

SUN 09/23/18

A Homily on the Gospel of Mark by Theophylact ¹

As he was teaching his disciples the Lord said to them: "The son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will put him to death, but after his death, on the third day, he will rise again."

The Lord always alternated prophecies of his passion with the performance of miracles, so that he should not be thought to have suffered through lack of power. Therefore after imparting the grievous news that men would kill him, he added the joyful tidings that on the third day he would rise again. This was to teach us that joy always follows sorrow, and that we should not be uselessly distressed by painful events, but should rather hope that better times will come.

He came to Capernaum, and after entering the house he questioned the disciples: "What were you arguing about on the way?" Now the disciples still saw things from a very human point of view, and they had been quarrelling amongst themselves about which of them was the greatest and most esteemed by Christ. Yet the Lord did not restrain their desire for honor; indeed he wishes us to aspire to the most exalted rank. He does not however wish us to seize the first place, but rather to win the highest honor by humility.

He stood a child among them because he wants us to become childlike. A child has no desire for honor; it is not jealous, and it does not remember injuries. And he said: "If you become like that, you will receive a great reward, and if, moreover, for my sake, you honor others who are like that, you will receive the kingdom of heaven; for you will be receiving me, and in receiving me you will receive the one who sent me."

You see then what great things humility, together with simplicity and guilelessness, can accomplish. It causes both the son and the father to dwell in us, and with them of course comes the Holy Spirit.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year B - New City Press – 1993 – pg 118

MON 09.24.18

The Prophecy of Jeremiah – by John Cassian and Prosper of Aquitaine ¹

John Cassian tells us: “The saints have never claimed that their own efforts would have enabled them to find their way along the road they were traveling to perfect virtue. Rather they sought it from the Lord, saying: Direct me in your truth” and “direct the road I take in your sight.” And someone else asserts that he grasped this not only through faith but through direct experience of how things are: “I learned, Lord, that a person is no master of the road he takes, nor is it in man’s power as he goes his way to control his steps.” The Lord had this to say to Israel: “I will lead him on, like a greening fir tree, and the fruit you bear comes from me.”

And Prosper of Aquitaine says: “Unless God works in us, we cannot be partakers of virtue. For indeed, without this good, nothing is good. Without this Light, nothing is bright. Without this Wisdom, nothing is wise. Without this justice, nothing is right. For the Lord says through the mouth of Isaiah: “I am. I am the Lord and there is no one besides me who saves,” and through Jeremiah: “I know, O Lord, that the way of a person is not in him. Neither is it in a person to direct his way.” Again the Lord proclaims through the same prophet that God effects the conversion of a heart to him and says: “I will bring them again into this land. And I will build them up again and not pull them down. And I will plant them and pluck them up. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. And they shall be my people and I will be their God, because they shall return to me with whole heart.

¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. XII – Jeremiah – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove,

TUE 09.25.2018

On the Meaning of Hope in the Face of Death. From a Book by Karl Rahner.²

The real miracle of Christ's death resides precisely in this: death, which can be experienced only as the advent of emptiness, as the dead-end of sin, as the darkness of eternal night (especially since the supernatural order is the real order in which there should be no death), and which could be suffered, even by Christ himself, only as a state of being abandoned by God, now, through being embraced by the obedient "yes" of the Son, while losing nothing of the horror of divine abandonment native to death, is transformed into something completely different: into the advent of God in the midst of that empty loneliness, into the manifestation of a complete, obedient surrender of the whole person to the Holy God at the very moment when the person seems lost and far removed from God.

Through the fact of Christ's death, the justifying grace of God illustrates and confirms something which previously was not shown but was hidden from us, namely, that at the very moment in which sin reaches the fullest measure of its power, the grace of God increases in its power to conquer sin. And through the death of Christ, when he surrendered himself to this innermost part of the world (hell), this grace became ours. What he really accomplished in his death, and what his death really is, may be stated thus: his death, as an act of grace, helped to offer to God the "flesh of sin" - which death really is - transforming it into a flesh of grace; so that we now can, through his grace, belong to God and to Christ in death, despite the fact that death, in itself, means remoteness from God.

