

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY

VIGILS READINGS: Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time
July 28-August 3, 2019

SUNDAY, JULY 28, 2019

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by St. Bede ¹

Our Lord and Savior wishes us to attain the joy of the heavenly kingdom, and so he taught us to pray for it, promising to give it to us if we did so. *Ask, he said, and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.*

We should consider most seriously and attentively what these words of the Lord may mean for us, for they warn that not the idle and lazy but those who ask, seek, and knock will receive, find and have the door opened to them. We must therefore ask for entry into the kingdom by prayer, seek it by upright living, and knock at its door by perseverance. Merely to ask verbally is not enough; we must also diligently seek to discover how to live so as to be worthy of obtaining what we ask for. We know this from our Savior's words: *Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father.*

There is a need, then, for constant and unflagging prayer. Let us fall upon our knees with tears before our God and Maker; and that we may deserve a hearing, let us consider carefully how he who made us wishes us to live, and what he has commanded us to do. *Let us seek the Lord and his strength; let us constantly seek his face.* And in order to become worthy of finding him and gazing upon him, *let us cleanse ourselves from all defilements of body and spirit*, for only the chaste of body can be raised up to heaven on the day of resurrection; only the pure of heart can contemplate the glory of the divine Majesty.

If we would know what the Lord wishes us to ask for, let us listen to the gospel text: *Seek first the kingdom of God and its justice, and these other things will be given you as well.* To seek the kingdom of God and its justice is to long for the graces of our heavenly homeland, and to give constant

thought to the kind of upright living that will deserve to obtain them; for should we chance to stray from the path that leads there we shall never be able to reach our goal.

To ask God for the justice of his kingdom is to ask principally for faith, hope and love. These virtues above all we should strive to obtain, for Scripture says: *The upright live by faith; mercy surrounds those who hope in the Lord; and To love is to fulfill the law, for the whole law is summed up in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* And so the Lord graciously promises that *the Father will give the good Spirit to those who ask him*, in order to show that those who of themselves are evil can become good only by receiving the grace of the Spirit. He promises the good Spirit will be given by the Father because whether it is faith, hope or any other virtue we desire to obtain, we shall do so only by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

As we do our best, then, to follow in our Lord's footsteps, let us ask God the Father for the grace of his Spirit to lead us along the path of that true faith which works through love. And that we may deserve to obtain our desire, let us strive to live in a way that will not make us unworthy of so great a Father; let us preserve inviolate in body and soul the sacramental rebirth of our baptism which made us children of God. Then, if we keep the almighty Father's commandments, he will certainly reward us with the eternal blessing which from the beginning he prepared as our heritage through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Holy Spirit lives and reigns with him, God for ever and ever. Amen.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – New York – 2000 – pg 102

MONDAY, JULY 29, 2019:

A reading about receiving Christ in our soul, from a Sermon by St. Aelred of Reivaulx (CSQ 32 : 45, 48)

Jesus entered a certain fortress, and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister named Mary. You have heard in the Gospel about the great happiness of the two women. Truly, brothers, great was the happiness of Martha, who welcomed such a guest,

who waited upon him, who was completely engaged with serving him. Great was the happiness of Mary, who recognized the excellence of her guest, who listened to his wisdom and tasted his sweetness. For in this way the evangelist recounts the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ entered a fortress, where a certain woman who was called Martha welcomed him into her house and waited upon him. She had a certain sister, who was called Mary, who, as soon as Jesus entered, immediately hastened to his feet and sat there and listened to his sweet words. She was attentive upon the words of the Lord to such an extent, that she cared nothing about what might be done in the house, what anyone was saying, or indeed even how hard her sister was working.

