

NT-JN02
08.12.2018

A reading about the true bread from heaven, from Origen's treatise *On Prayer*.¹

[Jesus] says, "*My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world*" (Jn 6.32-33). The true bread is He who nourishes the true Man, made in the image of God; and the one who has been nourished by it will come to be in the likeness of Him who Created him. And what is more nourishing to the soul than the Word, or what is more honorable than the Wisdom of God to the mind that holds it? What more rightly corresponds to a rational nature than truth?

But if someone objects to this and says that He would not have taught us to ask for "*daily bread*" if He meant something else, let him hear that even in the Gospel according to John sometimes He speaks about it as though it were something other than Himself, and sometimes as though He were Himself "bread." An example of the first is, "*Moses gave you bread from heaven, not the true bread, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven*" (Jn 6.32). An example of referring it to Himself is what he says to those who said to him, "*Give us this bread always*": "*I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst*" (Jn 6.34-35)....

Now all food is called "bread" in Scripture, as is clear from what is written about Moses, "*For forty days I neither ate bread nor drank water*" (Deut 9.9). How manifold and varying, then, is the nourishing Word, since not everyone can be nourished by the solid and vigorous food of divine teachings. That is why, when He wishes to offer food for an athlete, suitable for the more perfect, He says, "*The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh*" (Jn 6.51), and a little further on, "*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For*

¹ translated by Rowan A Greer, Classics of Western Spirituality series, New York: Paulist Press, 1979, pp. 138-139.

my flesh is true food...” (Jn 6.53). This is the “True food”, the “flesh” of Christ, existing as the Word become flesh according to the verse “*The Word became flesh*” (Jn 1.14). And when we eat and drink Him, He also has dwelt in us....

...Just as the corporeal bread distributed to the body of the person to be nourished goes into his being, so also “*the living bread which came down from heaven*” and is distributed to the mind and the soul gives a share in its own power to the person who provides himself food from it. And thus the bread we ask will be “*daily*” in the sense that it will be “for our being.” Moreover, just as the person nourished becomes empowered in differing ways according to the quality of the food, which may be solid and suitable for athletes or like mild or vegetables, so also it follows that the Word of God is given either as milk suitable for children or as vegetables fit for the sick or as meat special for those taking part in the contests. And the different ones, each nourished in proportion to how he places himself in the power of the Word, are able to do different things and become different kinds of people.... Therefore, “daily bread,” that is, “bread for being,” is what corresponds most closely with a rational nature and is akin to Being itself. It procures at one time health, vigor, and strength to the soul; and since the Word of God is immortal, it shares its own immortality with the one who eats it.

OT-1SM10

08.13.2018

A reading about David and the kingship of Israel, from a book by Eugene Maly. ¹

David's religious respect for the office of kingship is related in two stories from two separate traditions probably reflecting a single event. Despite the ease with which he could rid himself of his persecutor, David refuses to harm Saul out of respect for his sacral character: he is the Lord's anointed. The consistency with which David is reported showing this religious awe of the royal office makes it more credible, and gives us an insight into the future king's conception of the role he himself would play.

In this same context can be read those passages where predictions of David's future role as king are related. In one case it is made by Jonathan (1 Sam 23.16-17), in another by Saul himself (1Sam 24.20). The stories are interdependent and give some evidence of later reworking. But David's charismatic leadership was certainly clear to Jonathan and must have become increasingly so even to Saul. Given the strong religious bent of Saul, it is not impossible that on some highly emotional occasion he would have made a public confession of David's choice by God. Even in the oldest form of the story we find Saul blessing David and predicting a great future for him (1Sam 26.25).

