

SUN 09/09/18

A Homily on the Gospel of Mark by Lawrence of Brandisi ¹

Just as the divine law says that when God created the world *he saw all that he had made and it was very good*, so the gospel, speaking of our redemption and re-creation, affirms: *He has done all things well. A good tree bears good fruit; no good tree can bear bad fruit.* As fire can give out nothing but heat and is incapable of giving out cold; and as the sun gives out nothing but light and is incapable of giving out darkness, so God is incapable of doing anything but good, for he is infinite goodness and light. He is a sun giving out endless light, a fire producing endless warmth. *He has done all things well.*

And so today we must wholeheartedly unite with that holy throng in saying: *He has done all things well. He has made the deaf hear and the dumb speak.* Like Balaam's ass, this crowd certainly spoke under the inspiration of the Holy spirit. Clearly it was the Holy Spirit who said through his mouth: *He has done all things well;* in other words he is truly God, because making the deaf hear and the dumb speak are things that only God can do. There is a transition here from the particular to the general. The man has worked a miracle that only God could work; therefore he is God, who has done all things well.

He has done all things well. The law says that all God did was good; the gospel says he has done all things well. Doing a good deed is not quite the same as doing it well. Many do good deeds but fail to do them well. The deeds of hypocrites, for example, are good, but they are done in the wrong spirit, with a perverse and defective intention. Everything that God does, however, is not only good, but is also done well. *The Lord is just in all his ways and holy in all his deeds. With wisdom you have done them all:* that is to say, most wisely and well. So *he has done all things well*, they say.

Now if God has done all his good works and done them well for our sake, knowing that we take pleasure in goodness, why I ask do we not endeavor to make all our works good and to do them well, knowing that such works are pleasing to God?

If you ask what we should do to enjoy the divine blessings for ever, I will tell you in a word. Since the Church is called the bride of Christ and of God, we must do what a good wife does for her husband. Then God will treat us as a good husband treats a dearly loved wife. This is what the Lord says through Hosea: *I will betroth you to myself with justice and integrity, with tenderness and compassion; I will betroth you to myself with faithfulness, and you shall know that I am the Lord.* So even in thi present life we shall be happy, this world will be an earthly paradise for us; with the Hebrews we shall feast on heavenly manna in the desert of this life, if only we follow Christ's example by striving to do everything well, so that *he has done all things well* may be said of each one of us.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1993 – p 114

A Reading from The Conscience of Israel, by Bruce Vawter.¹

The "Confessions" of Jeremiah will always have a special interest for the reader. These passages do not come from any single moment in the prophet's long and varied career, but we should probably not be wrong in dating most of them to the hard days of Jehoiakim's persecution. The first of them was the issue of an attempt on Jeremiah's life by his own brethren at Anathoth who were trying to stifle his prophecy.

In these passages Jeremiah bares his soul quite frankly as do so many of the psalmists in the Book of Psalms. It seems more likely that they were not originally intended for publication, but were in the nature of private meditations in which the prophet discoursed intimately with his God. They are, we need hardly remind ourselves, the meditations of a holy man of the Old Testament, not of a Christian saint. When Jeremiah prays with respect to his enemies,

Pick them out like sheep for the slaughter,
set them aside for the day of slaughter

he is not seeking a mean and selfish vengeance, rather he is asking the Lord to punish wickedness. Nevertheless, a Christian saint would be somewhat less inclined to identify himself so personally with the right which God is petitioned to vindicate.

Not entirely Christian, too, must we judge the following prayer, which, however, could have been uttered only by one on terms of the utmost familiarity with God:

Woe to me, my mother, that you gave me birth,
a man of strife and contention to the whole land!
I neither lend nor borrow,
yet everyone curses me...
Because I bear your name upon me,
O Lord, God of Sebaoth,
I have not sat in the midst of merrymakers,
I have not rejoiced.
Because your hand was upon me I have sat alone,
because you have filled me with indignation.
Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
You have become to me like a deceiving brook,
waters that do not remain!

