

NT-LK07

02.10.19

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by St Augustine of Hippo ¹

While he was on the mountain with Christ the Lord in company with the two other disciples James and John, the blessed apostle Peter heard a voice from heaven saying: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.* The apostle remembered this and made it known in his letter. *We heard a voice coming from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain; and he added: so we have confirmation of what was prophesied. A voice came from heaven, and prophecy was confirmed.*

How great was Christ's courtesy! This Peter who spoke these words was once a fisherman, and in our day a public speaker deserves high praise if he is able to converse with a fisherman! Addressing the first Christians the apostle Paul says: *Brothers and sisters, remember what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise according to human standards; not many of you were influential or of noble birth. But God chose what the world regards as weak in order to disconcert the strong; God chose what the world regards as foolish in order to abash the wise; God chose what the world regards as common and contemptible, of no account whatever, in order to overthrow the existing order.*

If Christ has first chosen a man skilled in public speaking, such a man might well have said: "I have been chosen on account of my eloquence." If he had chosen a senator, the senator might have said: "I have been chosen because of my rank." If his first choice had been an emperor, the emperor surely might have said: "I have been chosen for the sake of the power I have at my disposal." Let these worthies keep quiet and defer to others; let them hold their peace for a while. I am not saying that they should be passed over or despised; I am simply asking all those who can find any grounds for pride in what they are to give way to others just a little.

Christ says: Give me this fisherman, this man without education or experience, this man to whom no senator would deign to speak, not even if he were buying fish. Yes, give me him; once I have taken possession of him it will be obvious that it is I who am at work in him. Although I mean to include senators, orators and emperors among my recruits, even when I have won over the senator I shall still be surer of the fisherman. The senator can always take pride in what he is; so can the orator and the emperor, but the fisherman can glory in nothing except Christ alone. Any of these other men may come and take lessons from me in the

importance of humility for salvation, but let the fisherman come first. He is the best person to win over an emperor.

Remember this fisherman, then. This holy, just, good, Christ-filled fisherman. In his nets cast throughout the world he has the task of catching this nation as well as others. So remember that claim of his: *We have confirmation of what was prophesied.*

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – 1994 – pg 78

02SN1101

02.11.19

From a Letter by St Marie Bernadette Soubirous¹

I had gone down one day with two other girls to the bank of the river Gave when suddenly I heard a kind of rustling sound. I turned my head toward the field by the side of the river but the trees seemed quite still and the noise was evidently not from them. Then I looked up and caught sight of the cave where I saw a lady wearing a lovely white dress with a bright belt. On top of each of her feet was a pale yellow rose, the same color as her rosary beads.

At this I rubbed my eyes, thinking I was seeing things, and I put my hands into the fold of my dress where my rosary was. I wanted to make the sign of the cross but for the life of me I couldn't manage it and my hand just fell down. Then the lady made the sign of the cross herself and at the second attempt I managed to do the same, though my hands were trembling. Then I began to say the rosary while the lady let her beads slip through her fingers, without moving her lips. When I stopped saying the Hail Mary, she immediately vanished.

I asked my two companions if they had noticed anything, but they said no. Of course they wanted to know what I was doing and I told them that I had seen a lady wearing a nice white dress, though I didn't know who she was. I told them not to say anything about it, and they said I was silly to have anything to do with it. I said they were wrong and I came back the next Sunday, feeling myself drawn to the place.

The third time I went the lady spoke to me and asked me to come every day for fifteen days. I said I would and then she said she wanted me to tell the priests to build a chapel there. She also told me to drink from the stream. I went to the Gave, the only stream I could see. Then she made me realize she was not speaking of the Gave and she indicated a little trickle of water close-by. When I got to it I could only find a few drops, mostly mud. I cupped my hands to catch some liquid without success and then I started to scrape the ground. I managed to find a few drops of water but only at the fourth attempt was there sufficient for any kind of drink. The lady then vanished and I went back home.

I went back each day for fifteen days and each time, except one Monday and one Friday, the lady appeared and told me to look for a stream and wash in it and to see that the priests build a chapel there. I must also pray, she said, for the conversion of sinners. I asked her many times what she meant by that, but she only smiled. Finally with outstretched hands and eyes looking up to heaven she told me she was the Immaculate Conception. During the fifteen days she told me three secrets but I was not to speak about them to anyone and so far I have not.

