

NT-MK12

09/30/18

Homily on the Gospel of Mark by Symeon the New Theologian ¹

Do you not tremble when you hear God saying to you day after day throughout the whole of divine Scripture: *Let no evil word come from your mouth, Indeed I tell you that you will have to answer for a single careless word, and: You will receive a reward for a cup of cold water?*

My brothers, do not deceive yourselves. God loves us, and he is merciful and compassionate. I myself testify and acknowledge that it is his compassion that makes me confident of being saved. Nevertheless you must understand that this will be of no avail to those who refuse to repent and to keep God's commandments in every detail and with great fear. On the contrary, God will punish them more severely than people who are unbelievers and unbaptized.

O brothers, do not deceive yourselves; let there be no sin that seems small in your eyes, and that you treat lightly, as though it did no great harm to our souls. Right-minded servants make no distinction between a small sin or a great; if they have offended by so much as a glance, a thought, or a word, they feel as if they have fallen away from the love of God, and I believe this is true. In fact whoever has the slightest thought contrary to the divine will, and does not immediately repent and repel the assault of such a thought, but welcomes it and consents to it – that person is guilty of sin, and this is so even if he is unaware that his thought is sinful.

Consequently we need to be extremely vigilant and zealous, and to give much time to searching the divine Scriptures. The Savior's command, "Search the Scriptures" shows how profitable they are for us. So search them and hold fast to what they say with great exactitude and faith. Then when the divine Scriptures have given you an accurate knowledge of God's will, you will be able to distinguish without error between good and evil, and will not listen to every spirit, or be carried away by harmful thoughts.

You may be certain, my brothers, that nothing is so conducive to our salvation as following the divine commandments of the Savior. Nevertheless we shall have to shed many tears, and shall need great fear, great patience, and constant prayer before the import of even a word of the Master can be revealed to us. Only then shall we perceive the great mystery hidden in short sayings, and be ready to die for the smallest detail of the commandments of God. For the word of God is like a two-edged sword, cutting off and separating the soul from all bodily desire and sensation. More than that, it is like a blazing fire, because it stirs up zeal in our souls, and makes us disregard all the sorrows of life, consider every trial we encounter a joy, and desire and embrace death, so fearful to others, as life and the means of attaining life.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1993 – pg 120

10sn0102
10.01.2018

The mission of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: a reading from a book by Hans Urs von Balthasar.¹

There can be no doubt that Thérèse of Lisieux was directly entrusted by God with a mission to the Church. YThérèse=s mission, at the very first glance, displays the marks of a clearly defined, and quite exceptional character. This is much less due to the personal drama of the little saint than to the sacred Form into which the trickling grains of petty anecdotes are compressed, into a hard, unbreakable block, by a firm invisible hand. It is contrary to all expectation that the simple, modest story of this little girl should eventually culminate, as it irrefutably does, in the enunciation of theological truths. Originally she herself never dreamed that she might be chosen to bear some fundamental message to the Church. She only became aware of it gradually; in fact, it did not occur to her until her task was almost completed, after she had already lived out her teaching and was writing the last chapters of her book. Suddenly, as she saw it all laid out before her, she recognized its strangeness, that in her obedience she had unwillingly conceived something beyond her own personality. And now that she saw it she also understood it, and seized it with a kind of violence.

Ever since her childhood Thérèse had shown a striking inclination to meditating and reflecting upon herself. [This] meant that when she discovered her mission she became intensely conscious of it in a manner rare amongst the saints. At that moment she realized she was to be set on a pedestal, and that every bit of her life, even its smallest details, would be used as a pattern for many of the Alittle ones@.Y She regards the publication of her manuscript as Aan important work@; she knows Athat all the world will love me@, and that her writings Awill do a great deal of good@. During her last months, as if making her last will and testament, she repeats constantly: AOne must tell soulsY@ Exactly the same expressions recur in reference to the mission she is soon to begin in heaven: AI feel that my mission will soon begin C to teach souls to love God as I love Him, to give them my >little way=. If my wishes are realized, I shall spend my Heaven on earth until the end of the world.@ Y Similarly she recognizes the function within the Church of her mission. She not only foresees the proclamation of her own sanctity Y but she also, as it were, foresaw the canonization of her doctrine. The two are not separable C it is not so much her writings as her life itself which is her doctrine, especially since her writings speak about her life more than anything else. Nor does she hesitate to propose her life as an example for the Church, because it is in her life that she sees the realization of that doctrine which Acan do so much good.@

