

SUN 05.05.19 3rd Sunday of Easter

A Commentary on the Gospel of John by St. Augustine ¹

The Lord appeared once again to his disciples after his resurrection, and questioning Peter, who from fear had thrice denied him, extracted from him a threefold declaration of love. Christ had been raised to life in the flesh, and Peter to life in the spirit, for when Christ died as a result of the torments he endured, Peter was also dead as a result of denying his master. Christ the Lord was raised from the dead; Christ the Lord raised up Peter through Peter's love for him. And having obtained from him the assurance of that love, he entrusted his sheep to Peter's care.

We may wonder what advantage there could be for Christ in Peter's love for him. If Christ loves you, you profit, not Christ; and if you love him, again the advantage is yours, not his. But wishing to show us how we should demonstrate our love for him, Christ the Lord made it plain that it is by our concern for his sheep. *Do you love me?*, he asked. *I do love you. Then feed my sheep.* Once, twice, and a third time the same dialogue was repeated. To the Lord's one and only question, Peter had no other answer than *I do love you*. And each time the Lord gave Peter the same command: *Feed my sheep*. Let us love one another then, and by doing so we shall be loving Christ.

Christ, the eternal God, was born in time as man. A true member of the human race, he appeared as one of us; but as God in human form he performed many wonderful signs. As a human being, he suffered much from other human beings; but as God in human form he rose from the dead. For forty days he lived on earth as one of us; then, before the eyes of his disciples, he ascended to heaven, where, as God in human form, he is now seated at the right hand of the father. We believe all these things, though we have never seen them; we are commanded to love Christ the Lord, whom we have never seen. And we all cry out and say that we love Christ.

But listen to John's words: *If you do not love the brother or sister that you can see, how can you love the God you cannot see?* It is by loving the sheep that you show your love for the shepherd, for the sheep are the members of the shepherd. Indeed, it was to make the sheep members of his own body that the Lord became one of them himself, that he allowed himself to be led like a lamb to the slaughter, and that he allowed the baptist to point him out and say: *Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.* Surely a crushing burden for a lamb! But that lamb possessed tremendous strength. Do you wish to know how much strength was in this lamb? Because the lamb was crucified, the lion was overcome. If he could vanquish the devil by his own death, think with what power he is able to rule the world! May nothing, then, ever be dearer to us than Christ the Lord; let us love him with all our hearts.

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – 2000 – pg 52

A Discourse of Christ's Resurrection, by Symeon the New Theologian.¹

Most people believe in the resurrection of Christ, but very few have a clear vision of it. Those who have no vision thereof cannot even adore Christ Jesus as the Holy One and as Lord. As it is written, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit", and, elsewhere, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth". That most sacred formula which is daily on our lips does not say, "Having believed in "Christ's resurrection," but, "Having beheld Christ's resurrection, let us worship the Holy One, the Lord Jesus, who alone is without sin." How then does the Holy Spirit urge us to say, "Having beheld Christ's resurrection," which we have not seen, as though we had seen it, when Christ has risen once for all a thousand years ago, and even then without anybody's seeing it? Surely Holy Scripture does not wish us to lie! Rather, it urges us to speak the truth, that the resurrection of Christ takes place in each of us who believes, and that not once, but every hour, so to speak, when Christ the Master arises in us, resplendent in array and flashing with the lightnings of incorruption and Deity. For the light-bringing coming of the Spirit shows forth to us, as in early morning, the Master's resurrection, or, rather, it grants us to see the Risen One Himself. Therefore we say, "The Lord is God, and He has given us light" and we allude to His second Coming and add these words, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord". Those to whom Christ has given light as He has risen, to them He has appeared spiritually, He has been shown to their spiritual eyes. When this happens to us through the Spirit He raises us up from the dead and gives us life. He grants us to see Him, who is immortal and indestructible. More than that, He grants clearly to know Him who raises us up and glorifies us with Himself, as all the divine Scripture testifies.