¹The Conscience of Israel Bruce Vawter C.M. Sheed & Ward 1961 p.241-2

Here was no man who enjoyed standing against the crowd, one of those needed in every age and civilization, who gain in strength from swimming against the current. Jeremiah did not at all relish the role in which he had been cast, a pariah from the society which God's command forced him to contradict. His concluding words, the fruit of a bitter brooding, would be blasphemous on the lips of anyone less assured than he of the right to talk back to God. Even Jeremiah realizes that they have gone too far and that he has spoken rashly, for in the following lines (vv. 19-21) God has him recognize his danger of becoming like one of the rebellious people against whom he has been set. Once again, he must walk in faith, trusting in the Lord to hold him up in the inevitable struggles that lie ahead.

TUES 09.11.2018

The development of the prophet Jeremiah=s mission, from *Pathways in Scripture* by Damasus Winzen. ²

Jeremiah had received his call to the prophetic ministry in 627 B.C., 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 (chs. 7 and 26) 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.

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! (18:6). 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

² Ann Arbor MI, Word of Life, 1976; pp. 206-207.

refuse heap so that it broke into pieces. 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)

WEDS 09.12.2019

SAINT PETER, ARCHBISHOP OF TARENTOISE -from Butler's Lives of the Saints³

St Peter of Tarentaise was born near Vienne in the French province of the Dauphine. He early displayed a remarkable memory, coupled with great inclination for religious studies, and at the age of twenty he entered the abbey of Bonnevaux. After a time, his father and the other two sons followed Peter to Bonnevaux, while his mother, with the only daughter, entered a neighboring nunnery.

He was not quite thirty when he was chosen superior of a new house built at Tamie, in the desert mountains of Tarentaise. It overlooked the pass which was then the chief route from Geneva to Savoy, and the monks were able to be of great use to travellers. There, with the help of Amadeus III, Count of Savoy, who held him in high esteem, he founded a hospice for the sick and for strangers, in which he was wont to wait upon his guests with his own hands.

In 1142 came his election to the archbishopric of Tarentaise, and Peter was compelled by St Bernard and the general chapter of his order, though much against the grain, to accept the office. He found the diocese in a deplorable state, due mainly to the mismanagement of his predecessor, an unworthy man who had eventually to be deposed. In place of the cathedral clergy whom he found lax and careless, St Peter substituted canons regular of St Augustine. He undertook the constant visitation of his diocese; recovered property which had been alienated; appointed good priests to various parishes; made excellent foundations for the education of the young and relief of the poor; and everywhere provided for the due celebration of the services of the Church..

In 1155, after he had administered the diocese for thirteen years, Peter suddenly disappeared. Actually he had made his way to a remote Cistercian abbey in Switzerland, where, he was accepted as a lay-brother. Not until a year later was he discovered. His identity having been revealed to his new superiors, Peter was obliged to leave and return to his see, where he was greeted with great joy. He took up his duties more zealously than ever. He rebuilt the hospice of the Little St Bernard and founded other similar refuges for travellers in the Alps...

It was not granted to the saint to die among his mountain flock. His reputation as a peacemaker led Alexander III to send him in 1174 to try effect a

reconciliation between King Louis VII of France and Henry II of England. St Peter, though he was old, set out at once, preaching everywhere on his way. As he approached Chaumont in the Vexin, where the French court was being held, he was met by King Louis and by Prince Henry, the rebellious heir to the English throne. The latter, alighting from his horse to receive the archbishop's blessing, asked for the saint's old cloak, which he reverently kissed. Both at Chaumont and at Gisors where he interviewed the English king, St Peter was treated with utmost honor, but the reconciliation for which he labored did not take place until after his death. As he was returning to his diocese he was taken ill on the road near Besancon, and died as he was being carried into the abbey of Bellevaux. This St Peter was canonized in 1191.

