

Homily of St. Augustine on the Feast of Corpus Christi¹

Although human beings seek to satisfy hunger and thirst by means of food and drink, these are indeed of no avail to them unless they render them immortal and incorruptible, that is, partakers of the society of the saints, where peace and perfect unity are had. Therefore, indeed, as children of God even before us understood it, our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted His own body and blood in the likeness of those things, which were reduced into one thing from many. For the one is made from many grains of wheat; the other is made from the juice of many grapes flowing together into one wine.

Now finally He shows in what manner this about which He is speaking is to take place, and how it is that we are to eat His body and drink His blood. "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him." Therefore to eat of that food and to drink of that drink is to abide in Christ and to have Him abiding in us.

And therefore he who does not abide in Christ, and in whom Christ does not abide, without a doubt neither spiritually eats His flesh nor drinks His blood, although carnally and visibly he consumes the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; nay, on the contrary, he eats and drinks the Sacrament unto judgment for himself, because, as one unclean, he dares to approach the Sacraments of Christ, which no one receives worthily except he who is pure, of whom it is said: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

"As the living Father," He says, "has sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me, he also shall live because of me." Just as if He were to say: "That I live because of the Father, that is, that I refer My life to Him as to a greater, My emptying out of Myself has effected; but that anyone lives because of Me, it is that participation of Me in which he eats Me that effects it. Therefore I, having been sent down to earth, live because of the Father, while he (who eats me), having been lifted up, lives because of Me." But if it is thus said, "I live because of the Father," for the reason that the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son, it is said without detriment to their equality. Yet by saying, "He who eats me, he also shall live because of me," He did not mean that there is an equality between Him and us, but He showed the grace of His mediatorship. This, then, he has taught and advised us by His mystical words, that we may be in His body, among His members subject to Him, the Head, partaking of His flesh and not breaking away from unity with Him.

¹Liturgical Readings. St. Meinrad's Abbey, 1943, pp. 196-197

A reading about the burning and shining of John the Baptist, from a sermon by St. Bernard of Clairvaux. 1

Let us rejoice, dearly beloved, on the Nativity of blessed John [the Baptist], on the solemnity of whose birth is celebrated today, and let us rejoice in that very nativity. Our reason for remembering John is certainly rich, and the source of our rejoicing sundry. Listen, brothers, to what is said about John: He was a burning and shining lamp, Scripture says. A great testimony, my brothers: great is the one to whom it is given, but greater is the one who gives it. He was a burning and shining lamp. Only to shine is nothing; only to burn is not enough. To burn and shine is complete.

He was, Scripture says, a burning and shining lamp. It does not say shining and burning, because John's splendor came from his fervor, and not the fervor from his splendor. Some do not shine because they are burning, but rather they burn in order to shine: clearly these do not burn with the spirit of charity but with the zeal that comes from vanity. Do you want to know how John both burned and shone? I think that a threefold division can be found in both, that is, in his burning and in his splendor. He was burning in himself with the mighty rigor of his way of life, with the deep and complete fervor of his devotion to Christ, and with the constancy of his bold reproaches to his sinful neighbors. He was shining no less in his example, in pointing out Christ, in his word; showing himself for the purpose of imitation; greatly illumining what lay concealed for the remission of sins; and for correction, lighting up our darkness, as was written: Lord, you who light my lamp, lighten my darkness.

Let us rejoice, dearly beloved, on the Nativity of blessed John, and let us rejoice in that very nativity. Our reason for remembering John is certainly rich, and the source of our rejoicing sundry. He was a lamp, and the Jews were willing to rejoice in his light; John rejoiced rather in the fervor of his loyalty: as the bridegroom's friend, he rejoiced in the bridegroom's voice. We are to rejoice in both ways: on the one hand for him, and on the other, we are to rejoice together with him for ourselves. He burned for himself; he was shining for us. Let us rejoice in his fervor for the purpose of imitation; let us also rejoice in his light yet not remaining there, but that in his light we may see light, the true light, which is not John himself, but the One to whom he bears witness.

He shone, as I stated above, in his example, in pointing out Christ in his word, making himself known by his deeds, making Christ known by a sign, and making us known to ourselves by his preaching. His father Zechariah said: You, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people. He does not say to give salvation, for he was not the light, but to give knowledge of salvation', that he might bear witness to the light.