These, then, are the divine mysteries of Christians. This is the hidden power of our faith, which unbelievers, or those who believe with difficulty, or rather believe in part, do not see nor are able at all to see. Unbelievers, those who believe with difficulty, or believe in part, are those who do not show their faith through works. Apart from works the demons also believe and confess Christ to be God and Master. "We know who you are", they say, "you are the Son of God", and elsewhere, "These men are the servants of the Most High God". Yet such faith will not benefit the demons, nor even humans. This faith is of no use, for it is dead, as says the divine apostle, "Faith apart from works is dead", just like works without faith. How is it dead? Because it has not in itself God who gives life. It has not laid hold of Him who said, "He who loves Me will keep My commandments, and I and the Father will come and make Our home with him, so that by His coming He may raise from the dead him who has attained faith and give him life, and grant him to see Him who has risen in him and who has raised him up. For this reason such faith is dead, or, rather, they are dead who have faith apart from works. Faith in God is always alive, and since it is living it gives life to those who come with a good intention and receive it. Even before they have practiced the commandments it has brought many out of death into life and has shown them Christ our God. Had they persevered in His commandments and kept them until death they too would have been preserved by them - that is, in the state to which faith alone had brought them. But

¹The Discourses, Paulist Press CWS, 1980. cp. XIII 90-160

² Selected Easter Sermons of Saint Augustine. Commentary by Philip T. Weller. B. Herder Book Co. St.

since they "turned aside like a bent bow" and speared themselves on their former actions, they inevitably at once made shipwreck of their faith and miserably deprived themselves of the true riches, who is Christ our God. So I urge you. let us keep God's commandments with all our might, so that we may not share in their fate, but enjoy both present and future blessings, that is, the very vision of Christ. To this may we all attain through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

TUES 05.07.19

From the Jerusalem Catecheses 1

When you were baptized into Christ and clothed yourselves in him, you were transformed into the likeness of the Son of God. Having destined us to be his children by adoption, God gave us a likeness to Christ in his glory, and living as you do in communion with Christ, you yourselves are rightly called “Christs” or anointed ones. When he said: *Do not touch my anointed ones*, God was speaking of you.

You became “Christs” when you received the sign of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, everything took place in you by means of images, because you yourselves are images of Christ. Christ bathed in the river Jordan, imparting to its waters the fragrance of his divinity, and when he came up from them the Holy Spirit descended upon him, like resting upon like. So you also, after coming up from the sacred waters of baptism, were anointed with chrism, which signifies the Holy spirit, by whom Christ was anointed and of whom the blessed Isaiah prophesied in the name of the Lord: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor.*

Christ's anointing was not by human hands, nor was it with ordinary oil. On the contrary, having destined him to be the Savior of the whole world, the father himself anointed him with the Holy Spirit. The words of Peter bear witness to this: *Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit.* And David the prophet proclaimed: *Your throne, O God, shall endure forever; your royal scepter is a scepter of justice. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above all your fellows.*

The oil of gladness with which Christ was anointed was a spiritual oil; it was in fact the Holy Spirit Himself, who is called *the oil of gladness* because he is the source of spiritual joy. But you also have been anointed with oil, and by this anointing you have entered into fellowship with Christ and have received a share in his life. Beware of thinking of this charism as merely ordinary oil. As the eucharistic bread after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer ordinary bread but the body of Christ, so also the oil after the invocation is no longer plain ordinary oil but Christ's gift which by the presence of his divinity becomes the instrument through which you receive the Holy Spirit. While symbolically, on your foreheads and organs of sense, your bodies are anointed with this oil that we see, your souls are sanctified by the holy and life-giving Spirit.

The Meaning of the Alleluia in Eastertide. From a Sermon by St. Augustine.²

Since it is the will of our Lord that we should see you during the time the **Alleluia** is sung, we feel that we ought to say a word to you about the **Alleluia**. I trust I shall not bore you by reminding you of something you already know, for we delight in singing the **alleluia** every day. As you know, **Alleluia** in our language means "praise the Lord." By this word we encourage one another to praise the Lord with one voice and one heart. Only that person can rightfully praise Him who is free from all that could displease Him. During this time of our earthly pilgrimage we sing the **Alleluia** for our solace on the journey. Now the **Alleluia** is our pilgrim's song on the way to the resting place of our true country, where all our striving must be left behind and only the song of **Alleluia** will endure.

What great happiness the virtue of hope engenders in us! But what will the realization itself be like? We hunger and we thirst and it is necessary that we have our fill. Yet now on the pilgrimage there is famine and only in the heavenly home will there be plenty. When, then, are we to be satisfied? "I shall be satisfied when your glory shall appear." But now the glory of our God, the glory of our Christ is hidden, and along with it our glory, too, lies concealed. But "when Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory." Then the **Alleluia** will be a thing of reality; now it is simply a matter of hope. Now it is hope that sings **Alleluia**, and love also, of course. Then it will be love, too, that will sing **Alleluia**, however a love that will know fulfillment, whereas now it is a love that remains unsatisfied.

