

NT-LK04

12/23/18

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by Guerric of Igny [1](#)

Our King and Savior is coming; let us go to meet him! *Good news from a far country*, in the words of Solomon, *is like cold water to a thirsty soul*; and to announce the coming of our Savior and the reconciliation of the world, together with the good things of the life to come, is to bring good news indeed. *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good tidings and publish peace!* Such messengers truly bear a refreshing draught to the soul that thirsts for God; with their news of the Savior's coming, they joyfully draw and offer us water from the springs of salvation. In the words and spirit of Elizabeth, the soul responds to the message, whether it be of Isaiah or his fellow-prophets: *Why is this granted to me, that my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, my spirit leapt for joy within me in eager longing to run ahead to meet my Lord and Savior.*

Let us too arise with joy and run in spirit to meet our Savior. Hailing him from afar, let us worship him, saying: *Come, Lord, save me and I shall be saved!* Come and *show us your face, and we shall all be saved. We have been waiting for you; be our help in time of trouble.* This is how the prophets and saints of old ran to meet the Messiah, filled with intense desire to see with their eyes, if possible, what they already saw in spirit.

We must look forward to the day, so soon to come, on which we celebrate the anniversary of Christ's birth. Scripture itself insists on the joy which must fill us – a joy which will lift our spirit out of itself in longing for his coming, impatient of delay as it strains forward to see even now what the future holds in store.

I believe that the many texts of scripture which urge us to go out to meet him speak of Christ's first coming as well as his second. This may raise a question in your mind. Surely, however, we are to understand that as our bodies will rise up rejoicing at his second coming, so our hearts must run forward in joy to greet his first.

Between these two comings of his, the Lord frequently visits us individually in accordance with our merits and desires, forming us to the likeness of his first coming in the flesh, and preparing us for his return at the end of time. He comes to us now, to make sure that we do not lose the fruits of his first coming nor incur his wrath at his second. His purpose now is to convert our pride into the humility which he showed when he first came, so that he may refashion our lowly bodies into the likeness of that glorious body which he will manifest when he comes again. –

Grace accompanied his first coming, glory will surround his last; this intermediate coming is a combination of both, enabling us to experience in the consolations of his

grace a sort of foretaste of his glory. Blessed are those whose burning love has gained for them such a privilege!

And so, my brothers, though we have not yet experienced this wonderful consolation, we are encouraged by firm faith and a pure conscience to wait patiently for the Lord to come. In joy and confidence let us say with St. Paul: *I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am confident of his power to guard what has been put into my charge until the day when our great God and Savior Jesus Christ comes in glory.* May he be praised for ever and ever. Amen

1Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – New York – 1994 – pg 16 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon for Advent

**Holy Night**, by Karl Rahner<sup>1</sup>

Why do we call the feast we are keeping tonight a "sacred night"? Night because a beginning, holy night because a blessed and unconquerable beginning; of such a beginning we would have to say: holy night, sacred night. And so the church sings "Silent night, holy night." Everywhere in the world these words are sung for this feast. With a sacred right. For this hour is the holy and sacred night. Faith tells the Christians: that was the beginning. There God himself came gently forth from the terrifying radiance in which he dwells as God and Lord, and came to us; he quietly entered the poor dwelling of our earthly existence and was found as a man; he began where we begin, quite poor, vulnerable, quite childlike and gentle, quite helpless. He who is infinite, distant future which of ourselves we never reach because it seems to retreat farther and farther away as we hurry towards it on the hard roads of life, he himself has approached us, arrived among us, because otherwise we should never have found our way to him. He has accompanied us on our way to him so that this may find a blessed end, because the very end itself has become our beginning. God is near; his eternal word of mercy is where we are; it is a pilgrim on our paths, experiences our joy and our distress, lives our life and dies our death. He has brought his eternal life quietly and gently into this world and its death. He has redeemed us, for he shared our lot. He made our beginning his own, followed the path of our destiny and so opened it up into the infinite expanses of God. And because he accepted us irrevocably, because God's Word will never cease to be human, this beginning which is ours and his is a beginning of indestructible promises, and his silent beginning by night is a holy and sacred night. It is a holy night. The eternal future has entered our time. Its radiance still dazzles us, so that we think it is night. But at all events it is a blessed night, a night in which there is already warmth and light, which is beautiful, welcoming and secure by reason of the eternal day which it bears hidden within it. It is a silent, holy night for us, however, only if we admit the holy silence of this night into our inner selves, only if our heart too keeps watch in solitude. It can do so easily. For such solitude and quiet is not hard. For of course we are solitary. There exists in our heart an interior land where we are alone, to which no one finds his way but God. This innermost, unfrequented chamber of our heart is really there-the only question is

