

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY

VIGILS READINGS

18TH Week in Ordinary Time

August 5-11, 2018

SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2018

The invitation to eat the flesh of Christ, Hans Urs von Balthasar¹

God's Wisdom has prepared God's meal for mortals, has everything ready, has sent out her maidens to invite everyone to the celebration. Since it is divine Wisdom who is doing the inviting, it is not those who are already wise who are approached, rather, to the contrary, the "inexperienced", "simpletons", those "lacking understanding", the ignorant". The foods that she sets out are those that cure "foolishness" or "credulity" and lead one "along the path of insight". The problem with this invitation is that it is directed at those who are not wise, yet who are supposed to let themselves be brought to Wisdom. Such people are unwise either because they consider themselves wise (like the Pharisees and scribes) or because they cannot even understand Wisdom's invitation, thinking it to be absurd

The incarnate Wisdom of God issues an invitation to a banquet that likewise is comprehensible within the frame work of divine wisdom. Hence the unwise, who think they are wise, quarrel among themselves: "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" Within the world of foolishness it is a perfectly understandable objection. Here one man stands among other men and offers himself as food. What could be more nonsensical? Yet God's Wisdom incarnate in Jesus chooses not to reply to the objection, rather, stresses all the more the utterly indispensable character of his offer: "If you do not eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." Those who are foolish in relation to God are outdone by God's foolishness: they must do what to them is completely absurd. Nor is it merely some earthly advantage that is at stake, rather, they are being offered eternal life; whoever refuses to come to this banquet will not be raised to eternal life at the Last Day. By way of explanation Jesus pushes forward into the ultimate, impenetrable mystery of God; just as the Son lives solely through the Father, "so the one who feeds on me will have

¹Light of the Word, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Ignatius, '93, p.228-229.

life through me". Those who think themselves wise are confronted with the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity so that they might comprehend that they can attain ultimate life only through the power of this mystery. God's love has never spoken with more harshness to short-sighted people. Rather than working with them by gradations, God's love confronts them at the outset with the Absolute.

MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 2018

From a Homily by St. Gregory Palamas ¹

The Savior took with him just Peter, James and John and led them up a high mountain where, before their eyes, he was transfigured. What does "He was transfigured" mean? It means that it was his good pleasure to give them a small glimpse of his divine nature. He let the disciples see God dwelling within him.

Saint Luke says that as he was praying the appearance of his face changed. Matthew writes that it shone like the sun. But he did not say that it was like the sun to make us think of that light as of something perceptible to the senses, but rather to teach us that what the sun is to those who live on the level of sense perception and whose vision is limited to sense perception, that Christ in his divine nature is to those who live by the spirit and see in the Spirit; nor do those who are like God need any other light by which to see God. Those who enjoy eternal life have no other light but him: why should they want another light when they have the greatest?

It is in prayer that he shone like this in the company of the preeminent prophets, revealing in some indescribable way that indescribable light to his chosen disciples, to show that that blessed vision was the fruit of prayer, and to teach us that drawing near to God by virtue and mental union with him is what causes this radiance to appear. It is given to all and seen by all who by pure prayer and the conscientious performance of good works continually reach out to God.

Chrysostom says that the true beauty, the most exquisite beauty of the blessed Godhead is to be seen only by those whose minds have been purified. By gazing at its dazzling beauty they receive some share in it, some bright beam as it were that lights up their own faces. Thus the face of Moses too became resplendent when he talked with God. Do you not remember how he too was transfigured when he went up the mountain, and so saw the glory of the Lord? But his

transfiguration came not from himself but from Another, whereas our Lord Jesus Christ possessed that splendor by nature. He had therefore no need of prayer to make his body shine with divine light, but he prayed to show what would enable the saints to receive and behold the divine splendor. For *the righteous too will shine light the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. And so, having become all divine light, as children of divine light they will see Christ in his unspeakable and divine splendor, the splendor proceeding naturally from his divinity, in which his body shared because of his unity of person, as was shown on Mount Tabor. Such was the light that made his face shine like the sun.