These considerations may make it possible to understand just what the Christian, in death, achieves through the grace of Christ (in the death which transpires throughout one's life); the person experiences life falling into the emptiness and powerlessness of death as remoteness from God, as the bitterness of guilt (one's own and that of the human race), while believing in the mercy of God, hoping for life in God and yet loving this God so far removed from one's self. This Faith, Hope and Charity are not, however, mere feelings accompanying the brutal reality of death, lasting only until death really occurs, persisting powerlessly beside the hard reality which is death. They are, rather, because transformed by grace, the true reality which transforms death but which, in order that faith should be preserved, transforms it in such a way that death is still encountered as the wages of sin. The trinity of Faith, Hope and Charity makes death itself the highest act of believing, hoping, loving, the very death which seems to be absolute darkness, despair, coldness itself. These three fundamental powers of Christian existence (together with grace, of which they

²On the Theology of Death, Karl Rahner, Herder & Herder, 1961,p.78.

are the personal realization), entering death, transform it into an act of resigning obedience: faith in darkness, hope against hope, love of God who appears only as Lord and as inexorable justice. In so far as these fundamental acts become constituents of death as a human act, death itself is changed; the dreadful falling into the hands of the living God, which death must appear as a manifestation of sin, becomes in reality: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

WED 09.26.18

A Commentary on Jeremiah by Jerome ³

It is the consensus of the Church that these words are spoken by Christ through the person of Jeremiah. For the Father made it known to him how he should speak and revealed to him the zealotry of the Jews – he who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening his mouth and not knowing. But the word SIN is implicitly added to this last phrase, in agreement with what was said by the apostle: “When he did not know sin, he was made to be sin on our account.” And they said: “Let us put wood on his bread: - clearly referring to the cross on the body of the Savior, for he is the one who said: “I am the bread that descended from heaven.”

They also said: “let us destroy (or eradicate) him from the land of the living.” And they conceived the evil in their soul that they would delete his name forever. In response to this, from the sacrament of the assumed body, the Son speaks to the Father and invokes his judgment while praising his justice and acknowledging him as the God who inspects the interior and the heart. He asks that the Father would return to the people what they deserve, saying: “Let me see your vengeance on them.” Obviously referring only to those who continue in sin, not to those who repent. Concerning the latter, he said on the Cross” Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” He also “disclosed his cause” to the Father, that he was crucified not because he deserved it but for the sins of the people, as he declared: “Behold the prince of the world came and found nothing against me.” The Jews and our Judaizers believe that all of this was said only by Jeremiah, arguing from prophecy that the people have sustained these evils in their captivity. But I fail to see how they hope to prove that Jeremiah was the one crucified, since such an event is nowhere recorded in Scripture. Perhaps it is just a figment of their imagination.

³ Ancient Christian Commentary – O.T. vol XII = InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2009 – pg 98

THUR 09.27.18

From a writing by St Vincent de Paul ⁴

Even though the poor are often rough and unrefined, we must not judge them from external appearances nor from the mental gifts they seem to have received. On the contrary, if you consider the poor in the light of faith, then you will observe that they are taking the place of the Son of God who chose to be poor. Although in his passion he almost lost the appearance of a man and was considered a fool by the Gentiles and a stumbling block by the Jews, he showed that his mission was to preach to the poor. *He sent me to preach the good news to the poor.* We also ought to have this same spirit and imitate Christ's actions, that is, we must take care of the poor, console them, help them, support their cause.

Since Christ willed to be born poor, he chose for himself disciples who were poor. He made himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty. He went so far as to say that he would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against himself. Since God surely loves the poor, he also loves those who love the poor. For when one person holds another dear, he also includes in his affection anyone who loves or serves the one he loves. That is why we hope that God will love us for the sake of the poor. So when we visit the poor and needy, we try to be understanding where they are concerned. We sympathize with them so fully that we can echo Paul's words: *I have become all things to all people.* Therefore we must try to be stirred by our neighbor's worries and distress. We must beg God to pour into our hearts sentiments of pity and compassion and to fill them again and again with these dispositions.

