

NT-MK08

09/02/18

A Homily on the Gospel of Mark by St Irenaeus [1](#)

The Pharisees claimed that the tradition of their elders safeguarded the law, but in fact it contravened the law Moses had given. By saying: *Your merchants mix water with wine* Isaiah showed that the elders mixed their watery tradition with God's strict commandment. In other words, they enjoined an adulterated law which went against the law, as the Lord made clear when he asked them: *Why do you transgress God's commandment for the sake of your tradition?*

By their transgression they not only falsified God's law, mixing water with the wine, but they also set against it their own law, called to this day the Pharisaic law. In this the rabbis suppress some of the commandments, add new ones, and give others their own interpretation, thus making the law serve their own purposes.

Their desire to justify these traditions kept them from submitting to God's law that taught them about the coming of Christ. Instead they even found fault with the Lord for healing on the sabbath, which was not forbidden by the law, for in a sense the law itself healed by causing circumcision to be performed on the sabbath. On the other hand they found no fault with themselves for breaking God's commandment by their tradition and the Pharisaic law just mentioned, or for lacking the essence of the law, which is love for God.

That this is the first and greatest commandment, the second being love of our neighbor, the Lord taught by saying that the whole of the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments. He himself brought no greater commandment than this, but he renewed this same commandment by bidding his disciples love God with their whole heart and their neighbor as themselves.

Paul also says that *love is the fulfillment of the law*. When all other charisms fail, faith, hope and love remain, but the greatest of all is love. Knowledge is of no avail without the love of God, nor is understanding of mysteries, faith or prophecy. Without love all are vain and profitless. Love on the other hand perfects a person, and one who loves God is perfect both in this world and the next, for we shall never stop loving God – the longer we gaze upon him the more our love for him will grow.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1993 – pg 112

A reading about contemplation, from the *Homilies on Ezechiel* by St. Gregory the Great.¹

There is in contemplation a great effort of the mind, when it raises itself up to heavenly things, when it fixes its attention on spiritual things, when it tries to pass over all that is outwardly seen, when it narrows itself that it may be enlarged. And sometimes indeed it prevails and soars above the resisting darkness of its blindness, so that it attains to somewhat of the unencompassed Light by stealth and scantily; but for all that, to itself straightaway beaten back it returns, and out of that light into which panting it had passed, into the darkness of its blindness sighing it returns. In the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel, the Angel symbolizes the Lord, and Jacob, who contends with the Angel, represents the soul of each perfect one, who exercises contemplation. Such a soul, when it strives to contemplate God, as if placed in a wrestle, now comes uppermost, because by understanding and feeling it tastes somewhat of the unencompassed Light; and now falls underneath, because in the very tasting it faints away. Therefore, so to say, the Angel is worsted when by the innermost intellect God is apprehended.

Almighty God, when He is now known through desire and intellect, dries up in us every fleshly pleasure; and whereas before we seemed to be both seeking God and cleaving to the world, after the perception of the sweetness of God, the love of the world grows feeble in us, and the love of God alone waxes strong; and while there increases in us the strength of inmost love, without doubt the strength of the flesh is weakened.

The sweetness of contemplation is worthy of love exceedingly, for it carries away the soul above itself, it opens out things heavenly, and shows that things earthly are to be despised; it reveals things spiritual to the eyes of the mind, and hides things bodily.

But we must know that so long as we live in this mortal flesh no one so advances in power of contemplation as to fix the mind's eyes as yet on the unencompassed ray itself of Light. For the Almighty God is not yet seen in this brightness, but the

soul beholds something beneath it, by which refreshed it may progress, and hereafter attain to the glory of the sight of Him. When the mind has made progress in contemplation it does not yet contemplate that which God, but that which is under Him. But in that contemplation already the taste of interior quiet is experienced.

1*Homilies on Ezechiel*, Bk. ii. Hom. ii. nn. 12-14; trans. Cuthbert Butler, in *Western Mysticism*, pp. 93-94.

9/4/18

The Call of Jeremiah to Prophetic Ministry by Dom Damasus Winzen¹

Jeremiah had received his call to the prophetic ministry in 627 BC, when Josiah was still reigning in Jerusalem. He was then a youth of twenty years of age, son of a priest who lived at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. During the first period of his prophetic career he tried to call Israel to repentance. He began by denouncing the apostasy of the people, and inviting them to return to the Lord. Realizing that his invitation was going unheeded, he threatened them with punishment through the foe from the north, the Scythians.

