

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY
VIGILS READINGS: THIRTIETH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

October 28-November 3, 2018

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2018:

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Clement of Alexandria [1](#)

The commandment of the Lord shines clearly, enlightening the eyes.

Receive Christ, receive power to see, receive your light, “that you may plainly recognize both God and man.” *More delightful than gold and precious stones, more desirable than honey and the honeycomb* is the Word that has enlightened us. How could he not be desirable, he who illuminated minds buried in darkness, and endowed with clear vision “the light-bearing eyes” of the soul?

“Despite the other stars, without the sun the whole world would be plunged in darkness.” So likewise we ourselves, had we not known the Word and been enlightened by Him, should have been no better off than plump poultry fattened in the dark, simply reared for death. Let us open ourselves to the light, then, and so to God. Let us open ourselves to the light, and become disciples of the Lord. For he promised the Father: *I will make known your name to my brothers and sisters, and praise you where they are assembled.*

Sing his praises, then, Lord, and make known to me your Father, who is God. Your deeds will save me, your song instruct me. Hitherto I have gone astray in my search for God; but now you might my path, Lord, and I find God through you, and receive the Father through you, I become co-heir with you, since you are not ashamed to own me as your brother.

Let us, then, shake off forgetfulness of truth, shake off the mist of ignorance and darkness that dims the eyes, and contemplate the true God, after first raising this song of praise to him: “All hail, O Light!” For upon us buried in darkness, imprisoned in the shadow of death, a heavenly light has shone, a light of a clarity surpassing the sun's, and of a sweetness exceeding any this earthly life can offer. That light is eternal life, and those who receive it live. Night, on the other hand, is

afraid of the light, and melting away in terror gives place to the day of the Lord. Unfailing light has penetrated everywhere, and sunset has turned into dawn. This is the meaning of the new creation; for the Sun of Righteousness, pursuing his course through the universe, visits all alike, in imitation of his Father, *who makes his sun rise upon all*, and bedews everyone with his truth.

He it is who has changed sunset into dawn and death into life by his crucifixion; he it is who snatched the human race from perdition and exalted it to the skies. Transplanting what was corruptible to make it incorruptible, transforming earth into heaven, he, God's gardener, points the way to prosperity, prompts his people to good works, reminds them how to live according to the truth, and bestows on us the truly great and divine heritage of the Father, which cannot be taken away from us. He deifies us by his heavenly teaching, instilling his laws into our minds, and writing them on our hearts. What are the laws he prescribes? That all, be they of high estate or low, shall know God. *And I will be merciful to them*, God says, *and I will remember their sin no more*.

Let us accept the laws of life, let us obey God's promptings. Let us learn to know Him, so that He may be merciful to us. Although He stands in no need of it, let us pay God our debt of gratitude in willing obedience as a rent, so to speak, which we owe Him for our lodging here below.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1999 – p 128

MONDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2018:

Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah by St Jerome ¹

The remnant of the people of Israel are gathered through the apostles and apostolic people about whom we read above “guardians will call on the mountain” and to whom it is commanded to “sing and resound” that the remnant of Israel might be saved. The Lord also promises that he will bring them down from the north country, he who is “the most sever wind but is called the right hand”, due to unbelief and the frigidity of his love, He also promises to gather

¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. – vol. XII – InterVarsity Press – DownersGrove, IL – 2009 – pg 207

them from the ends of the earth in no time other than the paschal solemnity, that is, in the days of the Lord's passion, when the Lord was crucified and when the gospel promise was fulfilled. "When I am lifted up, I will draw everyone to me." At that moment, he generated many people, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy: "a people is born in one moment," for on one day, three thousand and five thousand people believed. It is also written in Hebrew, "among whom were the blind, the lame, the pregnant and women in labor together, a great gathering of those returning here."

