

SUNDAY

07.15.18

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Theophylact ¹

Besides teaching himself the Lord also sent out the Twelve in pairs. The reason for sending them in pairs was so that they would go more readily, for they might not have been willing to set out all alone and, on the other hand, if he had sent more than two together, there would not have been enough apostles to cover all the villages. So he sent them two by two: *two are better than one*, as Ecclesiastes says.

He commanded them to take nothing with them, neither bag, nor money, nor bread, so as to teach them to despise riches, and to make people ashamed when they saw them preaching poverty by their own lack of possessions. For who would not blush for shame, strip himself of his possessions, and embrace a life of poverty when he saw an apostle carrying neither bag, nor even bread which is so essential?

The Lord instructed them to stay in the same house so as not to give the appearance of restlessness, as though they moved from one family to another in order to satisfy their stomachs. On the other hand, he told them to shake the dust off their feet when people refuse to receive them, to show that they had made a long journey for their sakes and they owed them nothing; they had received nothing from them, not even their dust, which they shook off as a testimony against them – a testimony of reproach. *Be sure of this, I tell you: Sodom and Gomorrah will fare better on the Day of Judgment than those who will not receive you.* The Sodomites were punished in this world, so they will be punished less severely in the next. What is more, no apostles were sent to them. For those who refused to receive the apostles, greater sufferings are in store.

So they set out to preach repentance. They cast out many demons, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them. The fact that the apostles anointed the sick with oil is mentioned only by Mark, but the practice is also referred to in his general letter by James, the brother of the Lord, who says: *Are there any sick people among you? Let them send for the elders of the Church and let these pray over them, anointing them with oil.* Oil is beneficial for the relief of suffering, and it also produces light and makes for cheerfulness. It symbolizes the mercy of God and the grace of the Spirit, through which we are freed from suffering and receive light, gladness, and spiritual joy.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1999 – pg 98

MONDAY

07.16.18

**A reading on the example of the martyrs,
from a homily by St Augustine.** ¹

Let us not imagine that in keeping the feast of the Martyrs with great solemnity, we are benefiting them. They who are in the joy of heaven with the angels have no need of our honors and if they rejoice with us, it is at being imitated, not at being honored. However, though this veneration does not benefit them, it is useful for us: but to honor them without imitating them, would be lying flattery. If then these solemnities have been instituted in the Church of Christ, it is only to unite all the members of Christ and to enlist them as followers in the steps of the martyrs of Christ. Such is the fruit of today's festival; there is no question of any other.

When, in fact, we propose God himself as our example, human weakness readily answers that it is above its power to imitate him to whom it cannot be compared. In that case Jesus Christ our Lord will be proposed to it as model who, being God, clothed himself in mortal flesh in order the better to persuade us also clothed in this same flesh, adding word to example; Christ, it is written, "suffered for our sakes, and left you his own example; you were to follow in his footsteps" (*1 Pet 2:21*). Yet will not frail humanity reply again: "What comparison is there between me and Christ? He was one of us, but he was God. He took flesh, but without ceasing to be the Word, assuming a new nature without losing that which was proper to him. For, as St Paul says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (*2 Cor 5:19*). Once again, how can I compare myself with Christ?

Therefore, to remove all pretext from the faithlessness of the weak, the Martyrs have made a broad way for us. It was necessary that the foundation should be solid as stone, in order that our footsteps should be steady: they have cemented it with their blood and their testimony, and finally, reckoning nothing of their bodies, they have thrown them under the feet of Christ as he advances to the conquest of the heathen, as, On Palm Sunday, the people threw their garments under the feet of the ass on which he rode. Who would be ashamed to say: "I am inferior to God"? I grant you are very much so. "I am inferior to

¹ Sermon 325. Trans., *Lectionary and Martyrology*, ed. Encalcat Abbey, 1956, 509-510.

Christ"? Yes, certainly, and even to his humanity. But Peter was what you are; so was Paul, and the Apostles and Prophets were all what you are yourself. If the example of our Lord alarms you, at least imitate those who are like you his servant. They go before you in dense crowds: no more excuse for your lukewarmness. Will you say to me again: "I am very far from Peter and Paul"? Are you then also far from truth? There where the illiterate receive the crown, there is no excuse for vanity. Are you less than children?

Watch then, my friends, that in celebrating the sufferings of the Martyrs you fill yourself with the desire to imitate them. They knew that they must choose a good cause if their work was to be made fruitful. They remembered that not only had our Lord said: "*Blessed are the persecuted*", but: "*blessed are those who suffer persecution in the cause of right*" (Mt 5:10). Choose yourselves the good cause, and do not be disturbed by what you suffer in so doing.

TUESDAY

07.17.18

From a Homily of St Gregory the Great ¹

My dear brothers and sisters, I urge you to meditate seriously on the word of God, and not to think lightly of the writings which our Creator has bequeathed to us. Beyond all doubt they afford warmth to hearts which would otherwise be numb with cold because of our sins. When we read of the heroic deeds of our saintly forebearers, their holy example inspires us and gives us the courage to do whatever is right.