YSo her life only contains exemplary value for the Church insofar as the Holy Spirit has possessed her and used her in order to demonstrate something for the sake of the Church, opening up new vistas onto the Gospels. That, and that alone, should be the motive for the

¹ *Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Mission*, trans. by Donald Nicholl, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954, pp xix ff.

Church's interest in Thérèse. That, and that alone, should engage the attention of those who feel themselves put off by many features of her cultus, or even of her character, or who experience indefinable objections to them. In fact, there are few other cases in which it is so prudent to distinguish between the mission of a saint and its essentials.

In the case of Thérèse of Lisieux the dramatic tension between her mission and her person needs specially to be borne in mind, and to be appreciated primarily in theological terms; the essence of sanctity has to be grasped as truly evangelical, as belonging to the Church, as a mission and not simply as an individual ascetical, mystical manifestation. Moreover it is not just because of contemporary needs but because of the depth of revealed truth that portraits of the saints must in future be remodeled, so that the saints can again live amongst us, and in us, as the best protectors and inspirers of the community of the saints, which is the Church.

OT-JER14
10.02.18

The Prophecy of Jeremiah – from a book by Fr. Carol Stuhlmueller, C.P. ¹

Jeremiah is certainly to be ranked among the holiest of the prophets. At the request of God he never married, so that he could consecrate himself unreservedly to God's work. From beginning to end, he was heroically dedicated to God's will. Preaching God's word made him look foolish at times, but he humbly admits: "I allowed myself to be duped". After the fall of Jerusalem in the summer of 587 B.C., the Babylonians offered Jeremiah the luxury of preferential treatment in the land of exile, but he deliberately chose to remain among the charred ruins and the discouraged populace of Palestine. This prophet from the town of Anathoth was commissioned to speak God's word. Yet he was to influence the Israelite people much more by the example of his holy life than by the eloquence of his preaching.

After his death, the scrolls containing his words as well as the story of his life were frequently in the hands of the chosen people. We find Daniel meditating on his words. Other books of the Bible show how people spontaneously opened the Sacred Scripture to the words of Jeremiah. And when our Lord asked Simon Peter: "Whom do men say the Son of Man is?" Peter replied: "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elias; and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. The prophecy of Jeremiah had become such a commonplace in Jewish life that a tradition arose demanding that he return. The people must hear the prophet's message from his own lips, as it is formed once again in a heart burning with zeal for God. They looked back on his life as a magnificent success.

Yet, how did Jeremiah look back on his own life, when his tired soul and toil-worn body were nearing the end of their earthly pilgrimage? The prophet's words to his faithful companion Baruch are an extract from his own heart. He dictated them after completing the first edition of his prophecy. They express very well what the old man thought about himself: "Alas! The Lord adds grief to my pain; I am weary from groaning, and can find no rest,,,. But thus says the Lord... Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not! I am bringing evil upon all mankind, says the Lord, but your life I will leave you as booty, wherever you may go".

Baruch at once remembers these other words of Jeremiah. His master: "My heart is broken within me".