The calling of the nations is demonstrated clearly when Scripture says: "Hear the word of the Lord, nations, and announce it to the distant coastlands." What do they announce to the distant coastlands? They announce that "the same Lord who scattered Israel will gather him," showing that it was never in the power of his enemies to scatter Israel, but only in the will of the Lord, "and guard Israel as a shepherd guards his flock," since "the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." "for the Lord redeemed Jacob with his own precious blood and freed him from the hands of those who were more powerful or stronger." "They will come," it continues, no doubt referring to those who were liberated from the hand of the powerful, "and praise their liberator on Mount Zion," that is, in the church, "and stream to the goodness of the Lord of all abundance," which is known not in the fruits and foods of this flesh but in a diversity of virtues.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2018:

A Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah by St Ambrose ²

"The Lord hears the weeping of the penitent". Let us purify ourselves by tears, that the Lord our God may hear us when we lament, as he heard Ephraim when weeping, as it is written: "I have surely heard Ephraim weeping." He expressly repeats the words of Ephraim: "You have chastised me, and I was chastised; like a calf I was not trained." For a calf shows itself off and leaves its stall, and so Ephraim was untrained like a calf far away from the stall. Because he had forsaken the stall of the Lord, followed Jeroboam and worshiped the calves,

² Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. – vol. XII – Inter Varsity Press – DownersGrove, IL – 2009 – pg 210

which future event was prophetically indicated through Aaron, namely, that the people of the Jews would fall after this manner. And so repenting, Ephraim says, “Turn me, and O shall be turned, for you are the Lord my God. Surely in the end of my captivity I repented, and after I learned I mourned over the days of confusion and subjected myself to you because I received reproach and made you known.”

Let us, then, submit ourselves to God and not be subject to sin, and when we ponder the remembrance of our offenses, let us blush as though at some disgrace and not speak of them as some glory to us, as some boast of overcoming modesty or putting down the feeling of justice. Let our conversion be such that we who did not know God may now ourselves declare him to others, that the Lord, moved by a conversion on our part, may answer to us: Ephraim is from youth a dear son, a pleasant child, for since my words are concerning him, I will truly remember him; therefore have I hastened to be over him. I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord.” And what mercy he promises us, the Lord also shows, when he says further on: “I have satiated every thirsty soul and have satisfied every hungry soul. Therefore I woke up and beheld, and my sleep was sweet to me.” We observe that the Lord promises his sacraments to those who sin. Let us, then, all be converted to the Lord.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2018:

A Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah by St. Jerome ³

When Israel was led out of the land of Egypt, God was intimate only with that people, such that it could be said that he took them by the hand and made a covenant with them, which they then violated and were therefore neglected by the Lord. Now, however, it is promised in the gospel that after the cross, resurrection and ascension, the covenant will be written not on stone tablets but on tablets of embodied hearts, since the testament of the Lord was to be written in the minds of believers, he being God dwelling in them and they a people in him, so that they would never again seek Jewish teachers and traditions and human commandments, but would be taught instead by the Holy Spirit, provided that

³ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. – vol XII – InterVarsity Press – DownerGrove, IL. – 2009 = pg 215

they are worthy to hear: “You are God’s temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in you.” But the Spirit blows where he wills, and has various graces and is himself the possession of the knowledge of the God of all virtue. “And I will forgive their iniquities, and I will not remember their sins any more,” he says. From this, it is clear, according to the proper knowledge of the reading above, that this must be understood of the Savior’s first coming, when both the people of Israel and Judah were joined together. Should anyone worry, however, about why it says “I will make a new covenant – or testament – with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with your ancestors,” he should first understand that the church of Christ came to everyone from the Jews and, moreover, that the Lord Savior said, “I came only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

For the grace of the law, which has passed away, we have received the abiding grace of the gospel, and, instead of the shadows and figures of the ancient covenant, truth has come by Jesus Christ. Jeremiah also prophecies in the person of God: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their ancestors, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” Notice that he says. That it is not to the people of the Gentiles, with whom he had not previously made a covenant, but to the people of the Jews, to whom he had given the law by Moses, that he promises the new covenant of the gospel, so that they might no longer live according to the ancient letter but in the newness of the Spirit.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2018:

A Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah by St. Jerome ⁴

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2018:

From Purgation and Purgatory by St. Catherine of Genoa [1](#)

The souls in purgatory cannot think, "I am here, and justly so because of my sins," or "I wish I had never committed such sins for now I would be in paradise," or "That person there is leaving before me," or "I will leave before that one." They cannot remember the good or evil in their past nor that of others.