THURS 09.13.2019

A reading about St. John Chrysostom, from *Historical Sketches* by Bl. John Henry Newman.¹

Whence this devotion to St. John Chrysostom, which leads me to dwell upon the thought of him, and makes me kindle at his name, when so many other great Saints...command indeed my veneration, but exert no personal claim upon my heart? Many holy people have died in exile, many holy people have been successful preachers; and what more can we write upon St. Chrysostom's monument than this, that he was eloquent and that he suffered persecution? He is not an Athanasius, expounding a sacred dogma with a luminousness which is almost an inspiration. Nor, except by the contrast, does he remind us of that Ambrose who kept his ground obstinately in an imperial city, and fortified himself against the heresy of a court by the living rampart of a devoted population. Nor is he Gregory or Basil, rich in the literature and philosophy of Greece, and embellishing the Church with the spoils of heathenism. Nor is he a Jerome, so dead to the world that he can imitate the point and wit of its writers without danger to himself or scandal to his brethren. He has not trampled upon heresy, nor smitten emperors, nor beautified the house or the service of God, nor knit together the portions of Christendom, nor founded a religious order, nor built up the framework of doctrine, nor expounded the science of the Saints; yet I love him, as I love David or St. Paul.

How am I to account for it? I consider St. Chrysostom's charm to lie in his intimate sympathy and compassionateness for the whole world, not only in its strength, but in its weakness; in the lively regard with which he views everything that comes before him, taken in the concrete, whether as made after its own kind or as gifted with a nature higher than its own. It is the interest which he takes in all things, not so far as God has made them alike, but as he has made them different from each other. I speak of the discriminating affectionateness with which he accepts everyone for what is personal and unlike others....

I speak of the kindly spirit and the genial temper with which he looks round at all things which this wonderful world contains; of the graphic fidelity with which he notes them down upon the tablets of his mind, and of the promptitude and propriety with which he calls them up as arguments or illustrations in the course of his teaching as the occasion requires. Possessed though he be by the fire of ardent charity, he has not lost one fibre, he does not miss one vibration, of the complicated whole of human sentiment and affection; like the miraculous bush in

the desert, which for all the flame that wrapt it round, was not thereby consumed.

That loving scrutiny, with which he follows the Apostles as they reveal themselves to us in their writings, he practices in various ways towards all people, living and dead, high and low, those whom he admires and those whom he weeps over. He writes as one who was ever looking out with sharp but kind eyes upon the world of humans and their history; and hence he has always something to produce about them, new or old, to the purpose of his argument, whether from books or from the experience of life. Head and heart were full to overflowing with a stream of mingled "wine and milk", of rich vigorous thought and affectionate feeling. This is why his manner of writing is so rare and special; and why, when once a student enters into it, he will ever recognize him, wherever he meets with extracts from him.

In him I recognize a special pattern of that very gift of discrimination. He may indeed be said in some sense to have a devotion of his own for every one who comes across him, —for persons, ranks, classes, callings, societies, considered as divine works and the subjects of his good offices or good will, and therefore I have a devotion for him.

[1](#) *Historical Sketches*, II, pp. 284-287.

FRI 09/14/2018

A reading on the power and strength of the Cross, from a treatise by St. John Chrysostom. ¹

[The cross,] this symbol of death -- and I shall not stop repeating this over and over again -- became the foundation of many blessings, a wall to make us secure on every side, a timely trap to catch the devil, a rein to hold in check the demons, a muzzle against the power of our adversaries. This sign has destroyed death, this sign has shattered hell's gates of brass and crushed iron bars. It has destroyed the stronghold of the devil, it has cut the sinews of sin. The cross has rescued the whole world, which was lying under condemnation, and has rid us of the calamity which God was sending down upon our human nature.

Nothing else has done such things. The divided waters of the Red Sea, the rocks which were split and gushed forth water, the air which changed into a column of cloud and a pillar of fire, the manna which was given to so many thousands for forty years, the Law, and the other wonders which were wrought both in the desert and in Palestine did none of these things. But the cross can do them not only in a single nation but in the whole world seen by the sun. The cross had been the symbol of a curse; all men had held it in dread and abomination; it had been the sign of the deepest shame. But after Christ died on it, the cross had the power to accomplish all this and with the greatest ease.