As should be evident by now, the story of Israel's monarchy cannot be understood except in a religious framework. All the peoples of the ancient Near East saw their gods as having some close relation to the events of their daily lives, particularly to those which, because they were regularly repeated, could be given a religious significance in accord with the divine pattern followed by the events. The difference between the pagans and the Hebrews was that the latter saw the one God, Yahweh, as supreme master and lord of every event, and in particular of those unique events which followed no pattern, and which thereby provided deeper insights into the unfolding plan of God. In other words, whereas the pagans needed constantly to have recourse to the mythological past into which they could fit the recurring pattern of the present, the Hebrews looked confidently to the future and saw the unexpected event of the present as a kind of divine preview of what would take place. Only in a religion where the supreme mastery of history is credited to God can such a conception find a home.

¹ *The World of David and Solomon*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: , 1966, pp. 42-43.

08SN1402.DOC

08.14.2018

The witness to eternity in the martyrdom of St. Maximilian: a reading from an address of Pope John Paul II.¹

The figure of Maximilian [Kolbe] remains as a testimony of the age and belongs to the "signs of the times." This difficult and tragic epoch, stigmatized by horrible debasement of human dignity, has brought about at Oswiecim [*pronounced* Oss-W□-chim] the birth of its salvific sign. Love has shown itself more powerful than death, more powerful than anti-human systems. Love for the person has achieved its victory there where hatred and scorn for human beings seemed to triumph. In this victory of love at Oswiecim the victory of Golgotha presented itself in a particular way. Many saw the death of their prison companion not as still another defeat for human beings, but a saving sign - the sign of our time, of our age.

The Church is rereading the meaning of such signs. It is in this that its link with the history of humanity, of peoples and of nations, consists. Yesterday she reread to the very end the meaning of the sign of Oswiecim that Maximilian Kolbe established by his martyr's death. The Church has reread this sign with profound veneration and emotion in proclaiming the holiness of the Martyr of Oswiecim. The Saints are in history in order to establish permanent points of reference as a background for the future of humankind and the world. That which shows through in them is lasting and unending. It bears witness to eternity. From this testimony we always draw a renewed awareness of our vocation and renewed assurance of all that awaits us. This is the direction in which the Saints guide the Church and humanity. Among these spiritual guides we include today St. Maximilian, our fellow countryman. In him the man of our times discovers a wonderful "synthesis" of the sufferings and the hopes of our age.

But in this synthesis there is also a prophetic warning. It is a cry addressed to all, to society, to humanity, to the systems responsible for our life and our societies. This modern-day Saint has come forth from the very center of human beings humiliated by human beings, of the humiliation of one's dignity, of cruelty and of slaughter. This Saint cries out therefore with all the synthesis of his martyrdom for a consistent respect for the rights of all and also of nations since in fact he is the son of a nation whose rights have been terribly violated.

¹ *Kolbe and the Commandant*. Desmet Foundation, 1983, pp. 330-332.

08SN1501

08.15.18

From a Homily of st. Bernard of Clairvaux ¹

Today the glorious Virgin has ascended into heaven, surely filling up the measure of those who dwell there. But it might seem more fitting for us to weep than to clap our hands. If heaven rejoices in Mary's presence, does it not follow that our world below should bemoan her absence? Nevertheless, let us make an end of our repining, for here we have no abiding city; we seek the very city to which blessed Mary has gone today. If we are enrolled as citizens of heaven, it is surely right for us to remember her and to share her joy even in our exile, even here beside the waters of Babylon. Our Queen has gone before us, and so glorious has been her entry into paradise that we, her servants, confidently follow our mistress, crying: *Draw us after you and we shall run toward the fragrance of your perfumes.* We in exile have sent on ahead of us our advocate who, as mother of our judge and mother of mercy, will humbly and effectively look after everything that concerns our salvation.

Today earth has sent a priceless gift up to heaven, so that by giving and receiving within the blessed bond of friendship, the human is wedded to the divine, earth to heaven, the depths to the heights. A sublime fruit of the earth has gone up to heaven, from whence the best of gifts, the perfect gifts descend. The blessed Virgin has ascended on high, and therefore she too will give gifts to us. And why not? Surely she lacks neither the ability to do so, nor the will. She is the queen of heaven; she is compassionate; she is the mother of the only-begotten Son of God. This more than anything else proves the greatness of her power and love – unless, perhaps, we do not believe that the son of God honors his mother, or unless we doubt that Love itself, which is born of God and rested nine months in her womb, evoked a response of love in her heart.