What is the **Alleluia**, my brothers and sisters? I have already told you that it is the praise of God. Now when you hear the word, you take delight in its very sound, and in this delight you are already rendering homage. If now you love the drop of dew, how much more will you love the rushing fountain itself? If faith now prompts us to render praise, how much more will the vision of the reality intensify our praise?

Since in the life to come we shall lack nothing, for that very reason we shall be happy. We shall be fully satisfied - but with God. He will take the place of all that we so ardently desired here on earth. Do you now have a craving for food? God will be your food in the life to come. Do you now yearn for fleshly caresses? "But it is good for me to adhere to my God." Is your heart set on riches here? How will it be possible for you to lack anything when you are going to possess Him who is the Creator of everything? To strengthen your assurance, let me quote the words of the apostle, who says of the future life: "That God may be all in all."

² Selected Easter Sermons of Saint Augustine. Commentary by Philip T. Weller. B. Herder Book Co. St. Louis, MO. 1959. p. 127.

THUR 05.09.19

Easter weekday

From a Paschal Homily by Hesychius of Jerusalem ¹

The festival we celebrate is one of victory – the victory of the Son of God, king of the whole universe. On this day the devil is defeated by the crucified one; our race is filled with joy by the risen one. In honor of my resurrection in Christ this day cries out: “In my journey I beheld a new wonder – an open tomb, a man risen from the dead, bones exulting, souls rejoicing, men and women refashioned, the heavens opened, and powers crying out: *Lift up your gates, you princes; be lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the king of glory may come in.* On this day I saw the king of heaven, robed in light, ascend above the lightning and the rays of the sun, above the sun and the sources of water, above the dwelling place of the angelic powers and the city of eternal life.”

Hidden first in a womb of flesh, he sanctified human birth by his own birth; hidden afterward in the womb of the earth, he gave life to the dead by his resurrection. *Suffering, pain, and sighs have now fled away. For who has known the mind of God, or who has been his counselor* if not the Word made flesh, who was nailed to the cross, who rose from the dead, and who was taken up into heaven.

This day brings a message of joy: it is the day of the Lord's resurrection when, with himself, he raised up the race of Adam. Born for the sake of human beings, he rose from the dead with them. On this day paradise is opened by the risen one, Adam is restored to life, Eve is consoled. On this day the divine call is heard, the kingdom is prepared, we are saved and Christ is adored. On this day when he had trampled death under foot, made the tyrant a prisoner, and despoiled the underworld, Christ ascended into heaven as a king in victory, as a ruler in glory, as an invincible charioteer. He said to the Father: *Here am I, O God, with the children you have given me* and he heard the Father's reply: *Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.* To him be glory, now and for ever, through endless ages, Amen.

¹A Word in Season – vol. III – Exordium Books – 1983 – pg 17

The Life of Blessed Damien De Veuster - Edited by Joseph Tylenda, SJ ³

Damien was born on January 3, 1840 in the small village of Tremeloo about six miles from Louvain, Belgium. He was the seventh of eight children. At his baptism he was named Joseph. The De Veuster family lived on a small farm and it was maintained by the labors of the father and the children. Joseph's education was limited to the elementary level and when he reached the age of thirteen, his days were spent working on the farm. When he was eighteen his father sent him to supplement his education by learning to manage the business end of the farming enterprise. The farming, carpentry and other trades he learned in Tremeloo all came in handy on the island of Molokai.

His brother Auguste, nearly three years older, had entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary at Louvain. Joseph spoke to his brother about his own desire for following a religious vocation. He intimated that he was drawn to the Trappist manner of life. However his brother suggested that he enter the same congregation as he had done. On his nineteenth birthday he and his father paid a visit to the monastery of the Sacred Heart Fathers in Louvain. Joseph decided to remain there on the spot.

Since his education was somewhat deficient, he was accepted for the brotherhood rather than the priesthood. Here he was given the name of Damien. Still desiring the priesthood, Damien asked his brother to teach him Latin. Damien did so well that the superior reconsidered his decision and now included him among the students for the priesthood.

Word spread among the students at Louvain that the missions in the Sandwich Islands, today's Hawaiian Islands, had urgent need of missionaries. Both brothers volunteered and were accepted. Damien was ordained priest in Honolulu and was sent to various parishes on the island.