Are we trying to avoid sin and endure humbly even when we are injured by someone in our own family? Let us remember Abel. Scripture says that his brother killed him, but we read nothing about Abel offering any resistance.

Are we striving to put God's commands before our own immediate advantage? Let us think of Noah. At the command of almighty God he put aside his own domestic concerns and spent a hundred years building the ark.

Are we endeavoring to acquire the virtue of obedience? We should look at Abraham. He left his home, kindred, and native land which he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out not knowing where he was going. He was ready to kill the beloved heir he had received for the sake of an eternal inheritance; and because he did not hesitate to offer his only son to the Lord, he received the whole multitude of nations as his offspring.

Remember Joseph. When tempted by the master's wife he was determined to preserve his chastity even at the risk of his life. And so, since he knew how to rule his body well, he was made ruler of all Egypt.

Do we seek to acquire gentleness and patience? Let us call Moses to mind, the ruler of six hundred thousand armed men, as well as their women and children. He is described as the most gentle person living on the whole face of the earth.

Do we long to rid ourselves of animosity and become large-hearted and kind? Let us think of Samuel. When the people who ousted him from leadership asked him to pray to the Lord for them, he answered: *Far be it from me to sin against*

the Lord by ceasing to pray for you. The holy man really thought that he would be committing a sin if he did not show kindness and goodwill by praying for those whose opposition he had endured even to the point of being deposed by them.

[1](#)Word in Season – vol. V – pg 183

WEDNESDAY

07/18/18

St Camillus de Lellis – From Butler’s Lives of Saints ²

Camillus de Lellis was born in 1550 at Bocchianico in the Abruzzi, when his mother was nearly sixty. He grew to be a big man – 6 feet 6 inches tall. When he was seventeen he went off with his father to fight with the Venetians against the Turks; but soon he had contracted the painful disease in his leg that was to afflict him for the rest of his life. In 1571 he was admitted to the San Giacomo hospital for incurables in Rome, as a patient and servant. After nine months he was dismissed, for his quarrelsomeness among other things, and he returned to active service in the Turkish war. Though Camillus habitually referred to himself as a great sinner, his worst disorder was an addiction to gambling. In the autumn of 1574 he gambled away his savings, his arms, everything down to the proverbial shirt, which was stripped off his back in the streets of Naples.

The indigence to which he had reduced himself, and the memory of a vow he had made in a fit of remorse to join the Franciscans, caused him to accept work as a laborer on the new Capuchin buildings at Manfredonia, and there his conversion was made complete by means of a moving exhortation which the guardian of the friars made one day. Pondering on it as he rode on his business, he at length fell on his knees and with tears deplored his past life, and cried out to heaven for mercy. This happened on Candlemas day in the year 1575. He entered the novitiate of the Capuchins, but could not be admitted to profession on account of the disease in his leg. He therefore returned to the hospital of San Giacomo and devoted himself to the service of the sick. The administrators, having been witnesses to his charity and ability, after some time appointed him superintendent of the hospital.

Camillus grieved to see the slackness of hired servants in attending the sick, and he formed a project of associating some of the attendants who desired to devote themselves to it out of a motive of charity. To make himself more useful in spiritually assisting the sick, he received holy orders with the approval of his confessor, St. Philip Neri. In 1585 he hired a larger house, and the success of his undertaking encouraged him to extend his activities. In 1588 Camillus was invited to Naples, and with twelve companions founded there a new house. He

² Butler’s Lives of Saints – revised edition – Harper – San Francisco – 1991 – pg 214

cared for those on boats who were afflicted with plague. In 1591 Pope Gregory XIV erected the congregation into a religious order for serving the sick.

Camillus laid down the canonical leadership of his order in 1607, but he continued to visit the sick and care for his brothers. He expired on July 14, 1614, being sixty-four years old. St. Camillus de Lellis was canonized in 1746 and was declared patron of the sick by Pope Leo XIII and of nurses by Pope Pius XI.

THURSDAY

07.19.18

A Reading About the Character of Saul, from a Sermon by John Cardinal Newman.³

In spite of Samuel's private liking for him, and in spite of the good fortune which actually attended him, we find that from the beginning the prophet's voice is raised both against people and king in warnings and rebukes, which are omens of his destined destruction, according to the text, "I gave them a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath."

Here, then, a question may be raised - why was Saul thus marked for vengeance from the beginning? Why these presages of misfortune, which from the first hung over him, gathered, fell in storm and tempest, and at length overwhelmed him?

This question leads us to a deeper inspection of his character. Now, we know, the first duty of everyone is the fear of God - a reverence for His word, a love of Him, and a desire to obey Him; and, besides, it was peculiarly incumbent on the king of Israel, as God's vice regent, by virtue of his office, to promote His glory whom his subjects had rejected.