It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else and to offer such service as quickly as possible. If a needy person requires medicine or other help during prayer time, do whatever has to be done with peace of mind. Offer the deed to God as your prayer. Do not become upset or feel guilty because you interrupted your prayer to serve the poor. God is not neglected if you leave him for such service. One of God's works is merely interrupted so that another can be carried out. So when you leave prayer to serve some poor person, remember that this service is performed for God. Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity. Since she is a noble mistress, we must do whatever she commands. With renewed devotion, then, we must serve the poor, especially beggars and outcasts. They have been given to us as our masters and patrons.

4

FRI 09.28.18

A Commentary on Jeremiah by St Jerome ⁵

The girdle, or loincloth, which is attached to the loins of God, is the people of Israel, who, like this piece of linen, were assumed from the earth unwashed and having no softness or beauty, yet were nevertheless joined to God through his mercy. When Israel sinner (which is why it is represented as a loincloth), it was led across the Euphrates and Assyria and there hidden, that is, absorbed, in a manner of speaking, into the crowd of larger and innumerable peoples and from captivity. Despite this, they did not observe the precepts of God after they were restored but went after other gods in the extreme, even raising their hand against the Son of God, and then they wasted away in everlasting perdition. God's loincloth is also every holy person who is assumed from the earth, even from the dust of the earth, and united to God as a companion, who, in a certain way, surrounds and covers with greater diligence the things that appear in God's church to be indecent, lest they become vulnerable to the stings of the pagans and heretics. Yet, as the loincloth was affected by the water of the Euphrates and was assimilated to the river's flow, so also Israel was imbued with the atmosphere of the Assyrian region, which destroyed its original strength and corrupted and dissolved it. Even though Israel returned to God's service, it was never able to regain its pristine beauty, though this was not due to any severity of God's part, but only to the Israelites own wickedness, for they would not hear his word but did whatever seemed good to themselves and walked in the depravity of their own hearts. But this is also why the divine word itself made the following analogy, saying, "As the loincloth clings to the loins of a man, so I have fastened and joined all the house of Israel and the whole people of Judah (obviously the ten tribes and the two) to myself, that they may be a people for my name and my praise and my glory, but none of them

⁵ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – OT _ vol. XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2009 – pg 106-7

SAT 09.29.18

From a Homily on the Gospels by St Gregory the Great ⁶

You should be aware that the word “angel” denotes a function rather than a nature. Those holy spirits of heaven have indeed always been spirits. They can only be called angels when they deliver some message. Moreover those who deliver messages of lesser importance are called angels; and those who proclaim messages of supreme importance are called archangels.

And so it was that not merely an angel but the archangel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin Mary. It was only fitting that the highest angel should come to announce the greatest of messages.

Some angels are given proper names to denote the service they are empowered to perform. In that holy city where perfect knowledge flows from the vision of Almighty God, those who have no names may easily be known. But personal names are assigned to some, not because they would not be known without them, but rather to denote their ministry when they come among us. Thus Michael means “Who is like God?; Gabriel is “The Strength of God”; and Raphael is “God’s Remedy”.

Whenever some act of wondrous power must be performed, Michael is sent, so that his action and his name may make it clear that no one can do what God does by his superior power. So also our ancient foe desired in his pride to be like God, saying: *I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of heaven; I will be like the Most High.* He will be allowed to remain in power until the end of the world when he will be destroyed in the final punishment. Then he will fight with the archangel Michael, as we are told by John: *A battle was fought with Michael the archangel.*

So too Gabriel, who is called God’s strength, was sent to Mary. He came to announce the One who appeared as a humble man to quell the cosmic powers. Thus God’s strength announced the coming of the Lord of the heavenly powers, mighty in battle.

Raphael means, as I have said, God’s remedy, for when he touched Tobit’s eyes in order to cure him, he banished the darkness of his blindness. Thus since he is to heal, he is rightly called God’s remedy.

⁶ The Liturgy of the Hours vol. IV Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York 1975 pg 1435

would listen to me, following instead their own vices. Therefore, let the one who is able to say "it is good for me to cling to God," be careful lest, through negligence, he is separated from the loins of God and passes into the Euphrates and becomes situated not on the most solid rock but in the cleft of that corrupt and decaying rock, which is the sordid life and the wickedness of heretics and there encounters so great a deterioration that he would be no longer able to return to the service and the loincloth of the Lord