To give knowledge of salvation, he says, in the forgiveness of sins. Can a wise person make light of the knowledge of salvation? Yet let us suppose that John has not yet come, that he has not yet pointed out Christ. Where would we seek salvation? What then shall I do? I will go to John, and listen to the voice of gladness, the voice of mercy, the speech of grace, the word of forgiveness and peace. Behold the Lamb of God, he says, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. In another place he says: He who has the bride is the bridegroom. John is revealing that God comes, the Bridegroom, the Lamb. Since he is God, it is certain that he can take away sins; but whether he is willing remains a question. Surely he is willing, because he is the Bridegroom, because he is worthy of love. John is the Bridegroom's friend, because the Bridegroom can have none but friends. And although he wants a glorious bride, having no blemish or wrinkle, or any such thing, yet he does not seek such a one for where would she be found? but rather he himself makes such a one, such a one as he presents to himself.

Then why do we hesitate, brothers, and not approach the throne of glory with complete confidence? Let us give thanks to John, and, with him as mediator, let us journey to Christ, because, as John says, He must increase, but I must decrease. Decrease in what way? In splendor certainly, not in fervor. He withdrew his rays; he gathered himself up, so that he would not be like one who gives forth all his spirit. He must increase, John says, the one who can not be emptied, and from whose fullness all can receive. But I must decrease; I came before the sun, like the morning star; I must be hidden, because the sun has risen.

Tuesday 06.25.19

A Commentary on the Book of Genesis by St John Chrysostom ²

Scripture tells us: “The Lord was with Joseph”. What is the meaning of this? Grace from on high stood by him, and smoothed over all his difficulties. It arranged all his affairs. It led those traders to sell him to the chief steward. Consider how he was not alarmed and did not give up hope or debate within himself in these terms: How deceitful those dreams that foretold such prosperity for me! But he said nothing of the sort; he gave it not a thought. On the contrary he bore everything meekly and nobly. “The Lord was with Joseph” after all, “and he became a man of means”.

What is the meaning of “a man of means”? Everything went well for him, grace from on high preceded him everywhere, and the grace that flourished in his regard was so obvious as to become plain even to his master, the chief steward. Joseph found favor with his master, who set him over his household and entrusted to him all his possessions. Why? Because along with power from on high he also contributed his own way of doing things.

Then the loving God, though wanting to make him feel completely secure, did not release him from slavery nor set him at liberty. This, after all, is ever his way; not to free virtuous men from dangers nor preserve them from trials, but in the midst of such trials, to give evidence of his characteristic grace to such an extent that the very trials prove an occasion of rejoicing for them.

Even the barbarian now learnt that the man thought to be a slave was particularly close to God. “He turned over all his possessions into Joseph’s keeping”. The slave, the captive, held in his care all his master’s possessions. That is what virtue is like: wherever it appears, it prevails over all things and controls them.

The wicked beast the devil, however, seeing the good man’s standing and the fact that he emerged even more conspicuous from these very things thought to be adversaries, prepared what he thought was a mighty precipice that would bring him to his ruin.

The text tells us: “Joseph cut a fine figure and was good looking”. It says this in order to that we might learn that he was striking not only for charm of soul but also for his person. Sacred Scripture tells us this about him so as to teach us that the Egyptian woman was under the spell of the young man’s beauty in inviting him to that illicit union. “But he refused”, the text says. He realized the great ruin it would bring him; and instead of thinking of himself, he was greatly concerned to deliver her from this folly as far as possible. What a grateful man! See how he counts his blessings from his master so as to demonstrate the ingratitude she shows to

² The Fathers of the Church – SDt John Chrysostom – Homilies on Genesis – vol. 3 – Catholic University Press – Washington DC –

her partner. But despite such a victory, despite such wonderful fortitude, once more he endures countless troubles as though a guilty party. His master flew into a rage and cast him into prison. God in his resourcefulness caused him to give evidence of such mildness that even in prison he showed his virtue and arrived at authority in the kingdom.

Let us, therefore, make this our concern also, to have the Lord always with us so that what is done by us will be concluded successfully by him. So when some temptation disturbs us, let us turn these words over in our mind, and every unholy desire will immediately be put to flight.

