

SUN 11/04/18

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by St Francis de Sales [1](#)

Because God created us in his own image and likeness, he ordained that our love for one another should be in the image and likeness of the love we owe him, our God. He said: *You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as yourself.*

What is our reason for loving God? God Himself is the reason we love him; we love him because he is the supreme and infinite goodness. What is our reason for loving ourselves? Surely because we are the image and likeness of God. And since all men and women possess this same dignity we love them as ourselves, that is, as holy and living images of the Godhead. It is as such that we belong to God through a kinship so close and a dependence so lovable that he does not hesitate to call himself our Father, and to name us his children. It is as such that we are capable of being united with him in the fruition of his sovereign goodness and joy. It is as such that we receive his grace and that our spirits are associated with his most Holy Spirit and rendered, in a sense, *sharers in the divine nature*.

So it is then that the same charity produces together acts of the love of God and of our neighbor. As Jacob saw that the same ladder touching heaven and earth was used by the angels both for ascending and descending, so we can be sure that the same charity cherishes both God and neighbor, raising us even to spiritual union with God, and bringing us back to loving companionship with our neighbors. It must always be understood, however, that we love our neighbors for this reason, that they are made in the image and likeness of God, created to communicate in his goodness, share in his grace, and rejoice in his glory.

To have a Christian love for our neighbors is to love God in them, or them in God; it is to cherish God alone for his own sake, and his creatures for love of Him. When we look upon our neighbors, created in the image and likeness of God, should we not say to each other: "Look at these people he has made – are they not like their maker?" Should we not be drawn irresistibly toward them, embrace them, and be moved to tears for love of them? Should we not call down upon them a hundred blessings? And why? For love of them? No indeed, since we cannot be sure whether, of themselves, they are worthy of love or hate. Then why? For love of God, who created them in his own image and likeness, and so capable of sharing in his goodness, grace, and glory; for love of God, I say, unto whom they exist, from whom they exist, through whom they exist, in whom they exist, for whom they exist, and whom they resemble in a very special manner.

That is why divine love not only repeatedly commands us to love our neighbors, but also produces this love and pours it out into our hearts, since they bear its own image and likeness; for just as we are the image of God, so our holy love for one another is the true image of our heavenly love for God.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – 1993 – pg 130

MON

11.05.18

A Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah by St Leo the Great ¹

But the majesty of the Son of God, in which he is equal with the Father in his garb of a slave's humility, feared no diminution, required no augmentation. And the very effect of his mercy, which he expended on the restitution of humanity, he was able to bring about solely by the power of his Godhead, thus rescuing the creature that was made in the image of God from the yoke of his cruel oppressor. But because the devil had not shown himself so violent in his attack on the first man as to bring him over to his side without the consent of his free will, the voluntary sin and hostile desires of humanity had to be destroyed in such a way that the standard of justice should not stand in the way of the gift of grace. And therefore in the general ruin of the entire human race there was but one remedy on the secret of the divine plan which could help the fallen, and that was that one of the sons of Adam should be born free and innocent of the original transgression, to prevail for the rest both by his example and his merits. Still further, because this was not permitted by natural generation, and because there could be no offspring from our faulty stock without seed, of which the Scripture says, "Who can make a clean thing conceived of an unclean seed? Is it not you who are alone?" David's Lord was made David's son, and sprang from the fruit of the promised branch – One without fault, the twofold nature coming together into one Person, that by one and the same conception and birth might spring our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom was present both true Godhead for the performance of mighty works and the true humanity, for the endurance of sufferings.

¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. – vol. XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2009 - pg 228

TUES 11.06.18

A Commentary on the Prophecies of Jeremiah from the Ancient Christian Commentaries ²

Theodoret of Cyr writes: We see the fulfillment of this prophecy. When the new covenant was given, in keeping with the divine promise, the priesthood was also given according to the order of Melchizedek, and those to whom it was promised offer the spiritual sacrifice to God continually. Then he says, as it is impossible for day to become night, so it is impossible for the Davidic monarchy to be destroyed. The fulfillment of this prophecy is also clear: Christ, who is of David according to the flesh, does not occupy the throne here below. He does, however, govern all things as he sits next to the Father. This is precisely what he also says about the priests and the Levites, noting that their line will be compared with the host of heaven and the sand of the sea. The facts confirm what is said: the whole land and sea are full of high priests and the deacons performing the liturgy of the Levites.