Now that he is close to death, Jeremiah could boast of no great accomplishments. There remained only his life, and even that would soon be violently snatched away as he died a martyr's death. No man's life ever seemed to turn onto the cold ashes of dead failure as did Jeremiah's. God had set him "over nations and over kingdoms... to destroy and to demolish." No kingdom was so torn and demolished as that within his own soul. This collapse of what he considered his mission in life almost drove him to despair, although he had felt convinced from the very beginning that his work would end in frustration. He had begged God to send someone else. Yet, as always, he submitted to the summons of God's holy will. This timid, fearful man would soon stand up before the jostling crowd to speak God's word. Often he pleaded with outstretched arms: "Return, rebellious, and I will cure you of your rebelling". On other

¹ The Prophets and the Word of God – Carol Stuhlmueller – Fides Publishers – Notre Dame, IN, - 1964 – pg115

occasions he hurled angry threats against distant mountains: “Hear, O nations! And know, O earth! ... See, I bring evil upon this people, the fruit of their own schemes”. But the people kept shrugging their shoulders with pitiful indifference, or, as time went on, they spit their angry insults at this meddlesome man. Always Jeremiah failed.

His unswerving efforts could not prevent the siege of Jerusalem. When the Babylonians encircled the city, the prophet entreated Sedecia, the Israelite king, to surrender and to save the scraps. In retaliation, the prophet was jailed for being a traitor. After the total destruction of the city and Temple, he urged the remnant left behind in Palestine to settle down and live peacefully. Instead, the ones who first pretended to honor and consult Jeremiah fled into Egypt and dragged him along against his will. Finally, according to Jewish tradition, they turned on Jeremiah and stoned to death the sorrowful old man. Not even his empty life was spared him. The silence of Egyptian sand would have consigned the prophet to oblivion had not his faithful friend Baruch written down an account of his words and life.

CM-CHR02

10/03/2018

TO BE A LIVING STONE, AN ALTAR STONE, from a Homily by Origen

All of us who believe in Christ Jesus are called 'living stones' in the words of scripture: 'Like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (I Pet 2:5).

You know that in the case of earthly stones the builder takes care to lay first the strongest and most massive stones as the foundation, so that the whole weight of the building can rest upon them. The next stones, of not quite such good quality, are laid upon the foundation stones; and so on according to the strength of the stone: the weakest are laid at the top, near the roof. It must be understood that this applies equally to living stones, some of which are foundations of our spiritual building. Who are these stones that are laid in the foundation? 'The apostles and prophets'. This is Paul's

teaching: 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone. (Eph 2:20)

To prepare yourselves more zealously, my listeners, to construct this building, to be one of the stones near the foundation, you must realize that Christ himself is the foundation of the building which we are describing. Paul the Apostles declares this to be so: 'No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 3:11). Happy are they who have built holy, religious buildings on so noble a foundation!

Now in this building which is the Church there must be an altar. Moreover I believe that there are among you those who as 'living stones' are able to become an altar--those of you who have resolved to dedicate yourselves to prayer, to offer God supplications day and night, and to immolate your sacrifices--and that, it is with you that Jesus builds his altar.

Think of the worth to be discerned in altar stones. 'Joshua built an altar, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, of unhewn stones, upon which no one has lifted an iron tool'(Joshua 8, 30). What do you think these unhewn stones represent? It is for each one's conscience to tell whether he or she is whole and perfect, whether one has integrity, whether one is without impurity or spot... To my mind, those whole and spotless stones must be the holy apostles who together form but one stone because of their unity of heart and soul. Indeed it is said that they 'all with one accord devoted themselves to prayer'(Acts 1:14), and that they said: 'Lord, who knowest the hearts of all'(Acts 1:24). For those who can pray with one accord, with one voice and one spirit, are indeed worthy to have been built together into a single altar on which Jesus offers sacrifices to his father. But we for our part, we too must ensure that we all agree and are united in the same mind and same judgment(1Cor 1:10); that we 'do nothing from selfishness

or conceit' but live 'having the same love, and of one mind' (Phil 12:2-3). So let us too try to become altar stones.

Homelie IX, 1-2: PG 12, 871-872.

A reading from *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*.

The next morning, as his companions knew that, owing to his exhaustion and lack of sleep during the night, St. Francis was too weak to be able to continue the journey on foot, they went to up to a poor local peasant and asked him, for the love of God to lend his donkey for their Father, Brother Francis, who could not travel on foot. Hearing Brother Francis mentioned, the man asked them: Are you the friars of that Brother Francis of Assisi about whom people say so much good?

The friars answered, Yes, and that it was really for him that they were asking for the donkey.