whether we ourselves avoid it foolishly out of guilty fear, because no one and no familiar things of this earth can accompany us if we enter it. The silent and solitary soul sings here to the God of the heart its quietest and most ardent song. And it can have confidence that he hears it. For this song no longer has to seek a beloved God beyond the stars in that inaccessible light in which he dwells and which makes him invisible to all. Because of Christmas, because the Word was made flesh, God is near and the quietest word in the stillest room of the heart, the word of love, comes to his ear and his heart. And those who have entered into themselves even when it is night, hear in this nocturnal quiet in the depth of the heart God's gentle word of love. One must be calm, not afraid of the night, hold one's peace. Otherwise we hear nothing. Let us enter quietly and shut the door behind us. Let us listen to the unutterable melody which sounds in the silence of that night. For the ultimate is only spoken in the silence of the night, now that in our night of life, through the gracious coming of the Word, there has come to be Christmas, holy night, silent night.

1Every Day Faith, Karl Rahner. Herder and Herder, 1968, pp. 32 ff.

**On being guardians of the Holy One of God; a reading from a homily by Karl Rahner.<sup>1</sup>**

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[*This is how Jesus Christ came to be born, it reads in today's Gospel. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. (Mt 1.18-24)*]

The angel does not merely tell Joseph that Mary has conceived her child through the power of God — though this in fact, which Joseph already knew from Mary, is confirmed by the apparition — but has as his principal message: *Take Mary as your wife.* Be a father to this child, heaven is saying, fulfill the duties of a father toward this child which heaven has sent to your bride. Protect, watch over, love, shield, take care of this child. This duty is laid on Joseph by God himself. We can say, therefore, that he is the foster-father and guardian of the child, not just because his wedded bride has conceived a child from heaven, but because God himself wished him to take the place of a father to the Son of God who has come to save the world.

This is why Joseph is told to give a name to the child; this is why Joseph is addressed as *Son of David* since Jesus himself will be known and acknowledged as the son of David precisely because his earthly father is a son of David stemming from that royal lineage. Thus from our reading of this text we can see heaven entrusting to the care of Joseph the savior of the world. Through this message from above Joseph is drawn into the great, public, official story of salvation. He acts no longer in the purely private capacity of bridegroom and later husband of Mary, but plays an official role in the salvation story. He is the guardian and protector of the Son of God, directly appointed to that office, and not just drifting into this relationship with the divine child through the accident of his betrothal to Mary.

We too are often called to be guardians of the Holy One in ourselves, in our lives, in our work. At first sight, our everyday affairs may seem to have nothing to do with the history of the kingdom of God and the salvation of the world. We may seem to be concerned with nothing more than the tissue of relationships that makes up our lives, our friendships, our work. But even here we are being called upon to be the guardians of something holy, something great, God's grace in us and about us. Is there anyone who has not some of God's children entrusted to his care: in the home, in the school, in the neighborhood? For us no angel from heaven appears, no dream apparition bids us: Take this child to yourself. And yet it seems as though through purely earthly incidents we are made responsible for what is heavenly and divine, for God's grace in our own hearts and in our earthly surroundings. In all these the Son of God who became man continues his life, and we are all asked whether the task of guarding this son of God whom we meet in others will find us as true as Joseph, of whom it is said: He was faithful, he took the child and his mother to himself, he spent his whole life guarding the child so that it might become in truth the savior and the life of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> *Biblical Homilies*, pp. 11-12.