¹The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. II – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1976 – p 1673

02SN12

02.12.19

Blessed Humbeline, Sister of St. Bernard - from the Life of St Bernard¹

From earliest childhood Humbelina and Bernard had been drawn together by a special bond of affection and sympathy, due to identity of interests and tastes. After her marriage, forgetful of her mother's example and exhortations, she began to follow the fashions of the world. In 1117 she came to Clairvaux surrounded with all the splendor of dress and attendants that unlimited wealth could bestow, thinking, so it seems, that she was doing her brother's honor. Her brother Andrew, the porter, in announcing her arrival, did not omit to describe to his Abbot the pomp and ceremony that attended her. It grieved Bernard to hear that his beloved sister had become a worshipper at the shrine of vanity. He refused to see her himself, nor would he allow any of his brothers to see her, but told Andrew to tell her from him that with these worldly ornaments she was making herself the devil's instrument for the ruin of immortal souls. Andrew delivered the message, adding on his own: AWhy so much solicitude to embellish a body destined for worms and rotteness, while the soul that now animates it is burning in everlasting flames?@

Humbeline burst into tears, crying out: AI deserve it all because I am a sinner. Yet it is for such as I that Christ suffered on the Cross. Indeed it is because of my sinfulness that I seek counsel and encouragement from the saints. If my brother Bernard, who is the servant of God, despises my body, let him at least have pity on my soul. Let him come; let him command; and whatever he thinks proper to enjoin I am prepared to carry out.@

There was no resisting such an appeal. Bernard and his brothers hastened to meet her and to confirm her in these good dispositions. It was the holy Abbot's desire that she should enter religion; but as this was unlawful without her husband's consent, he recommended her to live as much as possible like a recluse in the world, shunning ostentation and all kinds of vanity, and devoting herself, after her mother's example, to the service of God and the poor. She promised to do so. Five years later, in 1122, having obtained after much resistance her husband's consent, she left the world altogether and entered the convent of Jully where Elizabeth, her sister-in-law was superioress. When the latter went forth about 1130 to found a new convent in the neighborhood of Dijon, Humbeline was appointed to succeed her. Under her direction the house flourished greatly; the noblest ladies of the land sought admission in such numbers that she was forced to make about a dozen new foundations. She rivaled Bernard himself in her love of the Cross. Of food and sleep she allowed herself much less than the minimum which nature demands; her clothes were the meanest she could find, and it was her happiness to be employed in the humblest occupations. When her nuns begged her to be more careful of her health, which seemed in danger of breaking down under such austere practices, she replied: AFor you, my dear sisters, whose lives have been consecrated to the service of God, this is an excellent counsel. But for me, who have lived so long amidst worldly vanities, no kind of penance can be excessive.@

¹ Life and Teaching of St Bernard by Ailbe J. Luddy, O. Cist., pg. 68-69, M.H. Gill & Son, Dublin, 1937

In 1132 a colony of nuns from Jully founded Tart, in the diocese of Langres, the first convent to embrace the reform and submit to the jurisdiction of Citeaux, and the motherhouse, consequently, of the Cistercian nuns. It is uncertain whether Humbelina took part in this foundation, but there can be no doubt that to the end Jully remained purely Benedictine. (*over*)

Her last hours were consoled by the presence of three of her brothers, Bernard, Andrew and Nivard. Bartholomew, who was then Abbot of La Ferte, may also have been with her. When about to breathe her last she looked with a radiant smile at Bernard and said: AOh, how happy I am to have followed your counsel and consecrated myself to God! And what a beautiful reward I expect to receive for the love I have entertained for you in this life! It is to that love that I owe the joy and glory awaiting me in the homeland.@ Then turning to the others she cried out: Al rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord (Ps. 121,1) With these words, she gave up her spirit.

From a Sermon Attributed to St John Chrysostom 2

How, blessed Abraham, shall I describe the hospitality of your tent? How shall I not admire the oak called Mambre which you cultivated so well? The tent was a common dwelling place for travelers, with abundant feasting for every stranger, a free inn for the whole world. It was not hidden away so that no one should know the benefit of rest, but though in the desert it was right on the route through it, which was also the common gateway to almost the whole of Palestine.