1A Word in Season – vol. IV – Augustinian Press – 1991 – pg 132

TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2018

St. Cajetan - Taken from Butler=s Lives of the Saints²

St Cajetan (Gaetano) was son of Caspar, Count of Thiene, of the nobility of Vicenza, where he was born in 1480. Two years later his father was killed, fighting for the Venetians against King Ferdinand of Naples. Cajetan went for four years to Padua University, where he distinguished himself in theology, and took the degree of doctor in civil and canon law in 1504. He then returned to his native town, of which he was made senator. In pursuance of his resolve to serve God as a priest he received the tonsure. In 1506 he went to Rome. Soon after his arrival Pope Julius II conferred on him the office of protonotary, with a benefice attached. On the death of Julius Cajetan refused his successor=s request to continue in that office, and devoted three years to preparing himself for the priesthood. He was ordained in 1516, being thirty-three years old, and returned to Vicenza in 1518.

Cajetan had re-founded a confraternity in Rome called Aof the Divine Love@, which was an association of zealous and devout clerics who devoted themselves to labor with all their power to promote God=s honor and the welfare of souls. At

² Butler=s Lives of the Saints, revised edition by Michael Walsh, Harper, San Francisco, 1991, pg. 240

Vicenza he now entered himself in the Oratory of St. Jerome, which was instituted on the plan of that of the Divine Love but consisted only of men in the lowest station of life. This circumstance gave great offence to his friends, who thought it a reflection on the honor of his family. He persisted, however, and sought out the sick and the poor throughout the whole town, served them and cared for those who suffered from the most loathsome diseases in the hospital of the incurables. He founded a similar oratory at Verona and then went in 1520 to Venice where he took up his lodgings in the new hospital of that city. He remained in Venice for three years. He introduced exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in that city, as well as continuing the promotion of frequent communion.

The state of Christendom at this time shocked and distressed Cajetan, and in 1523 he went back to Rome to confer with his friends of the Oratory of Divine Love. They agreed that little could be done other than by reviving in the clergy the spirit and zeal of those holy pastors who first planted the faith, and a plan was formed for instituting an order of regular clergy upon the model of the lives of the Apostles. The first associates of Cajetan were John Peter Caraffa, who later became pope under the name of Paul IV. The institute was approved by Clement VII, and Caraffa was chosen as the first provost general. From the name of his episcopal see of Theatensis these clerks regular came to be distinguished from others as Theatines.

The success of the new congregation was not immediate, and in 1527, when it still numbered only a dozen members, the army of Emperor Charles V sacked Rome. The Theatines house was demolished and the members had to escape to Venice. Cajetan was sent to Verona, where both the clergy and the laity were opposing the reformation of discipline, which their bishop was endeavoring to introduce among them. A general improvement was the fruit of his example, preaching and labors.

Worn out with trying to appease civil strife in Naples, and disappointed at the suspension of the Council of Trent, from which he hoped so much for the Church's good, Cajetan had to take to his bed in the summer of 1547. The end came on Sunday, August 7. Many miracles wrought by his intercession were approved at Rome after rigorous scrutiny, and he was canonized in 1671.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2018

A reading about St. Dominic and his role in the Church, from a sermon by Ronald Knox.³

Two men, at the beginning of the 13th century, were raised up by God to season his Church, that seemed in danger of perishing through its own corruption....If you add the ages of St. Francis and St. Dominic together, they do not cover a full century. And the career of St. Dominic is particularly remarkably, because he did not find out what his life's work was to be until he was 35 years old, with only sixteen more years to live. That short time sufficed for doing the special thing God had called him to do; for meeting a particular situation, and warding off a particular danger from the gates of Christendom....

Two important heresies at that time threatened the peace, and perhaps the life of the Church; the Waldensian and the Albigensian heresies. The Waldenses...seem to have been among the most harmless of the sects, erring through their simpleness rather than through any constructive malice. Scandalized by the riches of the higher clergy, by the sight of so many priests living unpriestly lives, they formed themselves into a little Protestant community before the time of Protestantism was yet to come.... Their main false doctrine was that a priest living in mortal sin was no priest at all; and they thought to replace the ministry of the ordained clergy by a kind of lay ministry of their own.. They were, if such a phrase may be used, Nonconformists rather than heretics....