**12/26/18**

**A Reading from the Third Sermon of St Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspe.<sup>1</sup>**

Yesterday we celebrated the birth in time of our eternal king; today we celebrate the triumphant suffering of a soldier. For yesterday our king, nobly arrayed in flesh, proceeding from the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary, deigned to visit this world; today a soldier, leaving the confines of the body, made his way in triumph to heaven.

Our king, though he is the Most High, for our sake came in humility; yet he could not come empty-handed. It was indeed a generous gift that he brought for us, one by which he not only abundantly enriched us but gave us the strength to do battle and never be vanquished. What he brought was the gift of love, which was to lead us to become sharers in the godhead. He brought it only to expend it, without in any way diminishing his own store; while turning the poverty of his followers into riches he remained himself, as by a miracle, fully possessed of his own inexhaustible treasury.

Love then, the same love that brought Christ down from heaven to earth, raised Stephen from earth to heaven; the same love shown first in the king was reproduced in its splendor in the warrior.

And so Stephen, in order to earn his right to the crown his name signifies, armed himself with love, and by that same love won every battle. It was love of God that made him yield not an inch, love of his neighbor that led him to intercede for those who stoned him. It was through love that he was able to expose those in error so that they might change their ways; through love that he prayed for those who stoned him so that they should not be punished. Trusting only in love, he overcame Saul's cruel rage, and the very man who had been his persecutor on earth he won as his companion in heaven. That same holy and untiring love longed to win over by prayer those whom it could not convert by persuasion....

Love is therefore the source and origin of every good, an unrivalled protection, the road that leads to heaven. Those who walk in love can be neither lost nor afraid; love is the guide and protector, and brings them to the end of their journey. For this reason, beloved, since Christ has set up a stairway of love by which every Christian can mount up to heaven, keep a firm hold on love alone; love one another, and by growing in love climb together up to heaven.

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<sup>1</sup>Sermon 3,1-3,5-6: CCL 91A, 905-909. cf. *A Word in Season*, I (1st series) p132f.

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12/27/18

From a Sermon by Blessed John Henry Newman <sup>1</sup>

Saint John the apostle and evangelist is chiefly and most familiarly known to us as *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. He was one of the three or four who always attended our blessed Lord, and had the privilege of the most intimate intercourse with him; and, more favored than Peter, James and Andrew, he was his bosom friend.

Much might be said of this remarkable circumstance. I say *remarkable*, because it might be supposed that the Son of God Most High, could not have loved one man more than another; or again, if so, that he would not have had only one friend, but, as being all-holy, he would have loved all more or less, in proportion to their holiness. Yet we find our Savior had a private friend; and this shows us, first, how entirely he was a man, as much as any of us, in his wants and feelings; and next, that there is nothing contrary to the spirit of the gospel, nothing inconsistent with the fullness of Christian love, in having our affections directed in a special way towards certain objects. Towards those whom the circumstances of our past life, or some peculiarities of character, have endeared to us.

There have been those before now, who have supposed Christian love was so diffusive as not to admit of concentration upon individuals; so that we ought to love everyone equally. Now I shall here maintain, in opposition to such notions of Christian love, and with our Savior's pattern before me, that the best preparation for loving the world at large, and loving it duly and wisely, is to cultivate an intimate friendship and affection towards those who are immediately about us. The real love of humans *must* depend on practice, and therefore must begin by exercising itself on our friends around us; otherwise it will have no existence. By trying to love our relations and friends, by submitting to their wishes, though contrary to our own, by bearing with their infirmities, by overcoming their occasional waywardness by kindness, by dwelling on their excellences, and trying to copy them, thus it is that we form in our hearts that root of charity, which, though small at first, may, like the mustard seed, at last even overshadow the earth.

We know that Saint John is celebrated for his declarations about Christian love. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us. God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.* Now, did he begin with some vast effort at loving on a large scale? No, he had the unspeakable privilege of being the friend of Christ. Thus he was taught to love others; first his affection was concentrated, then it was expanded. Next he had the solemn and comfortable charge of tending our Lord's mother, the Blessed Virgin, after his departure. Do we not discern here the secret sources of his special love of the brethren? Could he who first was favored with his Savior's

affection, then trusted with a son's office towards his mother, could he be other than a memorial and pattern (as far as mortals can be). Of love, deep. Contemplative, fervent, unruffled, unbounded?