Then with great devotion and care this good man saddled the donkey and lead it to St. Francis, and with great reverence helped him get into the saddle.

Then they continued their journey, the peasant walking with them behind his donkey. And after they had gone awhile, he said to St. Francis: Tell me, are you Brother Francis of Assisi?

St. Francis answered that he was.

Well then, said the peasant, try to be as good as everyone thinks you are, because many people have great faith in you, so I urge you: never let there be anything in you different from what they expect of you.

When St. Francis heard these words, he did not mind being admonished by a peasant, and he did not say to himself, as many proud fellows who wear the cowl nowadays would say, Who is this brute who admonishes me? But he immediately got off the donkey and threw himself on his knees before the farmer and humbly kissed his feet, thanking him for having deigned to admonish him so charitably.

Then his companions and the peasant very devoutly helped him to his feet and sat him on the donkey again. And they traveled on.

And when they had climbed about halfway up the mountain, because the summer heat was very great and the path was long and steep, the peasant began to suffer intensely from thirst, and he called ahead to St. Francis: I am dying of thirst. If I don't have something to drink, I'll suffocate in a minute!

So St. Francis immediately got off the donkey and began to pray. And he remained kneeling on the ground, raising his hands toward heaven, until he knew by revelation that God had granted his prayer. Then he said to the peasant, Run quickly to that rock, and there you will find running water which Christ in his mercy has just caused to flow from the rock.

The man ran to the place which St. Francis had shown him, and found a very fine spring that had been made to flow through the hard rock by the power of St. Francis' prayer. And he drank all he wanted and felt better.

OT-JER15
10.05.18

**A reading on the Prophecy of Jeremiah –
From a book by Fr. Carol Stuhlmueller, C.P. ²**

Jeremiah left behind no monument of external wonder, but he did fulfil his vocation in life. He accomplished what God wanted him to do. He achieved success, we might say, through failure, repeated failure. Jeremiah is important, not so much for the conversions he made nor for the eloquence of his speaking, nor for his messianic prophecies, but he is important simply for what he was. The great wonders of his life were not outside him but within the silence of his lonely soul: wonders of energetic obedience and humble submission to God's will. For this reason, perhaps, the prophecy of Jeremiah is reserved by the Church for the liturgy of Passiontide. Jeremiah prefigures the silent Sufferer of Calvary and thus conditioned his fellow Israelites to recognize the power of divine redemption in the "weakness" of a God-man put to death by his enemies.

The example of suffering and resignation would rise from the tomb of Jeremiah and preach a sermon which would re-echo through the cities of the Jews, swelling in crescendo with the passage of time. The words of Jeremiah which Baruch gathered passed from Egypt to Palestine and from there to other distant groups of Jews. The Israelites, exiled in Babylon recalled still other words of the prophet and proceeded to add these to Baruch's collection. Yet Jeremiah never heard this echo of his voice. He died, haunted by the whispering, static repetition: "Denounce him! Denounce him!" Pathetically, he had once considered these accusers "my intimate friends".

Jeremiah did not easily accept this vocation to be a failure. Struggle, entreaty with God, questioning, alarm, complaint – these and other reactions stir within those passages called "The Confessions of Jeremiah" (chapters 11-15 & 17-20). In these sections especially the soul of the prophet is laid bare before our eyes. Jeremiah steps aside from the noise and ritual of the temple and its courtyards, from the muffled intrigue and harsh shouts of his enemies, to close his eyes for a moment to the make-believe world of irreligious people whose proud self-reliance was raising a tower of Babel in defiance of God; and in the style of a soliloquy he pour out the deepest secrets of his soul:

"Woe to me, mother, that you gave me birth!

A man of strife and contention to all the land!"