And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house And she had a sister named Mary. If therefore, brothers, our soul according to what we have said, becomes a fortress, it is fitting that two women live in it: one who sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to his words, the other who waits upon Jesus and feeds him. Consider this brothers: if Mary were alone in this house, there would be no one to feed the Lord; if Martha were alone, there would be no one to take delight in the discourses and presence of the Lord. Therefore, brothers, Martha signifies that action by which a person labors for Christ, and Mary signifies that rest by which a person ceases from bodily activities and takes delight in the sweetness of God, either through reading, prayer, or contemplation. Therefore, brothers, as long as Christ is poor and goes about afoot on earth, and is hungry and thirsty, and is tempted, it is necessary that both of these women dwell in one house, that both of their actions be in one soul.

As long as you or I or anyone else is on earth, he himself is present in the world, if we are his members. Whenever those who are his members are hungry, thirsty, and tempted, then Christ will be hungry, thirsty, and tempted. For this reason, Christ himself will say on the day of judgment: Whenever you, did it to one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you did it to me. Therefore, brothers, in this miserable and burdensome life, it is necessary that Martha be in our house, that is, that our soul be busy with bodily activities. As long as we must eat and drink, then we have to labor. As long as we are tempted by carnal pleasures, it is necessary for us to tame the flesh by vigils, fasts, and bodily labor. This part is Martha's. Mary

also should be in our soul, for she represents activity of spirit. We should not always give ourselves to bodily exercises but occasionally should rest and see how delightful, how sweet, is the Lord; we should sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his word. In no way ought you to neglect Mary because of Martha, nor again Martha because of Mary. If you neglect Martha who will feed Jesus? If you neglect Mary, what will it benefit you that Jesus entered your house, since you taste nothing of his sweetness?

TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2019:

Meditation One by William of St. Thierry ¹

“O the depth of the Wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways are past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?” For you have mercy, Lord, on whom you will have mercy; you have pity on whom you will have pity. Election “is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

The earthen vessel recoils from the hand of him who made it, of him who says by the Prophet: “I have made, and I will bear.” Deserving of destruction as it is, fit to be crushed and broken, it breaks away from the hand that carries it and cries: “Why does he then find fault? For who resists his will?” And it continues: “Why have you made me thus?”

That, O eternal Wisdom, is how the earthen vessel speaks to you! Thus speaks the pot of clay, the vessel of reproach and wrath, made for perdition, when it behoves it rather to tremble before you and to pray to you who, out of the selfsame lump, have power to make one vessel for an honorable use, another for reproach. But the chosen vessels, those that are made for honor, they endure. They are the vessels of mercy prepared by you for your glory; and they do not speak like that, but rather they acknowledge you as their creator and their potter, and themselves clay to which your hand has given form. And woe betide them if they fall away from your hand, for then they will be broken and crushed and reduced to nothing! They know this, and do not forsake your grace.

Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy! You are our potter and we are the clay. Somehow or other, we have held together until now; we are still

carried by your mighty hand, and we are still clinging to your three fingers: faith, hope and charity, with which you support the whole great bulk of earth – that is to say, the whole weight of your holy Church. Cleanse our reins and our hearts by the fire of your Holy Spirit, and establish the work that you have wrought in us, lest we be loosed asunder and return again to clay or nothingness. We were created for you by you yourself, and towards you our face is set. We acknowledge you our maker and creator; we adore your wisdom and pray that it may order all our life. We adore your goodness and mercy, and beg them ever to sustain and help us. You who have made us, bring us to perfection; perfect in us the image and likeness of yourself for which you made us.

[1](#)The Works of William of St. Thierry – vol. 1 – Cistercian Fathers Series - #3 – Cistercian Publications – Spencer, MA – 1971 - pg89

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2019:

RULES FOR THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS by St Ignatius Loyola¹

1. In the case of those who go from one mortal sin to another, the enemy is ordinarily accustomed to propose apparent pleasures. He fills their imagination with sensual delights and gratifications, the more readily to keep them in their vices and increase the number of their sins.

With such persons the good spirit uses a method which is the reverse of the above. Making use of the light of reason, he will rouse the sting of conscience and fill them with remorse.

2. In the case of those who go on earnestly striving to cleanse their souls from sin and who seek to rise in the service of God to greater perfection, the method pursued is the opposite of that mentioned in the first rule.

