. But Christ Himself intervened, and made one of these meetings the occasion of His first mystical grace to His daughter.

One day, while the simple girl was sitting behind the grille in the parlor listening to her admirer, Christ in His humanity suddenly appeared. He revealed the spear-wound in His side, and said to her: "Seek no more the pleasure of this affection; behold here, what you should love, and how you should love. Here in this wound I promise you the most pure of delights."

Another time Jesus asked her: "What do you want?" "Lord," she told him, "I want your Heart." Jesus responded: "What do you mean: you want My Heart? I want *your* heart." To which Lutgarde replied: "Take it, dear Lord. But take it in such a way that your Heart's love may be so mingled with my own heart that I may possess my heart in you, and may ever it remain there secure in Your protection."

St Lutgarde is perhaps the first saint in whom this mystical "exchange of hearts" was effected. Since her time, the exchange has become more common in

³ What are these Wounds? By Thomas Merton – Bruce Publishing Co – Milwaukee - 1950

the lives of mystics devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We read of it in the lives of St. Gertrude, St. Mechtilde (both Cistercians) and St. Margaret Mary.

After some years Lutgarde was elected Prioress of St Catherine convent. However due to the distraction of that position, she decided to enter the Cistercian Abbey near Liege. The period was marked by the Catharist heresy which laid claim to a higher and purer spirituality than that of the Church. They believed that the flesh, the body and all material creation were absolutely evil. The souls of humans were really fallen angels, imprisoned as punishment in human bodies and immersed in the filth of material creation. Rescue from this state had been effected by the son of God. But Christ had never really taken flesh, since the flesh was filthy. Therefore He had not died or risen from the dead.

The Blessed Virgin appeared to Lutgarde with a face very sorrowful. She told Lutgarde that this was because “my Son is once again being crucified by heretics and bad Christians.” She then enjoined on Lutgarde a fast of seven years in reparation. Lutgarde then began the first of three seven year fasts on bread and the ordinary drink of the convent, which happened to be weak beer.

Her third seven-year fast brought her to the end of her life. In 1239 or 1240, Christ again appeared to her and warned her that His Church was exposed to attack by a powerful enemy. This attack would result in terrible harm to souls, unless someone undertook to suffer and win grace from God. Thus Lutgarde began her third and last fast. She was to die in its seventh year. But her death would be serene with the confidence of victory.

END OF READINGS