But quite apart from the benefits that will accrue to us through her glorification, if we love her we shall rejoice because she goes to her son. We shall certainly congratulate her without reserve, unless – which God forbid – we are wholly without gratitude toward her who has found for us the way of grace. The Lord whom she first received when she entered the village of this world, today receives her into the holy city. But can you imagine with how much joy, with how much glory? On earth there was no worthier place for Mary to receive the son of God than the temple of her virginal womb. Nor in heaven is there a worthier place for her than the royal throne to which her Son has today exalted her.

Who can describe either how Christ was begotten or how Mary was taken up into heaven? Just as Mary surpassed in grace all others on earth, so also in heaven is her glory unique. If eye has not seen or ear heard or the human heart conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, who can express what he has prepared for the woman who gave him birth and who loved him, as everyone knows, more

than anyone else? Blessed indeed is Mary, blessed in many ways, both in receiving the Savior, and in being received by the Savior.

[1](#)A Word in Season – vol. IV- Augustinian Press – 1991 – pg 145

OT-1SM22
08.16.2018

**A reading about the end of Saul,
from a sermon by Bl. John Henry Newman. ¹**

[Saul] finishes his bad history by an open act of apostasy from the God of Israel. His last act is like his first, but more significant. He began, as we say, by consulting Samuel as a diviner; this showed the direction of his mind. It steadily persevered in its evil way—and he ends by consulting a professed sorceress at Endor. The Philistines had assembled their hosts; Saul’s heart trembled greatly—he had no advisers or comforters; Samuel was dead—the priests he had himself slain with the sword. He hoped, by magic rites, which he had formerly denounced, to foresee the issue of the approaching battle. God meets him even in the cave of Satanic delusions—but as an Antagonist. The reprobate king receives, by the mouth of dead Samuel, who had once anointed him, the news that he is to be “*taken away in God’s wrath*”—that the Lord would deliver Israel, with him, into the hands of the Philistines, and that on the morrow he and his sons should be numbered with the dead.

The next day “*the battle went sore against him, the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded [with] the archers.*” Anguish came upon him, and he feared to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised. He desired his armor-bearer to draw his sword and thrust him through therewith. On his refusing, he fell upon his own sword, and so came to his end.

Unbelief and wilfulness are the wretched characteristics of Saul’s history—and ear deaf to the plainest commands, a heart hardened against the most gracious influences. Do not suppose, my brethren, because I speak thus strongly, I consider Saul’s state of mind to be something very unusual. God forbid it should exist in its full misery anywhere among us! but surely there is not any one soul here present but what may trace in itself the elements of sins like his. Let us only reflect on our hardness of heart when attending religious ordinances, and we shall understand something of Saul’s condition when he prophesied. We may be conscious to ourselves of the truth of things

¹ “Saul”, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987, pp. 507-508.

sacred as entirely as if we saw them; we may have no misgivings about the presence of God in Church, or about the grace of the Sacraments, and yet we often feel in as ordinary and as unconcerned a mood as if we were altogether unbelievers. Again, let us reflect on our callousness after mercies received, or after suffering. We are often in worse case even than this; for to realize the unseen world in our imagination, and feel as if we saw it, may not always be in our power. But what shall be said to wilful transgression of God's commandments, such as most of us, I fear, must recollect in ourselves...? What, again, shall be said to those, perhaps not few in number, who sin with the [intention] beforehand of repenting afterwards?

What makes our insensibility still more alarming is, that it follows the grant of the highest privileges. Saul was hardened after the Spirit of God had come on him; ours is a sin after Baptism. There is something awful in this, if we understood it; as if that peculiar hardness of heart which we experience, in spite of whatever excellences of character we may otherwise possess, like Saul—in spite of the benevolence, or fairness, or candor, or consideration, which are the virtues of this age—was the characteristic of a soul transgressing after it had “tasted the powers of the world to come,” and an earnest of the second death. May this thought, through God's mercy, rouse us to a deeper seriousness than we have at present, while Christ still continues to intercede for us, and grants us time for repentance!

