

## A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by Origen of Alexandria <sup>1</sup>

*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone sang his praises.*

When you read about Jesus teaching in the synagogues of Galilee and everyone there praising him, take care not to regard those people as uniquely privileged, and yourselves as deprived of his teaching. If Scripture is true, it was not only to the Jewish congregations of his own generation that our Lord spoke. He still speaks to us assembled here today – and not only to us, but to other congregations also. Throughout the world Jesus looks for instruments through which he can continue his teaching. Pray that I may be one of them, and that he may find me ready to sing his praises.

*Then Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as was his custom. When he stood up to read they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written, “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me.”*

It was no coincidence, but in accordance with the plan of divine providence, that Jesus unrolled the scroll and found in it this chapter prophesying about himself. Since it is written: *Not a single sparrow will fall to the ground without your Father’s permission*, and the apostles were told that every hair on their heads had been counted, we can be sure it was not by chance that the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was produced rather than some other and this precise passage was found which speaks of the mystery of Christ: *The Spirit of the Lord has been given me, for he has anointed me.*

When Jesus had read this prophecy, *he rolled up the scroll, handed it to the assistant and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed upon him.*

Here too in this synagogue, that is, in this present assembly, you can at this very moment fix your eyes upon your Savior if you wish. Whenever you direct your inward gaze toward wisdom and truth and the contemplation of God’s only Son, then your eyes are fixed upon Jesus. Blessed was that congregation of which the gospel says: *All eyes in the synagogue were fixed upon him!* How I long for my own assembly to deserve the same testimony, for all of you, catechumens as well as the faithful, women, men and children,

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<sup>1</sup> Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – 1994 – pg 74

to have your eyes, not those of the body but of the soul, turned toward Jesus! When you look at Jesus your own faces will become radiant with his reflected glory, and you will be able to say: *The light of your face has shed its brightness upon us, O Lord!* To you be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

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01.28.2019

A reading about the contemplation of wisdom, by St. Thomas Aquinas.

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[In the book of Ecclesiasticus it says] *ARun ahead into your house and gather yourself there and play there and pursue your thoughts.* (Ecclus. 32.15-16)

The advantage which the study of wisdom has is that it is to a greater degree self-sufficient in pursuing its business. When we are engaged in outward activities we need many things to help us, but in the contemplation of wisdom we work all the more effectively, the more we dwell alone with ourselves. So, in the words cited above, the wise Man calls us back to ourselves: *ARun ahead into your own house,*≡ that is, be anxious to return from external things to your own mind, before anything else gets hold of it and any other anxiety distracts it. That is why it says in Wisdom 8.16, *AI will enter my house and rest with her,*≡ with wisdom, that is.

The first requirement, then for the contemplation of wisdom is that we should take complete possession of our minds before anything else does, so that we can fill the whole house with the contemplation of wisdom. But it is also necessary that we ourselves should be fully present there, concentrating in such a way that our aim is not diverted to other matters. Accordingly the text goes on, *AAnd gather yourself there,*≡ that is, draw together your whole intention. And when our interior house is entirely emptied like this and we are fully present there in our intention, the text tells us what we should do; *AAnd play there.*≡

There are two features of play which make it appropriate to compare the contemplation of wisdom to playing. First, we enjoy playing, and there is the greatest enjoyment of all to be had in the contemplation of wisdom. As Wisdom says in Ecclesiasticus 24.27, *AMy spirit is sweeter than honey.*≡

Secondly, playing has no purpose beyond itself; what we do in play is done for its own sake. And the same applies to the pleasure of wisdom. If we are enjoying thinking about the things we long for or the things we are proposing to do, this kind of enjoyment looks beyond itself to something else which we are eager to attain. - over -

If we fail to attain it or if there is a delay in attaining it, our pleasure is mingled with a proportionate distress. As it says in Proverbs 14.13, *ALaughter will be mixed with grief.*≡ But the contemplation of wisdom contains within itself the cause of its own enjoyment, and so it is not exposed to the kind of anxiety that goes with waiting for something which we lack. This is why it says in Wisdom 8.16, *AHer company is without bitterness*≡ (the company of wisdom, that is) *Aand there is no boredom in living with her.*≡

It is for this reason that divine Wisdom compares her enjoyment to playing in Proverbs 8.30, *AI enjoyed myself every single day, playing before him,*≡ each *Asingle day*≡ meaning the consideration of some different truth. So our text goes on, *APursue your thoughts,*≡ the thoughts, that is, by means of which we obtain knowledge of the truth.