A Commentary on the Book of Genesis by St John Chrysostom ³

You notice that when Joseph encountered troubles he had no sense of distress; instead the creative wisdom of God transformed all his distress. Virtue, wherever you cast it, reveals its characteristic power, be it in servitude, in prison, in distress or in prosperity. So since, even when cast into prison, he won over the chief jailer and received from him control of everything there.

Joseph rightly interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer of the king and the chief baker. He asked only that they remember him when they have been delivered from prison. "Remember me, and have me taken out of this dungeon". Hearing this let us learn, when we fall foul, not to be bent on railing against those who have offended us, but simply to demonstrate our innocence meekly and mildly and to imitate this remarkable man in that, though being in difficulties, he did not bring himself to blame others. Far from hankering for the esteem of mortals, he was content with favor from on high and wanted for an admirer of his conduct only that God on high. Hence, as he kept silence and endeavored to conceal everything, the loving Lord brought him to wonderful prominence.

Even after this, two years passed before the cupbearer recounted to the king what had happened in prison and the wonderful man who had rightly interpreted his dream. On hearing this, the king sent for Joseph and released him from the dungeon. See how divine providence had arranged all things so that Pharaoh's cupbearer and chief baker should be imprisoned there at the same time and should come to know the man's wisdom through his interpretation of dreams and should bring him forward now before the Pharaoh. Joseph replies to the king: "Don't suspect that I utter anything of myself or interpret them by human wisdom. There is no way of coming to knowledge of them without revelation from on high. So be aware that without God, it is not possible for me to give you a reply".

At this stage Pharaoh was instrumental in the fulfillment of the dream Joseph had when living at his father's house. Whereas he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams Pharaoh unwittingly brought Joseph's dream to pass. Pharaoh realized that these things became clear to him through a revelation from on high. He then says: "Since God has revealed all this to you, there is no person more discerning than you. You shall therefore be in charge of my household and all the people shall obey your words." See how all of a sudden the prisoner is made king of the whole of Egypt. Do you see how important it is to bear trials thankfully? Hence Paul also said: "Distress promotes endurance, endurance promotes character, character promotes hope and

³ The Fathers of the Church - vol/ 87 - St John Chrysostom - Homilies on Genesis - vol. 3 - Catholic University Press - Washington DC - 1992 - pg 212

hope does not disappoint.”

The text tells us that Joseph was thirty years old at this time. Far from idly considering that there is merely reference here to his age, let us learn that there is no excuse for anyone to neglect virtue nor any grounds for claiming the pretext of youth when virtue needs to be demonstrated. He had grace from on high to strengthen him.

After hearing this, let us never despair in the midst of distress nor become frustrated by following by following our own reasoning. Rather, let us give evidence of sound endurance and be buoyed up by hope, secure in the knowledge of our Lord’s resourcefulness and the fact that, instead of ignoring us and abandoning us to the experience of troubles, he wants to crown us with a resplendent garland for our struggles. It is for this that all holy people have been distinguished. Hence the apostle also said: “It is through great distress that we must enter the kingdom of God.” Christ himself said to the disciples, “In the world you will have distress.” So let us not be upset at the thought of distress, but rather listen to Paul’s statement that “those who wish to live religiously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” This, on fact, is what faith is, when we do not rely on our bodily eyes alone but imagine with the eyes of the mind things that are not visible.

Let us really give heed to this and nobly withstand the troubles that beset us, giving thanks to the loving God for everything and waiting for his recompense from him. May it be the good fortune of all of us to attain this, thanks to the grace and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A Commentary on the Book of Genesis from the writings of Quodvultdeus of Carthage ⁴

Joseph and Christ

After two days which seem like two years, Joseph is let out of prison on the third. Likewise our Joseph, who is Christ our Lord, rose from the dead on the third day. He is presented to Pharaoh. The resurrection is manifested to the world. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams to him and gives him sound advice about what ought to be done, the store for seven years of plenty to be laid up under the supervision of a prudent man, for them to withstand the famine threatening thereafter. Likewise our Joseph, Christ our Lord, gave this counsel to a world running toward its end, in fulfillment of a sevenfold symbolism. For he said that *unless a grain of wheat falling into the earth should die, it remains but what it is; but if it dies, it yields much fruit*. For again, *they who sow in tears shall reap in joy*.