Since Jeremiah was a man of uncommon sensitiveness and strange melancholy, some may feel that God's word is prejudiced by the prophet's interruptions

² The Prophets and the Word of God – Carol Stuhlmueller, C.P. Fides Publishers – Notre Dame, IN – 1964 – pg 118

10SN0601

10.06.18

St Bruno, Founder of the Carthusians, from Butler's Lives of Saints ¹

Bruno came of a good family and was born at Cologne about the year 1020. While still young he left home to finish his education at the cathedral school of Rheims, and returned to Cologne where he was ordained and given a canonry in the collegiate church of St. Cunibert. In 1056 he was invited to return to his school as professor of grammar and theology. He taught in the school of Rheims for eighteen years. He was involved in the struggles with his simoniacal archbishop and suffered much from the oppression of that bishop. The legate, writing to Pope Gregory VII, extolled the virtue and wisdom of Bruno.

However Bruno had decided to abandon the active ecclesiastical life precisely at a time when the church of Rheims was ready to choose him as archbishop. He resigned his benefice and renounced whatever held him in the world, and persuaded some of his friends to accompany him into solitude. They first put themselves under the direction of St. Robert, abbot of Molesmes (who afterwards founded Citeaux), and lived in a hermitage at Seche-Fontaine near by. In this solitude Bruno and his companions deliberated what it was best for them to do. He decided to apply to St Hugh, bishop of Grenoble, who was able to assist him.

St Bruno and his six companions arrived at Grenoble about midsummer in 1084, and begged from St Hugh some place where they might serve God, remote from worldly affairs and without being burdensome to men. Hugh embraced them very lovingly and assigned them to the desert of Chartreuse, promising his utmost assistance to establish them there. Bruno and his companions immediately built an oratory there, and small cells at a little distance from the other, like the ancient *lauras* of Palestine. Such was the origin of the order of the Carthusians, which took its name from this desert of Chartreuse.

The monks first built a church on a summit and cells near it. They met in church at Matins and Vespers; other Hours they recited in their cells. They never took two meals in a day except on the great feasts, when they ate together in a refectory. On other days they ate in their cells as hermits. Everything among them was extremely poor. Their manner of life they followed without any written rule, though they conformed to that of St. Benedict in some points which were compatible with an eremitical life.

St Hugh became so great an admirer of Bruno that he took him for his spiritual father and often went from Grenoble to the Chartreuse to enjoy his conversation and improve himself by his advice and example. But his fame went beyond Grenoble and reached the ears of Eudes de Chatillon, his former pupil and now Pope Urban II. Hearing of the holy life he lived, and being convinced from his own acquaintance of his great prudence and learning, the Pope sent him an

order to come to Rome that he might assist him by his counsels in the governance of the Church. Bruno could scarcely have met with a more severe trial of his obedience or made a greater sacrifice. Nevertheless he set out in 1090. Several of his disciples followed him to Rome, but they were prevailed upon by Bruno to return to their former dwelling.

Bruno, meanwhile, had permission to occupy a hermitage among the ruins of the baths of Diocletian, where he would be close at hand when required by the pope. Soon Pope Urban pressed him to accept the archbishopric of Reggio in Calabria, but Bruno excused himself with great earnestness, and redoubled his requests to live in solitude. Urban consented at length that he might retire to a wilderness in Calabria where he would be at hand, but he was not allowed to return to Chartreux since it was too far away.

In 1099 Landuin, whom Bruno had appointed as Prior of the Chartreuse, went to Calabria to consult Bruno about the form of living which he had instituted, for the monks were desirous not to depart from the spirit and rule of their master. Bruno wrote them a letter full of tender charity and the spirit of God. In it he instructed them in all practices of solitary life, solved the difficulties which they proposed to him, comforted them in their troubles, and encouraged them in perseverance.

His last sickness came upon him towards the end of September 1101, and when he saw death near he gathered his monks about his bed, and in their presence made a public confession of his life and profession of faith. He resigned his soul to God on Sunday, October 6, 1101. St Bruno has never been formally canonized, the Carthusians being averse to all occasions of publicity. But in 1514 they obtained permission from Pope Leo X to keep his feast, and in 1674 Clement X extended it to the whole western Church.

[1](#)Butler's Lives of the Saints, revised edition, by Michael Walsh, Harper, San Francisco, 1991, p. 320f