Now Saul "lacked this one thing." His character, indeed, is obscure, and we must be cautious while considering it; still, as Scripture is given us for our instruction, it is surely right to make the most of what we find there, and to form our judgment by such lights as we possess. It would appear, then, that Saul was never under the abiding influence of religion, or, in Scripture language, "the fear of God," however he might be at times moved and softened. Some men are inconsistent in their conduct, as Samson; or as Eli, in a different way; and yet may have lived by faith, though a weak faith. Others have sudden falls, as David had. Others are corrupted by prosperity, as Solomon. But as to Saul, there is no proof that he had any deep-seated religious principle at all; rather, it is to be feared, that his history is a lesson to us, that the "heart of unbelief" may exist in the very sight of God, may rule a person in spite of many natural advantages of character, in the midst of much that is virtuous, amiable, and commendable.

³Parochial & Plain Sermons, John Henry Newman. vol. 3, p.34ff.

FRIDAY

07.20.18

God is the One Who Calls - by St John Paul II [1](#)

Every vocation is a part of a divine plan. This means that in God's creative initiative there enters a particular act of love for those called not only to salvation, but also to the ministry of salvation. Therefore from all eternity, since we began to exist in the plan of the Creator, and He willed us to be creatures, He also willed us to be "called", preparing in us the gifts and conditions for the personal, conscious, and opportune response to the call of Christ and of the Church. God who loves us, who is Love, is also "He who calls" (Rom. 9:11).

Vocation is, therefore, a mystery which man accepts and lives in the depths of his being. A gift and a grace, it depends on supreme divine freedom and, in its total reality, it escapes our understanding. We cannot demand explanations from the Giver of all goods - "Why have you made me thus? (Rom 9:20) because He who calls is also "He who is" (Exod 3:14). Therefore in the presence of a vocation we adore the mystery, we respond lovingly to the initiative of love, we say *yes* to the call.

The experience of a vocation is unique and indescribable, and is only perceived as a gentle breeze of the clarifying touch of grace. The vocation is a breathing of the Holy Spirit, who at the same time as He genuinely shapes our fragile human reality, shines a new light into our hearts. He instills an extraordinary power that merges our existence into the divine enterprise.

The Lord has given you a heart open to great horizons; do not be afraid to commit your life completely to the service of Christ and his Gospel! Listen to him as he says again today: "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few."

We can learn how the Lord acts in every in every vocation. First, he evokes a new awareness of his presence - the burning bush. When we begin to show an interest he calls us by name. When our answer becomes more specific and like Moses we say: "Here I am", then he reveals more clearly both himself and his compassionate love for his people in need. Gradually he leads us to discover the practical way in which we should serve him: "I will send you". And usually it is then that fears and doubts come to disturb us and make it more difficult to decide. It is then that we need to hear the Lord's assurance: "I am with you. Be not afraid!" Every vocation springs from familiarity with God's word and involves being sent to communicate that word to others.

SATURDAY

07.21.18

A Reading about Mary and Waiting for Christ, from a book by Fr Jean Daniélou.ⁱ

The Blessed Virgin had a most crucial role in the first coming of Christ. In her culminated all the expectation of the Jewish people, insofar as all the preparations, aspirations, inspirations, graces, prefigurations which had filled the Old Testament, all came together and were summed up in her; it is true to say that at the eve of Christ's coming she was the epitome and incarnation of the long waiting of twenty centuries. The whole of the Old Testament seems to come together in her with a more ardent longing and a more complete spiritual preparation for Our Lord's coming. *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.* The work of the Old Testament was one of education: the human race, rugged, coarse, as yet unformed, still utterly carnal-minded, must be made able, bit by bit, to take God's gifts, to receive the Holy Spirit. It was a long, progressive work of training. And the training culminated in the soul of the Blessed Virgin; and if we can say that in some sense her soul is outside time, and that in her eternity is present, then we may also say that she was prepared by the education of the whole of her people: she is the marvelous flower sprung out of Israel, the final point in the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of all the prophets and all the holy women of Israel. It is in fact, absolutely true to say that in her *every valley was filled, every mountain and hill brought low.* That is to say, in her our Lord's path was smooth before Him.

All this, which was simply the preparation and foreshadowing of Christ in Our Lady's soul, is a reality still present to us, for the mystery we are now living in the world is the mystery of Christ's gradual coming into all souls, into all nations. Christ had appeared in the flesh, the culmination of Israel's hopes; Mary had seen him for whom she had waited, she had held in her arms the child born in Bethlehem, and with Simeon had been able to salute Him as a Light to enlighten the Gentiles. Christ, then, had certainly come. He has come, but He is always He that is to come. He has come, but not yet wholly come; and though the waiting of Israel had been crowned, Israel is nonetheless still waiting. We live always during Advent, we are always waiting for the Messiah to come. He has come, but is not yet fully manifest. He is not fully manifest in each of our souls; He is not fully manifest in the world as a whole: that is to say, that just as Christ was born according to the flesh in Bethlehem of Juda so must He be born according to the spirit in each of our souls.

¹-"Advent", New York 1951, 102-103, 109-110.