Joseph was given authority by Pharaoh over the whole of Egypt. So also our Joseph, Christ the Lord, said after his resurrection: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*. Joseph sent his men all over Egypt and *collected corn in abundance like the sand of the seashore*. So also our Joseph, Christ our Lord, sent his men out into the world, saying: *Go forth and baptize the nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. And the tally of the believers was beyond counting, like the sand of the seashore. Joseph set up barns all over Egypt. And Christ our Lord has consecrated churches throughout the world. About that, St. John said: *“He will store the corn in his barn, Joseph opened up the barns in time of famine and served out to the people. Of our Joseph, this is said: The Lord's eyes are on the just. And then: May he in his power and might draw out their souls from death and feed them in their hunger. Amos the prophet mentions the hunger of the soul: I will give them, says the Lord, a hunger not for bread and water, but to hear the word of God. And in the gospel the Lord himself says: Because iniquity has been there in abundance the charity of many has grown cold. To those affected by this famine, our Joseph, the one who is Christ our Lord, supplies from his granaries the daily abundance of the bread of his body, and on tasting it we see that the Lord is sweet. It was said that Joseph gained from Pharaoh the whole of Egypt. Of our Joseph it is said that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.*

⁴ A Word in Season - vol. VII - Augustinian Press - 1999 - pg 89

On the mysteries of our redemption hidden and revealed in the heart of Jesus; a prayer from the *Meditations* of William of St. Thierry. 1

O Truth supreme, you are the heaven of heavens, you who are what you are, who have your being from yourself, who belong to yourself and are sufficient to yourself. You lack nothing, yet you have no excess; ...you have within yourself supremest concord, utmost clarity, most perfect fullness and completest life.

...O Lord, the height, the depth, the wisdom and the mightCare these the heaven of which you are the door? It is so, truly; that is why the ark of the covenant was seen in heaven when the door was opened, as [St.] John says. For what does the ark of the covenant that was seen in heaven mean, if not, as the Apostle [Paul] says: *Athe dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning has been hidden in God, who created all things@?* You are yourself that ark. In you from all eternity was hidden, and in you in these latter days has been fulfilled, all that from the beginning of the world has been revealed to all the saints and prophets by the Law and by the prophecies, by wonders and by signs....

These blessings, that were hidden in your secret heaven through the ages, you at the ages= end unveiled to the world=s longing eyes, when you opened in heaven the door that is yourself. You opened that door when your grace appeared to all [people], teaching us.... The heavens being thus opened, all the good and glory and delight of heaven poured itself out on earth. And then, O God, who spared not your own Son, but delivered him up for us all, the greatness of your kindness... to us was published openly to all. You made known your salvation to the world, and in the sight of all the nations you revealed your righteousness....

Those unsearchable riches of your glory, Lord, were hidden in your secret place in heaven until the soldier=s spear opened the side of your Son our Lord and Savior on the cross, and from it flowed the mysteries of our redemption. Now we may not only thrust our finger or our hand into his side, like Thomas, but through that open door may enter whole, O Jesus, even into your heart, the sure seat of your mercy, even into your holy soul that is filled with the fullness of God, full of grace and truth, full of our salvation and our consolation....

Open, O Lord, the ark-door of your side, that all your own who shall be saved may enter in, before this flood that overwhelms the earth. Open to us your body=s side, that those who long to see the secrets of your Son may enter in, and may receive the sacraments that flow [from there], even the price of their redemption. Open the door of your heaven, that your redeemed may see the good things of God in the land of the living, though they still labor in the land of the dying....

O good Father, loving Brother, and sweet Lord, you are all that is good and sweet and loving; the sum of goodness overflows in you. Open yourself to us, that your sweetness may flow forth from you to us, and fill us. Open yourself to me, O you who are the door, so that through you I may by longing love attain sometimes to the place of your wondrous dwelling, even to the house of God, although I am not worthy yet to enter there in full reality....

Open to me, O Lord, so that, although I am a stranger unworthy of enrollment as a citizen, yet nonetheless, I may by your gift be suffered on occasion for a little while to journey there, that I may truly see your glory, and not come out again unless I am thrown out!....