01.29.19

**A reading about praying for our dead, from a sermon by Karl Rahner. <sup>2</sup>**

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Because we love our dead and we still love them we must be with them always. But are they also with us? Do they belong to this love and to the celebration of this love? They have departed, they are silent. No word from them reaches our ears; the gentle kindness of their love no longer fills our heart. How quiet the dead are, how dead they are! Do they want us to forget them, as we forget a casual acquaintance on a trip, with whom we exchanged a few insignificant words? If life is not taken away from those who depart this life in God's love, but changed into eternal, measureless, superabundant life, why then should it seem to us that they no longer exist? Is the inaccessible light of God into which they have entered so faint that it cannot penetrate to us down here? Does even their love (and not only their bodies) have to abandon us in order to live with God in his light? Does their silence imitate the silence of their God, to whose home they have gone?

That is the way it is. For God is silent just like the dead. For us to celebrate his feasts in our hearts, this silent God must certainly be with us, even though he seems so distant and so silent. We certainly must love him, too, as we love our dead, the distant and silent dead, who have entered into the night. Does he not give to our love an intelligible answer when we call him to the feast of the heart, and ask him for a sign that his love exists for us and is present to us? And that is why we cannot lament the silence of the dead, for their silence is only an echo of God's silence. But if we keep silent and meek, if we listen to this silence of God's, then we begin to grasp with a comprehension that exceeds our own power to evoke or even to understand why both God and the dead are so silent. Then it dawns on us that they are near us precisely when we remember and pray for them. God's silence is the boundless sphere where alone our love can produce its act of faith in his love. He has veiled his love in the stillness of his silence so that our love might reveal itself in faith. God has apparently forsaken us so that we can find him. For if his presence in our midst were obvious, in our search for him we would find only ourselves. We must, however, go out from ourselves, if we are to find him where he is really himself. Because his love is infinite, it can dwell openly and radiantly only in his own infinity; and because he wants to show us his infinite love, he has hidden it from us in our finiteness, whence he calls out to us. Our faith in him is nothing but the dark road in the night between the deserted house of our life with its puny, dimly lit rooms, and the blinding light of his eternal life. His silence in this world is nothing but the earthly appearance of the eternal word of his love.

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<sup>2</sup> From *The Eternal Year*, Helicon Press, 1964, pp. 140-141.

**OT-GEN46**  
**01.30.19**

**Homilies on Genesis by St John Chrysostom <sup>1</sup>**

“Now Adam had intercourse with his wife; she conceived, bore a son and gave him the name Seth, saying: 'God has raised up for me another child in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.'” Notice the mother, how through the name of the child she bore she ensures a constant reminder of that evil deed, and so that future generations might be in a position to know of the crime committed by Cain, she says: “in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.’” The comment of a grieving spirit, upset at the memory of what had happened, and while thankful for her new child, yet by the name she gave it erecting a monument, as it were, to her other son. After all, it was no chance sorrow he brought to his parents in raising his hand against his brother and stretching him on the ground before their eyes, a lifeless corpse, whom they had bred and cherished. I mean, if Adam received the sentence, “Dust you are, and to dust you are to return”, and “On the day you eat from it you will surely die, still the meaning of the sentence lay in the words alone for the time being and he had no awareness up to that time of what death looked like. Cain, on the contrary, took the initiative against his brother out of hatred, let loose against Abel the rancor that had been gnawing at his vitals, and thus provided his parents with a dreadful spectacle to contemplate. For this reason, assuredly, the mother, who had scarcely lifted her head and was able only at this late stage to find some consolation for that unbearable grief in the birth of a son, offered thanks to the Lord and immortalized the crime of fratricide, thus also inflicting on him the severest of punishments by ensuring the unfailing remembrance of what had been done by him.