You passed your whole day under the oak, and travelers found you the good angel of rest. Christ appeared to you, excellent man, in the company of two angels, and so your hospitality led you to share your tent with God and angels. How blessed that tent which received God with angels through the Incarnation! Christ appeared to you in human form, showing you the mysteries of his divine coming for our salvation; yet the glory of your guest was not hidden from you by his servile form, for you had other eyes with which to perceive the Lord. And so you recognized the mediator, the son destined to be made known standing between two living beings. I admire, blessed man, your personal care for those who appeared before you; for you could have ordered a servant to deal with their needs as you wished, but instead of that you yourself, though an old man, ran to your herd, youthful eagerness supporting your aged body. Your wife, too, eagerly shared the work with you loading the table with unleavened bread (for zealous hospitality could not wait for fermentation). But all was done in fear and reverence, not as for the entertainment of a human guest but like the offering of a sacrifice to God. So the fruit of your hospitality was good, blessed man, and the reward for your devotion was also good.

For beyond all hope fertility was restored to a barren womb, and the near-dead body of an old man was revived for the begetting of a legitimate child, and you received from the only God the promise of an only son. *At this time I shall return*, God said, *and Sarah will have a son*. Truly blessed man, how shall I praise you enough for your faith? For you had no hesitation in believing the promise, and you were not perturbed by it. You did not consider how dead your body had become, being as you were about a hundred years old, nor did you think of the barrenness of Sarah's womb, but your faith was strengthened because you knew that God was able to fulfill whatever he promised. For nature's creator is not a slave to nature's passions, since God as all nature's creator is subject to no constraint of nature in any of his works, but nature obeys the free will of its creator in every kind of change. Therefore, blessed man, you were not disappointed in your hopes, but at the appointed time, and in your near-dead age, you were called a father.

Saints Cyril and Methodius: a reading from *Butler=s Lives of the Saints*. 1

In 862 there arrived in Constantinople an ambassador charged by Rostislav, prince of Moravia, to ask if the emperor would send him missionaries capable of teaching his people in their own language. Photius, now patriarch of Constantinople, decided that Cyril and Methodius were most suitable for the work; they were learned men, who knew Slavonic.

In 863 the two brothers set out with a number of assistants and came to the court of Rostislav. The new missionaries made free use of the vernacular in their preaching and ministrations, and this made immediate appeal to the local people. To the German clergy this was objectionable, and their opposition was strengthened when the Emperor Louis forced Rostislav to take an oath of fealty to him. The Byzantine missionaries, armed with their pericopes from the Scriptures and liturgical hymns in Slavonic, pursued their way with much success, but were soon handicapped by their lack of a bishop to ordain more priests. The German prelate, the bishop of Passau, would not do it, and Cyril therefore determined to seek help elsewhere, presumably from Constantinople whence he came.

On their way the brothers arrived in Venice. It was at a bad moment. Photius at Constantinople had incurred excommunication; the *proteges* of the Eastern emperor and their liturgical use of a new tongue were vehemently criticized. They came to Rome bringing with them alleged relics of Pope St Clement, which St Cyril had recovered when in the Crimea on his way back from the Khazars. Adrian II warmly welcomed the bearers of so great a gift. He examined their cause, and he gave judgment: Cyril and Methodius were to receive episcopal consecration, their neophytes were to be ordained, and the use of the liturgy in Slavonic was approved.

While still in Rome Cyril died, on February 14, 869. He was buried with great pomp in the church of San Clemente on the Coelian, where the relics of St Clement had been enshrined. St Methodius now took up his brother=s leadership. Having been consecrated bishop he returned, bearing a letter from the Holy See recommending him as a man of >exact understanding and orthodoxy=. Kosel, prince of Pannonia, asked that the ancient archdiocese of Sirmium (now

Mitrovitsa) be revived. Methodius was made metropolitan and the boundaries of his charge extended to the borders of Bulgaria.