O, if only I may see, if only I may persevere, if only I may hear some day: *Enter into the joy of your Lord,* and may thus enter in, never to come out again! Lord, you are mighty and your truth is all about you. Finish your work and give what you have promised.

A Reading about the Pillars of the Earth, from a Sermon by St. Aelred of Rievaulx⁵

*Though the earth and all who dwell in it may rock,
it is I who uphold its pillars [Ps. 75(74):4]*

The pillars of the earth, my brothers, are the holy apostles, especially these two whose feast we celebrate today. They are the pillars who support holy Church through their doctrine, their prayers, and through the example of their patience. These are the pillars our Lord upholds. Previously, they were very weak and unable to support themselves or others. Yet this was a great dispensation of the Lord. For if they had always been strong, someone could think that they had always had this strength from themselves. For that reason our Lord wished to show first what they were of themselves, and then afterwards to uphold them, so that all might know that all their strength was from God. Again, because they were to be Fathers of the Church and physicians to cure the weak, they would not know how to have compassion for others' weaknesses unless they first had felt their own weakness. The Lord therefore upholds the pillars of the earth, that is, of holy Church.

For these pillars were very weak: obviously saint Peter was weak, for example, when the voice of one maidservant cast him down. Afterward, the Lord upheld that pillar: first, when He asked him three times, *Peter, do you love Me?* and three times Peter answered, *I do love you [Jn 21]*. For as Peter diminished that love of our Lord in himself when he denied Him three times, and therefore this pillar failed and was broken; so through Peter's confessing his love three times, this pillar was upheld. That other pillar, Paul, was undoubtedly weak, too. For sins are a weakness of the soul, and hear how weak he was: *I who before was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and insulted Him [1 Tim 1]*. Again when he was prostrate and blind and led into the city; when Ananias came to him and instructed him, then he was weak. But hear how strong he was afterwards: *I am certain, he says, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor any other creature can separate me from the Love of God [Rom 8]*.

And note that when Peter answered, *I do love you*, the Lord immediately said to him *Feed My sheep [ibid.]*; as if to say: Show me the love you have for Me in this way: by feeding My sheep. Therefore, my brothers, he who does not wish to feed Christ's sheep, falsely says that he loves God. But someone may say: What is all this to us? This pertains to bishops, to abbots, to priests who have the care of souls. That is true, my brothers, it does pertain to them; but it also pertains to you. For Christ's sheep are fed in two ways: by word and by

⁵ Sermo XVI in Die SS. Petri et Pauli, Migne PL 299-300, 301 & 302.

example. Certainly there are many prelates or superiors in the Church who can sufficiently feed Christ's sheep by their words; but because they live badly, they would feed them better if they were silent or physically went away. They would thus give the sheep an example of humility, of poverty, abstinence, chastity and the other virtues. Yet that prelate or superior who does both does better, i.e., he feeds the sheep both by his word and by his example. If a prelate or superior cannot do both, it is better to feed Christ's sheep by his example than by his words. Therefore, my brothers, if you love our Lord, live so that the sheep of Christ may be fed by your example, as the Lord says: *So let your works shine before men, that they may glorify your Father Who is in Heaven [Matt 5]*.

But in each soul our Lord also has some sheep, that is, some virtues which he who loves Christ must feed. These sheep are: charity, humility, spiritual joy, and the like. We feed these sheep when we do works that make these virtues grow in us. And each one of us must also feed these sheep, these virtues, in the others. We do this if we so conduct ourselves before our brothers that their charity, their joy, their humility and patience grow by our example. For how do I feed humility in my brother, if I am proud before him, if I speak proudly, answer him proudly, walk proudly? How do I feed obedience in my brother, if he sees me contrary and disobedient? How do I feed his patience if I grumble, am irascible, or speak or make signs harshly before him? He who does these things before his brother does not feed Christ's sheep in him; but so far as he can, he destroys and kills them, because he scandalizes his brother. But he who scandalizes his brother, sins against his brother. And who sins against his brother, as the Apostle says, sins against Christ [1 Cor 8]. Therefore if you love Christ, my brothers, feed Christ's sheep, and you will belong to these pillars which are upheld by Christ's love. And let us place before our eyes the life and death of these saints and their reward, my brothers; let us think that if we imitate their sufferings as we can, without doubt we will be joined to their lot. May the Lord grant us this through their merits. Amen.