Such is their joy in God's will, in his pleasure, that they have no concern for themselves but dwell only in their joy in God's ordinance. They see only the goodness of God, his mercy toward all. Should they be aware of other good or evil, theirs would not be perfect charity. Only once do they understand the reason for their purgatory: the moment in which they leave this life. After this moment, that knowledge disappears. Immersed in charity, incapable of deviating from it, they can only will or desire pure love. There is no joy save that in paradise to be compared with the joy of the souls in purgatory.

As the rust of sin is consumed the soul is more and more open to God's love. Just as a covered object left out in the sun cannot be penetrated by the sun's rays, in the same way, once the covering of the soul is removed, the soul opens itself fully to the rays of the sun. Having become one with God's will, these souls, to the extent that he grants it to them, see into God.

Joy in God, oneness with him, is the end of these souls, an instinct implanted in them at their creation. All that I have said is nothing compared to what I feel within, the witnessed correspondence of love between God and the soul; for when God sees the soul pure as it was in its origins, he tugs at it with a glance, draws it and binds it to himself with a fiery love. God so transforms the soul into himself that it knows nothing other than God. He will not cease until he has brought the soul to its perfection.

That is why the soul seeks to cast off any and all impediments, so that it can be lifted up to God; and such impediments are the cause of the suffering of the souls in purgatory. Not that the souls dwell on their suffering; they dwell rather on the resistance they feel within themselves against the will of God, against his intense and pure love bent on nothing but drawing them up to him. And I see rays of lightning darting from that divine love to the creature, so intense and fiery as to annihilate not the body alone but, were it possible, the soul. The soul becomes like gold that becomes purer as it is fired, all dross being cast out.

The last stage of love is that which does its work without human doing. If humans were to be aware of the many hidden flaws in them, they would despair. These flaws are burned away in the last stage of love. God shows the soul its weakness, so that the soul may see the workings of God. If we are to become perfect, the change must be brought about in us and without us; that is, the change is to be the work not of human beings but of God.

This, the last stage of love, is the pure and intense love of God alone. The overwhelming love of God gives the soul a joy beyond words. In purgatory great joy and great suffering do not exclude one another.

1A Word in Season – vol. IV – Sanctoral – Augustinian Press – 1991 – pg 215

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2018:

Mary as Star of the Sea – From a Homily by St. Bernard of Clairvaux ⁵

“And the Virgin’s name was Mary”. Let us now say a few words about this name, which means ‘star of the sea’ and is so becoming to the Virgin Mother. Surely she is very fittingly likened to a star. The star sends forth its ray without harm to itself. In the same way the Virgin brought forth her son with no injury to herself. The ray no more diminishes the star’s brightness than does the son his mother’s integrity. She is indeed that noble star risen out of Jacob whose beam enlightens this earthly globe. She it is whose brightness both shines in the highest heaven and pierces the pit of hell, and is shed upon the earth, warming our hearts far more than our bodies, fostering virtue and cauterizing vice.

O you, whoever you are, who feel that in the tidal wave of this world you are nearer to being tossed about among the squalls and gales than treading on dry land, if you do not want to founder in this tempest, do not avert your eyes from the brightness of this star. When the wind of temptation blows up within you, when you strike upon the rock of tribulation, gaze up at this star, call out to Mary. Whether you are being tossed about by the waves of pride or ambition or

⁵ Magnificat – Homilies in Praise of the Virgin Mary – Cistercian Fathers Series #18 – Cistercian Publications – Kalamazoo, MI – 1979 – p 30

slander or jealousy, gaze up at this star, call out to Mary. When rage or greed or fleshly desires are battering the skiff of your soul, gaze up at Mary. When the immensity of your sins weighs you down and you are bewildered by the loathsomeness of your conscience, when the terrifying thought of judgment appalls you and you begin to founder in the gulf of sadness and despair, think of Mary. In dangers, in hardships, in every doubt, think of Mary, call out to Mary. Keep her in your mouth, keep her in your heart. Follow the example of her life and you will obtain the favor of her prayer. Following her you will never go astray. Asking her help, you will never despair. Keeping her in your thoughts, you will never wander away. With your hand in hers, you will not be afraid. With her leading you, you will never tire. Her kindness will see you through to the end. Then you will know by your own experience how true it is that “the Virgin’s name was Mary”.

END OF READINGS