An outbreak of leprosy had struck the islands and the government enforced the segregation of those afflicted to the newly established Kalawao Settlement, located on the northern side of the island of Molokai. Catholics were a minority and were habitually without ministrations of a priest. The Bishop informed his priests of this fact, but felt that he could not order any to go there. Fr Damien volunteered to go. He arrived on a boat, along with fifty lepers, on May 10, 1873. When Damien toured his new parish, he found it very depressing. The faces he saw were disfigured by running ulcerated sores; hands were without fingers and feet without toes. Those greeting him were half-naked and the meager clothing they wore were rags, dirty and foul smelling. About him he found no houses but only crumbling thatched huts that served as miserable shelters for the lepers. He himself was without a house, but he found a pandanus tree near the church of St. Philomena, and there he spent his nights until he built a shack that was to become his residence.

The food supply was inadequate for the six hundred lepers, and their attempts at farming were unsuccessful due to their condition. The water supply was located at such

³Portraits in American Sanctity - edited by Joseph N. Tylenda, SJ - Franciscan Herald Press- Chicago - 1982

a distance from the huts that most were physically unable to carry water to their hovels and hence rarely washed and had to live in huts that were defiled and polluted.

Fr Damien quickly came to realize that even though he had come to care for the spiritual needs of the 200 Catholics in the settlement, he could not restrict his ministry to them alone, but would have to use all his talents to make the lepers last months on earth somewhat humane. He traveled to Honolulu to seek supplies for the colony: more food for his people, lumber and tools for construction, and pipes to better the sanitation system. His early training in farming proved a great asset to him. With the lumber he and the healthy lepers began to transform the miserable huts into clean habitable cottages. With the pipes he brought the water supply into the center of the colony where everyone could get water for all their needs. He also learned how to clean and bandage sores, apply ointments and prescribe pills. To the lepers of Molokai Fr Damien was priest and doctor, carpenter and plumber, but above all he was the tangible evidence of God's love among them.

By ministering to their diseased bodies, Fr Damien was able to touch their souls. Within two months of his coming he had 2/3 of the six hundred inhabitants under his spiritual care; about half of these were undergoing instruction prior to baptism. Among his Catholic faithful he formed a group of altar boys and a choir. Death was a common experience on the island and rather than leaving the bodies dumped on the edge of the settlement as had been the custom, Fr Damien marked off a cemetery and enclosed it with a white picket fence. At the end of his first eighteen months he had celebrated over 200 funerals.

In 1881 Damien first began to feel pain in his feet and by 1885 it was clear that the disease was taking over his body. On March 19, 1889 Fr Damien celebrated the silver anniversary of his arrival at Honolulu, but a few days later he was confined to his bed and began to prepare himself for death. He said: The good Lord is calling me to celebrate Easter with Him. On Monday of Holy Week, April 15, 1889, the leper priest died with a smile on his lips. He was buried under the same pandanus tree that gave him shelter when he first came to Kalawao sixteen years before. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II.

SAT 05.11.19 Holy Abbots of Cluny

A READING FROM A TREATISE ON THE CONVENTUAL LIFE, BY BALDWIN OF FORD.⁴

Dearly beloved, let us anxiously attend to all that concerns the profession of our common life, keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the imparting of the Holy Spirit. From the love of God comes the unity of the spirit; from the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ comes the bond of peace; from the imparting of the Holy Spirit comes that communion which is necessary to those who live in common, if they are to live in common.

This unity which the love of God works in us is preserved in the bond of peace by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our peace who made of two peoples one; at whose birth the angels sang: glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those of good will; who when about to ascend into heaven said: My peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.

What is this peace given us by Christ in the bond of which the unity of the spirit is preserved? It is mutual charity by which we love one another, which remains unbroken if we are all of one mind and there are no divisions among us. St. Peter exhorts us on this point: Above all things preserve constant charity among yourselves. What is this charity, if not what is mine and thine, so that I speak of it to him whom I love?

This, then, is the law of the common life, the unity of the spirit in the love of God, the bond of peace in the mutual and constant love of all our brothers, the sharing of all our goods, with every opportunity of possessing things as our own far removed from us by the rule of holy religion. That this may be our abiding intention, that we may have but one heart and one soul and all things in common, "the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the imparting of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen."

⁴Trans. in Catholicism, Henri de Lubac. London 1950. pp.221-222.