OT-SAM34
08.17.18

A Commentary on the Book of Samuel by Origen ¹

Samuel in Hades! Samuel, he who was special among the prophets, who was dedicated to God from his birth, who before his birth is said to be in the temple, who at the same time he was weaned was clothed with the ephod and double cloak and became a priest of the Lord, the child to whom the Lord when he speaks uttered his messages, he is brought up by a medium?

Samuel comes up, and note that she does not say that she saw the soul of Samuel. She does not say she saw a man. She has been scared by this thing that she saw. What did she see? "I saw gods," she says, "coming up from the earth." And perhaps Samuel has not only come up in order just to prophesy to Saul, but it is likely, just as here "with the holy he will be holy, and with the innocent man he will be innocent", and with the one of the chosen he will be as one of the chosen, and here the ways of the holy are with the holy but not with sinners. And if then at some point the way of life of the holy is with the sinners for the sake of saving the sinners, so perhaps also you may speculate whether either the holy souls of the other prophets in the coming up of Samuel come up together or whether perhaps they were angels of their spirits – the prophet says, "the angel who speaks in me" - or whether they were angels who came up together with the spirits. And every place is filled with those who need salvation, and "are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" Why do you fear to say that every place has need of Jesus Christ? Those who have need of Christ have need of the prophets. But if he has no need of Christ, he has no need of those who prepare for the appearance and dwelling of Christ.

If the prophets, the forerunners of Christ, all went down into hades before Christ, so too Samuel has gone down there. For he does not merely go down, but he goes down as a holy man. Wherever the holy man may be, he is holy. Is Christ no longer Christ, since he was once in hades? Was he no longer the Son of God, since he existed in an underworld place, "that every knee should bow in the name of Jesus Christ in heaven and on earth and under the earth"? So Christ was Christ even when he was below; that is to say, while he was in the place below, he was above in purpose. So too the prophets and Samuel, even if they go down below where the souls are, they are able to be in a place below, but they are not below in purpose.

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08.18.2018

From a Treatise on the Admirable Heart of Jesus by St John Eudes ¹

I ask you to consider that our Lord Jesus Christ is your true head and that you are a member of his body. He belongs to you as the head belongs to the body. All that is his is yours: breath, heart, body, soul and all his faculties. All of these you must use as if they belonged to you, so that in serving him you may give him praise, love and glory. You belong to him as a member belongs to the head. This is why he earnestly desires you to serve and glorify the Father by using all your faculties as if they were his.

He belongs to you, but more than that, he longs to be in you, living and ruling in you, as the head lives and rules in the body. He desires that whatever is in him may live and rule in you: his breath in your breath, his heart in your heart, all the faculties of his soul in the faculties of your soul, so that these words may be fulfilled in you: *Glorify God and bear him in your body, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in you.*

You belong to the Son of God, but more than that, you ought to be in him as the members are in the head. All that is in you must be incorporated into him. You must receive life from him and be ruled by him. There will be no true life for you except in him, for he is the one source of true life. Let him be the only source of your movements, of the actions and the strength of your life. He must be both the source and the purpose of your life, so that you may fulfill these words: *None of us lives as his own master and none of us dies as his own master. While we live, we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die, we die as his servants. Both in life and in death we are the Lord's. That is why Christ died and came to life again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.*

Finally, you are one with Jesus as the body is one with the head. You must, then, have one breath with him, one soul, one life, one will, one mind, one heart. And he must be your breath, heart, love, life, your all. These great gifts in the follower of Christ originate from baptism. They are increased and strengthened through confirmation and by making good use of the other graces that are given by God. Through the Holy Eucharist they are brought to perfection.

¹The Liturgy of the Hours IV Catholic Bok Publishing Co – New York 1975 – pg 1331)