Do you see what a terrible evil sin is? How it brings those who commit it into shame and disgrace? Do you see how through it he was rendered bereft of grace from above and became an object of mockery for all to see? Do you see how even to his parents, committed though they were by nature itself to loving their children, he was transformed into an object of revulsion because of that evil deed? Let us accordingly, I beseech you, shun the sin that brings such evils upon us, and let us choose virtue so that we may win favor from on high and avoid punishment.

I ask you therefore that if you want to gain some little advantage from coming here each day and achieve the correction of the passions that handicap you, you will ascend little by little to the very pinnacle of virtue. You see, we will not cease addressing you each day and making your ears ring with talk of the noblest way of life so that you may eradicate those deadly passions – I mean anger, envy and jealousy. After all, once these have been removed, it will be easier for the obsession with material goods to find a remedy; and once the obsession with material goods has in turn ceased, those improper thoughts and shameful desires will with greater security be suppressed. Avarice, you see, is the root of all evils; so if we chop out the root and pull it up from the very bottom, it will be easier for us to get the better of the branches.

<sup>1</sup>The Fathers of the Church – vol. 82 – St John Chrysostom – Homilies on Genesis – 18-45 – Catholic University of America Press – Washington DC – 1990 – pg44 ff

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01.31.2019

### **A reading about St. John Bosco, by Archbishop L. Mathias. <sup>1</sup>**

Don Bosco has struck the imagination of all who have known him and his work. There is no doubt that he was one of the most wonderful of men, and even in that galaxy of great names which is the catalogue of Saints, he occupies a place apart.

[Paul Claudel said that “In the Church there are some who made a profession of sanctity...; who, from the very first, had the Calendar of Saints as a goal. Don Bosco had no time for this, and we can readily believe that if he became a saint it was not his fault.”]

Genius as well as Saint, it is often difficult to see where the one ends and the other begins. Simple as a child and mostly to be found in the dust and clamor of a playground crowded with children, he plays also with miracles and prophecies, which he seems to make for fun. His speech is simple: so simple that children listen fascinated to his new kind of eloquence — an eloquence very different from that of the pulpit orators of the time. And his mind is so wise, that ministers, kings and popes listen to his advice.

A poor man, of poor parents, more millions passed through his hands than through those of many a banker. He spent them with the prodigality of an American playboy, when it was a question of the salvation of souls; but he was as tight with each cent as the peasants he came from, when it was a question of his person, or his comfort. He had the shrewdness of a captain of industry and a trust in God that made him undertake even the impossible when he saw it was for God's glory.

Above all, he was the most lovable of men. To know him was to love him, and often to be so fascinated as to be physically unable to leave him.

His chosen, or better, his God-given mission was education, and he is **the** educator of modern times. A man who could do with children what no man has ever done; he could attach to himself the little ruffians that roam the streets and make of them lovable, ideal young men.

Indeed, Don Bosco as a man, as a Saint, as an Educator occupies a place apart. [He had a tremendous love for God and for souls, and not much for anything else.] His motto was **“Give me souls, and take all the rest away.”**

<sup>1</sup>From the Preface to *Saint John Bosco*, by A. Auffray; Salesian House: Tirpattur, India, 1959.

**OT-GEN48**

**02.01.19**

### **Homilies on Genesis by St John Chrysostom <sup>1</sup>**

“Now Noe was six hundred years old when the deluge came upon the earth”. It was not idly that Scripture taught us the good man's age; instead, because Sacred Scripture had previously taught us that “Noe was five hundred years old”, and then recounted people's extreme tendency to wickedness and that their mind was firmly set on evil from their youth, accordingly God said: “My spirit is not to remain with these human beings on account of their being sinful”, giving them a premonition of the extremity of his anger. Then, so as to give them a sufficient opportunity to change direction and avoid experiencing his anger, he says, “Instead, they will have a life of a hundred and twenty years”. And far from being content with the promise of a hundred and twenty years, he orders the good man to build the ark so that the very sight of the ark may also provide them in turn with adequate reminder and that no one would be unaware of the magnitude of the punishment due to be inflicted. After all, that very fact that that good man who had reached the very pinnacle of virtue was displaying such earnestness in building the ark should have been sufficient to put fear and anxiety into everyone with sense and to persuade them to placate this so kind and loving God.