¹THE TREASURY OF CATHOLIC WISDOM, Ed by John A. Hardon, S.J. (Doubleday NY, 1987) pp. 408-409.

Then it is characteristic of the evil spirit to harass with anxiety, to afflict with sadness, to raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul. Thus he seeks to prevent the soul from advancing.

It is characteristic of the good spirit, however, to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This he does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good.

3. Spiritual Consolations: I call it consolation when an interior movement is aroused in the soul, by which it is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and as a consequence, can love no creature on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of them all. It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears that move to the love of God, whether it be because of sorrow for sins, or because of the sufferings of Christ our Lord, or for any other reason that is immediately directed to the praise and service of God. Finally, I call consolation every increase of faith, hope and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts to what is heavenly and to the salvation of one's soul by filling it with peace and quiet in its Creator and Lord.

4. Spiritual Desolation: I call desolation what is entirely the opposite of what is described in the third rule, as darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of love. The soul is wholly slothful, tepid, sad, and separated, as it were, from its Creator and Lord. For just as consolation is the opposite of desolation, so the thoughts that spring from consolation are the opposite of those that spring from desolation.

5. In time of desolation we should never make any change, but remain firm and constant in the resolution and decision which guided us the day before the desolation, or in the decision to which we adhered in the preceding consolation. For just as in consolation the good spirit guides and counsels us, so in desolation the evil spirit guides and counsels. Following his counsels we can never find the way to a right decision.

Though in desolation we must never change our former resolutions, it will be very advantageous to intensify our activity against the desolation. We can insist more upon prayer, upon meditation, and on much examination of ourselves. We can make an effort in a suitable way to do some penance.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2019:

From a sermon by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, bishop 2

All holiness and perfection of soul lies in our love for Jesus Christ our God, who is our Redeemer and our supreme good. It is part of the love of God to acquire and to nurture all the virtues that make one perfect.

Has not God in fact won for himself a claim on all our love? From all eternity he has loved us. And it is in this vein that he speaks to us: “O consider carefully that I first loved you. You had not yet appeared in the light of day, nor did the world yet exist, but already I loved you. From all eternity I have loved you.”

Since God knew that we are enticed by favors, he wished to bind us to his love by means of his gifts: “I want to catch mortals with these snare, these chains of love in which they allow themselves to be entrapped, so that they will love me.” And all the gifts which he bestowed on us were given to this end. He gave us a soul, made in his likeness, and endowed with memory, intellect and will; he gave us a body equipped with the senses; it was for us that he created heaven and earth and such an abundance of things. He made all things out of love for us, so that all creation might serve us, and we in turn might love God out of gratitude for so many gifts.

But God did not wish to give us only beautiful creatures; the truth is that to win for himself our love, he went so far as to bestow upon us the fullness of himself. The eternal Father went so far as to give us his only Son. When he saw that we were all dead through sin and deprived of his grace, what did he do? Compelled, as the Apostle says, by the superabundance of

his love for us, he sent his beloved Son to make reparation for us and to call us back to a sinless life.

By giving us his Son, whom he did not spare precisely so that he might spare us, he bestowed on us every good: grace, love and heaven; for all these goods are certainly inferior to the Son: *He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for all of us; how could he fail to give us along with his Son all good things?*

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 2019:

A Reading from the Golden Epistle by William of St Thierry ¹

The cell is holy ground and a holy place in which the Lord and his servant often talk together as a man dines with his friend; in which the faithful soul frequently has intercourse with the Word of God, the bride is in company with the Bridegroom, the heavenly is united to the earthly, the divine to the human. Indeed as a church is a place holy to God, so the cell is the sanctuary of God's servant.

For both in a church and in a cell the things of God are practiced, but more continually in the cell. In a church at certain times the sacraments of Christian religion are dispensed visibly and in figure, while in cells as in heaven the reality which underlies all the sacraments of our faith is continually celebrated with as much truth, in the same order, although not yet with the same untarnished magnificence or the same security that marks eternity.