OT-GEN58

A Commentary on the Book of Genesis by Origen 3

02.15.19

“The cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is filled and their sins are very great. I have descended, therefore, to see whether their iniquities are completed as their cry to me indicates.” When responses are delivered to Abraham, God is not said to descend, but to stand before him. But now because sinners are involved, God is said to descend. Therefore God is said to descend when he deigns to have concern for human frailty. This should be discerned especially of our Lord and Savior who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant”. Therefore he descended. For the Lord descended not only to care for us, but also to bear what things are ours. “For he took the form of a servant”, and although he himself is invisible in nature, in as much as he is equal to the Father, nevertheless he took a visible appearance, “and was found in appearance as a man.”

We say, therefore, with confidence that according to the Scriptures God does not know all men. God does not know sin and God does not know sinners. He is ignorant of those alienated from himself. Hear the scripture saying: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and “Let everyone depart from iniquity who calls on the name of the Lord.” Hear the scripture saying: “Depart from me, all workers of iniquity. I have not known you.” And again Paul says: “If anyone among you is a prophet or spiritual, let him know that the things that I write are of the Lord. But if any man know not, he is not known.”

We say these things, however, not as ascribing ignorance to God, but thus we understand that those whose activity is concerned unworthy of God are also considered to be unworthy of knowledge of God. For God does not deign to know him who has turned away from him and does not know him. And for this reason the apostle says that “anyone who does not know is not known.”

So also now, therefore, it is said of these who live in Sodom that if indeed on his examination, “their deeds are completed as the cry” which has ascended to God, they would be considered unworthy; but if there is any conversion among them, so, at last, God would know them. The text does not say that I may know what they are doing, but that I might know them and make them worthy of knowledge of me, if I should find some among them just, if I should find some repentant, if some such as I ought to know. Finally, because no one besides Lot is found who would repent, no one would be converted, he alone is known, he alone is delivered from the conflagration.

OT-GEN55

02.16.19

Homily of St John Chrysostom on Genesis 4

Now as Jacob approaches the land of his brother Esau, see the good man's godliness and proper sense of values in requesting nothing from the Lord other than the fulfillment of his promises. Although the brother had calmed down in the meantime and had allayed his extreme anger at Jacob, nevertheless the latter was in an agony of fear and apprehension about meeting his brother; so the good Lord comforted the good man. After dispatching the men carrying the gifts for his brother, the text says, he went to sleep. "Now when Jacob was left alone, in the middle of the night a man wrestled with him." Wonderful is the Lord's loving kindness: since he was on the point of having a meeting with his brother; for him to learn by experience that he had no risk of unpleasantness he deigned to wrestle with the good man in the guise of a human being. Then seeing himself being overcome by Jacob, "he lay hold of the flat of his thigh," the text says. Now all this was done by way of considerateness so as to expel apprehension from the good man's soul and convince him to have the meeting with his brother free from all preoccupation.

Then, for Jacob to learn the power of the man thought to be wrestling with him, he said: "Let me go: dawn has broken." Do you see how the Lord revealed the complete explanation of why he demonstrated such considerateness and at the same time taught the good man through the imposition of a new name who it was whom he saw and was allowed to hold on to? "You will no longer be called Jacob but Israel," the text says. Remember now Israel means "Seeing God". Since you are privileged to see God, insofar as it is possible for a human being to see him, hence I also give you this name so that it may be clear to everyone in the future that you were accorded this vision. No longer have any fear nor expect to suffer any harm from anyone. Having gained such might as to succeed in wrestling with God, much more will you prevail over human beings and prove yourself superior to all.

Do you see how the Lord shows considerateness for our human limitations in all he does and in arranging everything in a way that gives evidence of his characteristic love? Don't be surprised, dearly beloved, at the extent of his considerateness. Rather remember that with the patriarch as well, when he was sitting by the oak tree, he came in human form as the good man's guest in the company of the angels, giving us a premonition from on high at the beginning that he would one day take human form to liberate all human nature by this means from the tyranny of the devil and lead us to salvation.

But when he deigned to take on the form of a slave, he donned our flesh, not in appearance, but in reality. He brought himself to undergo all our experiences, to be born of a woman, to become an infant to be fed at the breast, and to undergo everything for this purpose, that the truth of the divine plan might be given credence.