When Josiah in the course of his reform abolished the local sanctuaries and centered the worship of the nation in the temple in Jerusalem, Jeremiah left Anathoth and went to the capital. There he realized that Josiah's reform, ordered from above, did not change the heart of the people. After the death of Josiah, in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah entered into a new phase of his mission. He warned the people not to put their trust into external institutions. In his famous "temple address" he denounced those who would rely on the temple as a pledge that all would be good. When Jeremiah foretold them that the temple would be destroyed if the people did not amend their ways, the priests and the prophets laid hold of him, saying: "You shall die!" Centuries later Jesus was tried on the charge that he had spoken of the destruction of the temple (Mk 14:58).

Jeremiah went still a step further in his "pottery sermons." He saw a potter engaged in work on the wheels. Whenever the vessel at which he was working became marred, as clay is apt to do in the potter's hand, he would turn it into another vessel, such as seemed suitable in the potter's eyes. Watching him, Jeremiah received the word of the Lord: "Cannot I deal with you like this potter, O house of Israel? As the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel!" The conviction rose in Jeremiah's heart that only complete destruction, not only of the temple but of the nation, could bring about salvation. He went to the entrance of the Potsherd Gate, and there, before the eyes of the elders and priests, he threw an earthen bottle on the refuse heap so that it broke into pieces.

¹PATHWAYS IN SCRIPTURE by Dom Damasus Winzen, (Word of Life, Ann Arbor, MI 1976) pp.206-07.

"As the potter's vessel is broken and cannot be mended again, so will I break this people and this city!"(19:11)

From now on Jeremiah's way was clear. Convinced that "the sin of Judah is written with an iron pen, and is engraved with the point of a diamond on the tablet of their heart"(17:1) he announced God's irrevocable decision: "I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good. It shall be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, who shall burn it"(21:10). Jeremiah himself suffered agony under the burden of his mission. "Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day on which my mother bore me--let it not be blessed. Why came I out of the womb, to see trouble and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame!" (20:14;18).

GN-VOC12

09.05.18

The Meaning of Vocation – by St John Paul II [1](#)

Faith and love are not just words or vague feelings. Believing and loving God means a consistent life, lived wholly in the light of the Gospel. This is not easy. It often calls for great courage in going against the trends of fashion and the opinions of our world. But this is the one requirement for a truly successful and happy life.

If, in spite of your personal effort to follow Christ you are sometimes weak and do not live in conformity to the law of love, to the commandments, do not be discouraged. Christ continues to wait for you. He, Jesus, is the Good Shepherd who searches for the lost sheep and who tenderly bears it on his shoulder. Christ is the friend who never lets you down.

In the gospel story we see that the young man, having affirmed that he has kept the commandments, adds: "What do I still lack?" The young heart, moved by God's grace, felt a desire for greater generosity, more commitment, greater love. This desire for more is characteristic of youth; a heart that is in love does not calculate, does not begrudge, it wants to give of itself without measure. "Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, come, follow me."

To those who entered the path of life by observing the commandments, the Lord proposes new horizons; the Lord proposes to the means that are loftier and calls them to commit themselves to his love without reserve. To discover this call, this vocation, is to realize that Christ is looking on you and inviting you by his glance to give yourself totally in love. Before this glance, before his love, the heart opens its doors gradually and is capable of saying yes.

If some of you hear the call to follow Christ more closely, to dedicate your entire heart to him, like the apostles John and Paul, be generous, do not be afraid, because you have nothing to fear when the prize that you await is God Himself, for whom, sometimes without ever knowing it, all young people are searching.

Young people who are hastening to me, young people who more than anything else want to know what you must do to gain eternal life, always say yes to God and he will fill you with his happiness.

“There is one thing you lack, come, follow me”. Is Jesus perhaps repeating to some of you today: “There is one thing you lack?” Is he perhaps asking for even more love, more generosity, more sacrifice? Yes, the love of Christ involves generosity and sacrifice. To follow Christ and to serve the world in his name requires courage and strength. There is no place for selfishness – and no place for fear! Do not be afraid, then, when love makes demands. Do not be afraid when love requires sacrifice.

To each one of you I say, therefore: Heed the call of Christ when you hear him saying to you: “Follow me!” Walk in my path! Stand by my side! Remain in my love! There is a choice to be made: a choice for Christ and the way of life, and his commandment of love.