Likewise Cassiodorus says: “But the counsel of the Lord stands forever. The thoughts of his heart are for all time.” Just as he said that the debased plans of the people are to be made vain, so now he says that the dispositions of the Lord remain forever. While the sinner and the mortal person experience transient things, the eternal Lord established what will never be blameworthy. As Isaiah says, “All my counsel shall be enduring and all that I have planned I shall achieve.” Jeremiah too says the same thing: “If my covenant were not under guard day and night, I should not have issued the laws of heaven and earth.”

² Ancient Christian Commentaries – Old Testament – vol. XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL – 2009 – pg 228

WED

11.04.18

The Divine Call – from a book by Hans Urs von Balthasar ³

Christian revelation is primarily a revelation of hearing, not of seeing. Although the image of seeing is not excluded – for “we see now through a mirror in an obscure manner” (I Cor 13:12); wisdom, when it appears, is the “mirror ... and image” of the divine goodness (Wis 7:26); and Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) so that, in seeing him, we also see the Father (Jn 14:9) – nevertheless the comparison with hearing is the dominant one in revelation: the Second Person is heard primarily as “Word” (Jn 1:1) and faith in him comes by hearing (Rom 10:17). The hearing of the Word is by no means a temporary substitute for the seeing that is wanting to us here below. On the contrary, it is the lasting proof that God never is and never will be a mere “object” of knowledge to us, but is rather the infinitely sovereign majesty of a Trinity of Persons that makes itself known in whatever way and to whomever it wills. That God speaks to us in his personal word is a greater grace than that we are allowed to see him: That we are deemed worthy of his word is the grace of graces that makes us partners in a divine, even Trinitarian, conversation. That the word of God is spoken to us is the highest revelation and honor the personal God can bestow upon us, for it presumes that God considers us capable of understanding his word through the gift of his grace and of possessing the Spirit who “searches all things, even the deep things of God, that we may know all things that have been given us by God” (I Cor 2:10,12). So tremendous is this grace that the creature thus addressed by God must forget its own wishes and desires, even its longing for “eternal happiness” and for the “vision of God” so that, trembling in the depths of its being, it may fall to the ground and hear his voice (cf. Acts 9:4) only to ask: “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10)

But one who has been thrown to the ground by the impact of this compelling voice is also “set upon his feet” by it. When God speaks, He wants a partner. He wants one who is erect, who, hearing his voice, is yet able to stand upon his feet and answer: “...I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of the one that spoke. And he said to me: Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak to you. And the Spirit entered into me after he spoke to me, and he set me upon my feet; and I heard him speaking to me...” (Ezek 2:1-2). When God speaks personally, he wants to be understood personally; when he utters his personal word into the world, he wants that word to be returned to him, not as a dead echo, but as a personal response from his creature in an exchange that is

³ The Christian State of Life – Hans Urs von Balthasar – Ignatius Press – San Francisco – 1983 – pg 393

genuinely a dialogue even though it can be conducted only in the unity of the divine Word that mediates between the Father and us. But just as that divine Word proceeds from the Father, yet is not the Father, but only declares the Father, so the creature can give back to the Father this word it has received by uttering itself in it – or better, by letting itself be uttered by it.

THUR 11.08.18

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

The Lord clearly shows all that there is one King and Lord, the father of all, of whom he had previously said: “Neither will you swear by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.” He had from the beginning prepared the marriage of his Son and used, with the utmost kindness, to call, by the instrumentality of his servants, the people of the former dispensation to the wedding feast. When they would not obey, he still invited them by sending other servants. Yet even then they did not obey him but even stoned and killed those who brought them the message of invitation. He accordingly sent forth his armies and destroyed them and burnt down their city. But he called together from all the highways, that is, from all nations, guests to the marriage feast of his Son, as also he says by Jeremiah: “I have sent also to you my servants the prophets to say, “Return now everyone from his evil ways and amend your doings.” And again he says by the same prophet: “I have also sent to you my servants the prophets throughout the day and before the light. Yet they did not obey me or incline their ears to me. And you shall speak this word to them: This is a people who does not obey the voice of the Lord or receive correction. Faith has perished from their mouth. ”The Lord, therefore, who has called us everywhere by the apostles. is he who called those of old everywhere by the prophets, as appears by the words of the Lord. Although they preached to various nations, the prophets were not from one God and the apostles from another, but, proceeding from one and the same, some of hem announced the Lord, others preached the Father. Others again foretold the advent of the Son of God, while yet others declared him as already present to those who were then far off.