Therefore, as has been said, the cell quickly expels as an abortion the man who does not belong to it, is not its true son; it vomits him forth like useless and harmful food. The workshop of piety cannot long suffer such a one to remain in its bosom. The foot of pride comes and the sinner's hand carries him off to another place; he is cast out and cannot find anywhere to settle, he flees in misery, naked and trembling, like Cain before the face of the Lord. Or if he does continue in the cell for some time it is not through the constancy which virtue breeds but through an obstinacy that makes him wretched, and so his cell is like a prison for him or like a sepulchre that has swallowed up a living man.

However the wise man will be all the wiser for the punishment of the fool, and the just man will wash his hands in the blood of the sinner. Therefore, as the Prophet says: "If you are converted, Israel, be converted," that is to say, attain to the summit of perfect conversion. For no one is allowed to remain long in the same condition. The servant of God must always either make progress or go back; either he struggles upwards or he is driven down into the depths.

But from all of you perfection is demanded, although not the same kind from each. If you are beginning begin perfectly; if you are already making progress be perfect also in your doing of that; if you have already achieved some measure of perfection measure yourselves by yourselves and say with the apostle: "Not that I have already won the prize, already reached fulfillment. I only press on, in the hope of winning the mastery, as Christ Jesus has won the mastery over me. This at least I do: forgetting what I have left behind, intent on what lies before me, I press on with the goal in view, eager for the prize, God's heavenly summons in Christ Jesus."

Then he adds: "All of us who are perfect must be of this mind." Clearly the apostle's teaching in this passage is that the perfection of the just man in this life consists in wholly forgetting what lies behind him and pressing on with might and main to what lies before. And the place where the perfection of this perfection will be achieved is where the prize of God's heavenly summons will be grasped with full security.

1The Golden Epistle – William of St Thierry – Cistercian Fathers Series #12 – Cistercian Publications – Kalamazoo, MI – 1971 – pg 22

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 2019:

A reading on the loveliness of the Virgin Mary, by Amadeus of Lausanne (CF 18: 125-126)

How precious in the sight of God is his mother's death! What life will equal her death? What joy her passing? You may bring together earthly loves, feasts and triumphal banquets, everything that sweetens and delights the whole world, yet this [death] is lovelier and sweeter than them all. For it is a liberation from the flesh, a road to life involving no pain, no bitterness, no

terror. In place of pain, it cherishes; instead of bitterness it delights; and in place of terror it strengthens the faith of the one who stands on the shore. It brings no darkness, for it reveals eternal light. It does not take away life for it directs to the author of life.

By this death the glorious lady departed, if we may call a passing into life 'death'. Rather, to speak truly, life is where death alone dies, where the body of death is shed, where the life of the flesh now departed in a holy rest is preserved for the time to come with manifest gains. Is it not life when one goes to the source of life and drinks eternal life from life in an unbroken stream? Of this unfailing draft the virgin Mother tasted even before her death, so that in her very passing she should not be touched by the slightest taste of death. Therefore as she went forth she saw life, that she might not see death. She saw her Son that she might not grieve at her separation from the flesh. Therefore going out free with such a happy vision and being possessed of the face of God that she had longed for, she found the revered citizens of heaven ready to render service and attend her.

They marvel that this soul of unique merit, freed from the everlasting taint of sin had not a spot of the flesh or of the world. They marvel that, freed from the body, she glowed with the grace of perfect purity. What should they first praise in her: integrity or humility, prudence or charity, vigor of mind or forbearance, the honor of her motherhood or the novelty of the birth? But yet more praised in her is her perfect virtue and fullness of grace.

Therefore the Lord, present at her departure from the body, thus proclaims her praises: 'You are all lovely, my mother, and there is no spot in you. You are all lovely, he says, lovely in thought, lovely in word, lovely in deed, lovely from your beginning to your end, lovely in the virgin conception, lovely in the divine birth, lovely in the crimson of my passion, lovely in the brightness of my glorious resurrection.

END OF READINGS