1The Meaning of Vocation – St John Paul II – Scepter Publishers – Princeton, NJ – 1997 – pg 18

09.06.2018

**THE WORD OF GOD THAT BURNED IN THE HEART OF JEREMIAH,
from Pathways in Scripture by Dom Damasus Winzen²**

The Chalice of Jeremiah was filled to the brim. According to a very probable tradition, his countrymen stoned him to death. It was the death of a true martyr, an unflinching witness to the Word of God. Shortly after, the last of Jeremiah's prophecies was fulfilled: Egypt fell into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. The heart-rending tragedy of Jewish national pride, fighting in vain against the word of God--which was so clearly the word of the cross--had drawn to its close:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! murdering the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you, how often have I longed to gather your children around me, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you refused! Behold, now your house is left desolate! (Mt 23:37-38)

If we ask what the book of Jeremiah means to us today, we hear very often the answer that Jeremiah initiates a new period in Old Testament piety which frees the individual from the bonds of community life, that he is the first to record faithfully his innermost religious feelings, and that he is one of the great fighters who fought the battle for liberty of the spirit against tyranny of dead ceremonials. Looked at in this light Jeremiah would automatically become one of the "great liberals," and that would mean one of us. In reality he was wholly God's. God took possession of him before he was born(1:5). During his life the word of God was his one and overwhelming passion.

Abraham received the promise; Jacob, the blessing; Moses, the staff. David was anointed. Isaiah had his lips cleansed with burning coal. Ezekiel had to eat the scroll. As for Jeremiah, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched his mouth saying: "I am with you, I put my words into your mouth. This day I give you authority over the nations and kingdoms, to root and pull down, to wreck and to ruin, to build and to plant". It was the Emmanuel (God with us), the God of the Word made flesh, who took possession of Jeremiah. In no other prophet was the union between the prophet's heart and the word of God as intimate and as deep as in Jeremiah. The word was his strength and his cross. It made him, a youth of

²PATHWAYS IN SCRIPTURE, by Dom Damasus Winzen (Word of Life, Ann Arbor MI, 1976) pp. 210-211.

twenty years and by nature a timid man, a "fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall against the whole land". "The word of the Lord," he exclaimed, "is in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones. I weary myself to hold it in, but cannot"(20:9). "As for me," he cried out, "your word is my joy and my delight, for I bear your name, Lord, Lord of hosts!" He never mixed the word of God with purely human dreams and desires, as the false prophets did. The word of God in his mouth was "like a hammer that smashes the rock into pieces". The words of the letter to the Hebrews must be applied to Jeremiah's preaching: "For the message of God is a living and active force, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing through soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and keen in judging the thoughts and purposes of the mind"(4:12).

**A reading about the manner of instruction by the Logos,
from St.Clement of Alexandria.³**

With all His power the Instructor of humanity, the Divine Word, using all the resources of wisdom, devotes Himself to saving the children (of God), admonishing, upbraiding, blaming, chiding, reproving, threatening, healing, promising, favoring; and as it were, by many reins, curbing the irrational impulses of humanity. To speak briefly, therefore, the Lord acts towards us as we do towards our children. "*Do you have children? correct them,*" is the exhortation of the book of Wisdom, "*and bend them from their youth.*"

Admonition, then, is the censure of loving care, and produces understanding. Such is the Instructor in His admonitions, as when He says in the gospel, "*How often would I have gathered your children, as a bird gathers her young ones under her wings, and you would not!*" And again, the Scripture admonishes, saying, "*And they committed adultery with stock and stone, and burnt incense to Baal.*" For it is a very great proof of His love, that, though knowing well the shamelessness of the people that had kicked and bounded away, He nevertheless exhorts them to repentance, and says by Ezekiel, "*Son of man, you dwell in the midst of scorpions; nevertheless, speak to them, if perhaps they will hear.*" Further, to Moses He says, "*Go and tell Pharaoh to send my people forth; but I know that he will not send them forth.*" For He shows both things: both His divinity in His foreknowledge of what would take place, and His love in affording an opportunity for repentance to the self-determination of the soul. He admonishes also by Isaias, in His care for the people, when He says, "*This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*" What follows is reproving censure: "*In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*" Here His loving care, having shown their sin, shows salvation side by side.