For this reason the text says: “Noe was six hundred years old when the deluge came upon the earth.” To this point we had learned that when the Lord's anger occurred and he made this forecast, Noe was five hundred years old. When, however, the deluge was brought upon them, he was six hundred years old, so that a hundred years had passed in the meantime, and yet they gained no benefit from those hundred years, despite the advantage given them of so much instruction from Noe's building the ark.

See also the Lord's loving kindness, how like a skillful physician he treated the disease in different ways: since their wounds were incurable, he provided them with such a lengthy period of time in his wish that they might come to their senses through the generous amount of time and he might be able to revoke the sentence of his anger. You see, it is always his fashion, concerned as he is for our salvation, to tell us ahead of time the punishments he is due to inflict, with the sole purpose in mind of not having to inflict them. If, of course, he had wanted to inflict them, he would not have told us; but he makes a point of giving us warning so that we may learn of it, be brought to our senses through fear, placate his anger and render his sentence null and void. Nothing, after all, so gladdens him as our conversion and our reverting from evil to virtue.

The fact too that he brought on the deluge for forty days and nights is a further wonderful sign of his loving kindness: his purpose in his great goodness was that at least some of them might come to their senses and escape that utter ruin, having before their eyes the annihilation of their peers and the destruction about to overwhelm them. You see, had it been his wish and command, he could have submerged everything in one downpour;

instead, out of fidelity to his characteristic love he arranged for a stay of so many days.

[1](#)The Fathers of the Church – vol. 82 – St John Chrysostom – Homilies on Genesis – 18-45 – Catholic University of America Press – Washington DC – 1990 – pg 115ff

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**The paschal significance of Jesus' presentation in the temple; a reading from the book *Sign of Contradiction* by St. John Paul II. <sup>1</sup>**

Forty days after the nativity the Church celebrates an event full of spiritual significance. On that day the Son of God, as a tiny child of poor parents, born in a rough stable in Bethlehem, was carried to the temple in Jerusalem. This was his own temple, the temple of the living God, but he came to it not as the Lord but as one under the law. For the poor the law prescribed that forty days after the birth of the firstborn two turtle-doves or two young pigeons must be offered in sacrifice, as a sign that the child was consecrated to the Lord.

The message which the Spirit of God allowed the old man Simeon to sense and express so wonderfully was implicitly in the event itself, in this first encounter between the Messiah and his temple. On seeing the child, Simeon begins to utter words that are not of human provenance. He prophesies, prompted by the Holy Spirit; he speaks with the voice of God, the God for whom the temple was built and who is its rightful master.

Simeon's words begin, in what the liturgy calls the Song, by bearing witness to the light, and in so doing they ante-date by thirty years the witness borne by John the Baptist. They end, on the other hand, by bearing witness to the cross, in which contradiction of Jesus, the Christ, is to find tangible expression. The cost of the cross was shared by the mother, whose soul — according to Simeon's words — was to be pierced by a sword, *so that the thoughts of many hearts may be laid bare*.

Chronologically the presentation of Jesus in the temple is linked with the nativity, but in its significance it belongs with the mystery of the pasch. It is the first of the events which clearly reveal the messianic status of the newborn child. With him are linked the fall and the rising of many in the old Israel and also the new. On him the future of humankind depends. It is he who is the true Lord of the ages to come. His reign begins when the temple sacrifice is offered in accordance with the law, and it attains full realization through the sacrifice on the cross, offered in accordance with an eternal plan of love.

<sup>1</sup>pp. 40-41; reprinted in *Meditations on the Sunday Gospels: Year A*; introduced and edited by John E. Rotelle, Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995, pp. 144-145.