Not only do these things show the strength of the cross but also other events which occurred thereafter. The world had been unproductive of any virtue; its condition was no better than that of a desert with no hope of producing any good. Suddenly the cross changed this desert into a garden and the mother of many children. And the prophet made this clear long before-hand when he said: "Rejoice, you barren woman, who bear no children. Break forth with shouts of joy, you who suffer not the pangs of childbirth; for many more are the children of the desolate than of her who has a husband."

¹ *Demonstration Against the Pagans That Christ is God*. Trans. Paul W. Harkins, Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 73. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985, pp. 229-231.

After he made the earth so fruitful, he gave it a Law which was far superior to the Old Law. The prophets did not veil this in silence but foretold it when they said; “I will make with them a new covenant, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt. Because they did not abide by this covenant of mine, I, too, took no care of them,’ says the Lord. ‘For this is the covenant which I will make with them and I will adapt my laws to their understanding and I shall write them on their hearts.’”

Then, in showing the rapidity of the change and the facility with which they would embrace Christ’s teaching, the prophet went on to say: “And they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’ for all will know me from the least of them to the greatest of them.”

On his coming, Christ would also pardon all men their transgressions and no more remember their sins.” What could be clearer than this? By these predictions the prophet revealed the calling of the gentiles, the superiority of the New Law over the Old Law, the ease of access, the grace possessed by those who have believed, and the gift given in baptism.

SAT 09.15.2019

From a Sermon in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Amadeus of Lusanne (CF 18:105-106)

With deep calling to deep, two loves had come together into one and from the two loves was made a single love when the Virgin mother gave to her Son the love she gave to God, and showed her love for her son in loving God. Therefore the more she loved, the more she grieved and the greatness of her love brought the increase of her suffering.

What was she doing when she stood on Calvary and saw the cross, the nails, the wounds of the One who was dying in innocence and the insatiable cruelty of the Pharisee afire with malice? [Jesus] hung there atoning not for his sins but for ours, and the Pharisees with the Scribes, mocking him, struck him on the head and offered to his lips vinegar mingled with gall that there might be fulfilled the prophecy of David, saying in the person of Christ, 'They added to the pain of my wounds.' In the midst of this the Mother of God was distressed in mind, and sorrows seized upon her as upon a woman in childbirth. There are groans, sobs, sighs, sorrow, grief, agony, distress of heart, fires, a death more cruel than death. There life is not taken away yet the bitterness of death is suffered. O memory to be revered, full of devotion and tears, to recall how that glorious holy soul suffered, and what anguish she endured in the death of Christ. The pale face of Jesus reflected the bloodless face of his mother. He suffered in the flesh, she in her heart. Finally the insults and scoffing of the wicked came back upon his mother's head. The Lord's death was to her more bitter than her own [would have been]. Although, taught by the Spirit, she would not doubt the resurrection, yet she had to drink the Father's cup and to know the hour of her own passion. Concerning this, the venerable Simeon prophesied to her: 'A sword shall pierce your soul.' O Lord Jesus, terrible in your counsels beyond the sons of men, you did not spare your mother from the sword piercing her soul. By this road must we all pass by the fiery sword turning this way and that to the tree of life which is in the midst of paradise.

But to return: Blessed Mary was able to cry out that which was especially appropriate to Christ: 'O all you who pass by, behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow. What a sorrow and how great! And in that sorrow what was Mary like? Alas, as she was then, how different from the girl who had once tended her son amid a choir of angels while shepherds worshiped and Magi adored him with an offering of mystic gifts. Very different, not indeed in virtue but in sadness, not in grace but in grief. For she increased in virtue and grew in grace. For set in the midst of adversity she neither relaxed her modesty nor lost the strength of her constancy.