And now I have suggested to you a subject of thought for today's festival – and surely a very practical subject, when we consider how large a portion of our duties lies at home. Should God call upon us to preach to the world, surely we must obey his call; but at present, let us do what lies before us, *Little children, let us love one another.*



**A reading about the three kinds of martyrdom,  
from a sermon by St. Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>2</sup>**

*Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord: the Lord is God, and he had shone upon us.*

Blessed be his glorious name for he is holy. It was not in vain that Holiness Itself was born of the Virgin Mary since it has spread both the name and the grace of sanctity so widely. Unquestionably, it is because of this grace that Stephen is holy, John is holy and the young Innocents are holy. It is therefore by a profitable disposition that these three feasts accompany the birth of our Lord, not only in order that our devotion may be kept alive by so many feasts, but also in order that we should see the fruit of the birth of our Lord more clearly in them as an effect and a consequence of the nativity. We can notice in these three feasts, three different types of sanctity as it were; and I do not think it possible that any other fourth type can be found outside of these three. In blessed Stephen we have both the will and the act of martyrdom; in blessed John we have the will only; in the Holy Innocents we have the act only. All of these drank the chalice of salvation, either in the body and the spirit, or in the spirit alone or in the body alone. *My chalice indeed you shall drink*, said the Lord to James and John, and undoubtedly he was speaking of the chalice of his passion. And when he said to Peter, *Follow me*, he was clearly inviting him to imitate his passion: *Peter, turning about, saw that disciple, whom Jesus loved, following*, not so much with his bodily feet as with the affection of his fervent devotion. Therefore John also drank the chalice of salvation and like Peter followed the Lord, although not like Peter in every way. For that he should remain like this and not follow his Master in a corporal passion was the divine will, as he himself says: *I wish him to remain till I come*. As if he had said: *he indeed wishes to follow me but I wish him to remain*.

Who can be in doubt as to whether the Holy Innocents received the martyr=s crown? Only those who do not believe that those who are re-born in Christ are numbered among the sons of adoption, doubt that the children who were slain for Christ have been crowned among the martyrs. For how could that Child who was born for us, not against us, permit that those children, born at the same time as himself, should be killed, when he could prevent it by one act of his will, unless he had something better prepared for them? Therefore we may presume that the martyrdom they underwent for him was sufficient for their sanctification C just as, for the other infants of that time, circumcision was sufficient for salvation without

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<sup>2</sup> AFor the Feast of the Holy Innocents@, from *St. Bernard: The Nativity*; Chicago - Dublin - London 1959, pp. 95-97.

any use of their own will, and just as baptism is sufficient nowadays. If you ask what were their merits in the eyes of God that they should be crowned, ask also what was their crime in the eyes of Herod that they should be killed. And do you think that Herod=s wickedness is greater than Christ=s love, that the former should be able to kill such innocents and Christ should not be able to crown the children who were killed for his sake?

We may say then that Stephen was a martyr in the eyes of other people, whose voluntary suffering was shown especially by this: that at the very moment of his death, he showed more solicitude for his persecutors than for himself, and the internal affections of compassion overcame the sense of bodily suffering in him, so that he wept more for their crime than for his own wounds. We may say that John was a martyr in the eyes of the angels, to whom as spiritual creatures the spiritual signs of his devotion were more clearly evident. But the Holy Innocents are most especially Your martyrs, Lord, because in them, in whom neither humans nor angels found any merit, You have clearly manifested the prerogatives of Your grace. *Out of the mouth of infants and babes you have perfected praise*, and the angels declare *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to all those of good will*. That indeed was great praise, but I dare to affirm that it was not yet perfect until the coming of him who said: *Suffer the little children and do not forbid them to come to me; for the kingdom of heaven is theirs*; and [is theirs] until peace comes to all people B even without the use of their will B in the Sacrament of God=s mercy.

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