But the Albigenses, who resembled them outwardly because they too made a great parade of great simplicity and innocence, were the revival...of a very old and very dangerous heresy, the Manichean heresy.... In order to account for the existence of the evil in the world, the Manichean maintains a total divorce between matter and spirit, believing that matter is of its nature evil.... Accordingly, [they] reject the doctrine of the Incarnation.... They were the declared enemies of Christendom....

We remember St. Dominic and his order, in the first instance, for the intellectual protest which they opposed to that sinister outbreak of Oriental philosophy in the heart of Western Christendom. Heresies, after all, have their place in the

³“St. Dominic”, *Occasional Sermons*, ed. by Philip Cara man, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960, pp. 34ff.

elucidation of religious truth. ...Christian theology has at all times been a reaction to the assaults of heresy....When the germs of the Manichean heresy sought to find a lodgment in the healthy body of Christendom, the reaction of that healthy body was the great Dominican tradition of learning. It developed, we may well believe, beyond the saint's own hopes. Almost at the moment of his death another saint was being born to carry on his work: St. Thomas [Aquinas].

Those were times, it is sad to say, in which the Church seemed to have lost the salt wherewith Christ had commissioned it to season the world.... There were crying abuses; and, whereas the Albigenses, a purely destructive movement, deserve little of our sympathy, the poor Waldenses could at least claim that they had reason for the disaffection which made them the antagonists of the Church. An intellectual heresy can be met by the weapons of the intellect; a moral protest, such as that of the Waldenses, can only be met by a rival moral protest within the Church itself.

...The times in which we live... still need the intellectual protest, still need the moral. The old difficulty of reconciling God's omnipotence with his benevolence still presses upon us; and today, instead of trying so save the one at the expense of the other, like the medieval heretics, men are driven, by that apparent inconsistency, to deny his very existence.... We call...for an intellectual protest against the tendencies of the age, we call... for a moral protest as well. For the times are evil; and the world's mind would not have traveled so far from God if its heart had not traveled far from God first.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 2018

A Reading about David's attitude toward King Saul, from a meditation by Gaston Brillet.⁴

David came to calm Saul with his music. This brought him very close to the king. It enabled him to learn intimate things about a great man.

Unfortunately Saul's soon-awakened and fast-spreading jealousy found expression in growing malevolence. At first David had to avoid the court, then he

⁴Gaston Brillet, Meditations on the Old Testament, the Narratives, New York, 1959, pp 100-101.

had to flee to another part of the land. Saul, who had arranged that he be exposed to death in the intermittent war with the Philistines, wanted to kill him.

Yet all this caused no movement of hatred or disdain in David's soul. He never spoke of Saul, except with the reverence due a king, even when alone with his friend Jonathan. No doubt this was the effect of his nobility of soul and the natural generosity of a young and valiant heart. To this was added a feeling of patriotism towards the first king of the new monarchy and lastly he felt the loyalty of a soldier towards his chief.

The most beautiful of all songs sung to the glory of Saul was sung by David. This redounds to David's own glory but fails to reveal to us the depths of his soul and the beauty of his conscience. The accounts, or rather the double account, of his magnanimity towards his odious persecutor deepen our understanding of the younger man. David had the royal enemy completely at his mercy, at the very moment when the latter wanted to destroy him. David never touched him. His comrades in arms, the men who had shared his dangers and hardships, urged him to put an end to this sorry adventure, to the misfortune of the kingdom and the madness of the king. Was not this a divinely-given opportunity? David answered: *The Lord be merciful unto me, that I may do no such thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, as to lay my hand upon him, because he is the Lord's anointed.*

In these words we can discover how deep was David's soul and how clear was his conscience.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 2018

From a sermon by St Augustine on the feast of St Lawrence ¹

The Roman Church commends to us today the anniversary of the triumph of St. Lawrence. For on this day he trod the furious pagan world underfoot and flung aside its allurements, and so gained victory over Satan's attack on his faith. As you have often heard, Lawrence was a deacon of the Church at Rome. There he ministered the sacred blood of Christ; there for the sake of Christ's name he poured out his own blood. St John the Apostle was evidently teaching us about the mystery of the Lord's supper when he wrote: *Just as Christ laid down his life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* My brethren, Lawrence understood this and, understanding, he acted on it. Just as he had partaken of a

gift of self at the table of the Lord, so he prepared to offer such a gift. In his life he loved Christ; in his death he followed in his footsteps.