³Clement of Alexandria. *The Instructor*, Bk.I, Cp.IX. (ANCL vol. IV.1), 1867; p.164-6

Upbraiding is censure on account of what is base, conciliating to what is noble. This is shown by Jeremiah: "*They were female-mad horses; each one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? says the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*" He everywhere interweaves fear, because "*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of sense.*" And again, by Hosea, He says, "*Shall I not visit them? for they themselves mingled with harlots, and sacrificed with the initiated; and the people that understood embraced a harlot.*" He shows their offence to be clearer, by declaring that they understood, and thus sinned wilfully. Reproof is the bringing forward of sin, laying it before one. This form of instruction He employs as in the highest degree necessary, on account of the feebleness of the faith of many. For He says by Isaias, "*You have forsaken the Lord, and have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger.*" And He says also by Jeremiah: "*Heaven was astonished at this, and the earth shuddered exceedingly. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to themselves broken cisterns, which will not hold water.*" And again, by the same: "*Jerusalem has sinned a sin; therefore it became turbulent. All that glorified her dishonored her, when they saw her baseness.*" And He uses the bitter and biting language of reproof in His consolations by Solomon, tacitly alluding to the love for children that characterizes His instruction: "*My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when you are rebuked by Him: for the Lord chastens whom He loves, and scourges every son He receives.*" "*For a man who is a sinner escapes reproof.*" Consequently, therefore, the Scripture says, "*Let the righteous reprove and correct me; but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head.*"

09.08.2018

A reading about ascending to God through the humanity of Jesus;

from a homily by St. Ælred of Rievaulx. [1](#)

You know, dearest brothers, that today we are celebrating the birth of our Lady, Saint Mary, and so it is right that we rejoice in the Lord and remember how great is the joy that comes to us through her birth, for in her birth all of our joy begins to appear...

For today he began to show us his wonderful mercy and his marvelous love, which he had promised to Abraham so many years ago, namely that *in his seed all nations will be blessed* (Gen 22.18). Today was born that seed from which the sun of righteousness arose, Christ our God, in whom...even all nations are blessed, because faith in Christ and Christ's blessing extends throughout all nations. This seed, brothers, is blessed Mary, who today was born from the seed of Abraham, who received such a wonderful blessing from the Lord that it took away the curse of the world. As the Gospel that [is] read today says, it is certain that she is from the seed of Abraham. We read: *The book of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham* (Mt 1.1). From this we know that our Lord, who did not have a father on earth, could not rightly be called the son of Abraham and the son of David unless his mother was from their seed. Again, so that we might be certain that he is the one of whom God spoke to Abraham, the evangelist Matthew wished to narrate to us the entire genealogy of our Lord from Abraham to blessed Mary, from whom the sun of justice arose, Christ our God.

We should consider further that the evangelist presented this genealogy to us not simply to show us those ancestors from whom Christ was born, so that we might know his bodily genealogy, but also so that we might take spiritual fruit from his bodily genealogy. If the evangelist intended merely to show us a genealogy and nothing else, why did he make those three divisions and in every single division put fourteen generations, that is fourteen names? ...He omitted in his counting some fathers and sons who

belong to this genealogy, and he skipped from father to grandson. Therefore by those ancestors through whom Christ descended to us, we should understand something spiritual and take note of certain steps by which we should ascend to him.

Let us consider how he narrates this genealogy. He begins from Abraham and by descending comes to our Lord. It seems to me that he wanted to show us through this descent, by which our Lord descends to us, a certain ascent by which we must ascend to him. For this reason he descended, that we might ascend. He became poor for our sake, to that he might make us rich. The evangelist begins this descent with Abraham. Abraham is interpreted as *exalted father*, by which can be signified the one who is truly the exalted Father, that is *God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. From the bosom of the exalted Father, our Lord descended so as to come to us. He came to us by the fact that he became a man among us. He is a man by the fact that he is indeed the son of Mary. At the end of this descent, the evangelist says: *And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ* (Mt 1.16).

Dearest brothers, if we want to ascend to that place from where he descends to us, that is, to the exalted Father, let us begin our ascent here. Where? From the son of Mary, that is from the humanity of Christ, and thus let us ascend to his divinity. He is the way, just as he said: *I am the way* (Jn 14.6). Except by this way, no one can come to the exalted father. Therefore he says: *No one comes to the Father except through me* (Jn 14.6). No one can begin anything good without beginning from Christ who is the foundation of all good things, as the Apostle says: *No one can lay another foundation but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus* (1 Cor 3.11). But because we are in the depths and he to whom we must ascend is exceedingly high, we cannot reach the place except by some steps. As we say, we can discern these spiritual steps, by which we ascend, in those ancestors through whom our Lord descended to us so that we might ascend to him. Just as he descended from Abraham, that is, from God the Father, to us by way of those ancestors according to the flesh, so also let us ascend by those ancestors, understood in a spiritual way, to God the Father.

[1](#)Sermon 24: On the Birth of Mary; CCCM 2A:190-203; PL 195: 326-336, S 21; translated by Athanasius Sulavik, OP, in CSQ 32.1 (1997), pp. 79ff.