⁴ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – O.T. – vol XII – InterVarsity Press – Downers Grove, IL. – 2009 – pg 230

FRI 11.09.2018

A reading about the origins of the Basilica of Saint John the Baptist, commonly known as the Lateran. 1

The blessed Pope Sylvester I instituted the rites which the Roman Church observes in consecrating churches and altars. For although from the ages of the apostles places had been dedicated to God where assemblies were held every Sabbath, yet those places had not been consecrated by a solemn rite before this. Up to the time of Sylvester an altar was not erected under title, which, anointed with chrism, symbolizes our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Altar, our Victim, our Priest.

But when the Emperor Constantine obtained health and salvation through the sacrament of Baptism, then for the first time, by an edict published by him, the Christians throughout the world were permitted to build churches; he himself encouraged this holy building by his own example, as well as by this edict. For in his own Lateran palace he dedicated a church to the Savior and founded adjacent to it a Basilica, under the tile of St. John the Baptist, on the very spot where he had been baptized by St. Sylvester and cleansed from the leprosy of unbelief. This basilica the same Pope consecrated on November 9, and the memory of this consecration is celebrated today, when, for the first time, a church was publicly consecrated at Rome, and there appeared to the Roman people an image of the Savior depicted on the wall.

Although later on St. Sylvester decreed that from that time forward all altars should be built of stone, yet the altar of the Lateran Basilica was built of wood. This is not surprising. For since, from St. Peter down to Sylvester, because of persecutions, the Pontiffs could not dwell in any fixed abode, they offered the Holy Sacrifice [of the Mass] wherever necessity compelled them, whether in crypts or in cemeteries, or in the homes of the faithful, upon a wooden altar which was hollow like a chest.

When this altar had been placed in the first church, the Lateran, St. Sylvester decreed that from that time on, no one except the Roman Pontiff should

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adapted from *The Lessons of the Temporal Cycle and the Principal feasts of the Sanctoral Cycle According to the Monastic Breviary*, compiled and adapted for the Office of the Brothers of St. Meinrad's Abbey, St. Meinrad, IN, 1943, pp. 508-509.

celebrate Mass upon it, in honor of the Prince of the Apostles and of the rest of the Popes who had been accustomed to use it. This same church, having been destroyed by fires, pillaging, and earthquakes, and repaired by the laborious effort of the Supreme Pontiffs, was afterwards rebuilt anew. Pope Benedict XIII, a Dominican, consecrated it on April 28, 1726, by a solemn rite.

SAT 11.10.2018

A Reading about the Incarnation of the Son of God, from a letter of St leo the Great.⁵

Although the Lord Jesus Christ is one and there is really one and the same person in Him, composed of true divinity and true humanity, the exaltation with which God exalted Him (as the Teacher of the Gentiles says) and gave to Him a name superior to every other name--this exaltation, as we know, took place in that same nature which needed enrichment by the increase of so great a glorification. Indeed, in His nature as God the Son was equal to the Father; and there was no distinction of essence between the Father and the Only-begotten, no difference in majesty; and through the mystery of the Incarnation the Word did not lose anything which the Father might restore to Him as a gift. But the servile form through which the non-sentient God fulfilled the mystery of great and fatherly concern, is human lowliness, which was carried up to the glory of divine power. The divinity and humanity were bound together in so great a unity from the very time of conception by the Virgin that divine acts were not done without the man and human acts were not done without God. For that reason, just as the lord of Majesty is said to have been crucified, so He who from all eternity is equal to the Father is said to have been exalted. For, since the unity of person remains inseparable, He is one and the same--wholly the Son of Man because of the flesh, and wholly the Son of God because of the divinity He has in common with the Father. Hence, whatever Christ received in time He received in his humanity, on which are bestowed the things it did not have. As regards the power of the Godhead, all that the Father has belongs also to the Son without distinction. According to His divine nature, *as the Father has life in himself, even so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself.* But in His servile state,

⁵Letter 165. Trans. "Fathers of the Church" # 34. NY 1957, pp 270-271.

His soul is sad even unto death. As the Apostle teaches, he is at once both poor and rich: *rich* because, as the Evangelist says: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God: and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing.* But he was *poor* because on our account *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*