Brethren, we too must imitate Christ if we truly love him. We shall not be able to render better return on that love than by modeling our lives on his. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps.* In saying this, the Apostle Peter seems to have understood that Christ suffered only for those who follow in his steps, in the sense that Christ's passion is of no avail to those who do not. The holy martyrs followed Christ even to the shedding of their life's blood, even to reproducing the very likeness of his passion. They followed him, but not they alone. It is not true that the bridge was broken after the martyrs crossed; nor is it true that after they had drunk from it, the fountain of eternal life dried up.

I tell you again and again, my brethren, that in the Lord's garden are to be found not only the roses of his martyrs. In it there are also the lilies of the virgins, the ivy of wedded couples, and the violets of widows. On no account may any class of people despair, thinking that Christ has not called them. Christ suffered for all. What the Scriptures say of him is true: *He desires all to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.*

Let us understand, then, how a Christian must follow Christ even though he does not shed his blood for him, and his faith is not called upon to undergo the great test of the martyr's sufferings. The apostle Paul says of Christ our Lord: *Though he was in the form of God he did not consider equality with God a prize to be clung to.* How unrivaled his majesty! *But he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, made in human likeness, and presenting himself in human form.* How deep his humility!

Christ humbled himself. Christian, that is what you must make your own. *Christ became obedient.* How is it that you are proud? When this humbling experience was completed and death itself lay conquered, Christ ascended into heaven. Let us follow him there, for we hear Paul saying: *If you have been raised with Christ, you must lift your thoughts on high, where Christ now sits at the right hand of God.*

1The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – pg 1305 – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York - 1975

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2018

A READING FROM THE TESTAMENT OF ST CLARE⁵

I admonish all my sisters, present and to come, and I exhort them in Our Lord Jesus Christ always to strive to follow the way of holy simplicity, of humility and of poverty, and to live worthily and holily just as we have been taught from the beginning of our conversion to Jesus Christ by our blessed father Francis. Thus with these virtues, not acquired through our merits, but through the mercy and grace alone of our benefactor, the Father of Mercies, the sisters may spread the fragrance of a good name for all the others, for those sisters who are far and for those who are near.

And in the love of Christ love one another, and show the love that you have within you outwardly by your works, so that such an example may inspire the sisters to grow always in the love of God and in mutual charity. I also beseech the sister who shall be entrusted with the guidance of the sisters to govern them more by her virtues and the holiness of her life, than by the dignity of her office, so that the sisters, inspired by her example, will obey her not only out of duty, but rather out of love.

In addition, let her show the discretion and solicitude of a good mother for her daughters, and above all provide all of them with the alms given by the Lord, giving to each according to her need. Let her also be so kind and so approachable to all, that they may disclose their needs to her with surety and have recourse to her with confidence, as they may deem necessary for themselves or for their sisters. For their part the sisters subject to her should remember that they have renounced their wills for God's sake.

Therefore, I will that they obey their mother, with a spontaneous will, as they have promised the Lord, so that this mother, seeing the charity, humility and the unity that reigns among them, may bear the burden of her duties more lightly, and their

⁵THE CALL OF ST CLARE, by H. Daniel-Rops, Trans by S. Attanasio (Hawthorn Books, Inc. NY 1963) pp 138-140.

holy life may change what is painful and bitter into sweetness for her. How strait is the way that leads to life! And how narrow is the gate through which one must enter! Thus there are few who walk along this path and who pass through this gate. And if there are some who walk along the path for a moment, O how rare are those who know how to persevere there! But happy are those to whom it is given to walk thereon and to persevere unto the end!

END OF READINGS