

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY
VIGILS READINGS
Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time
July 7-13, 2019

SUNDAY, JULY 7, 2019:

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

The gospel for today raises a question. When the Lord told his disciples that the harvest was indeed abundant but laborers were scarce and urged them to ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers out to harvest his crop, which crop did he have in mind? That was the point at which he increased the group of twelve disciples whom he had named his apostles by the addition of another seventy-two, and his words make it clear that he sent all these out to gather in the ripe grain.

But which crop did he mean? Evidently not a crop of Gentiles, from whom there was nothing to be reaped because there had as yet been no sowing among them. The conclusion must be that the crop in question consisted of Jews. The Jewish people were the harvest to which the Lord of the harvest came, and to which he dispatched his reapers. To the Gentiles he could send no reapers at that time, only sowers. We may understand, then, that harvest time among the Jews coincided with sowing time among the Gentiles, for out of the Jewish crop, sown by the prophets and now ripe for harvesting, the apostles were chosen.

Here we have the joy of observing the divine husbandry. How good it is to see God's gifts and watch the laborers in the field! Consider his twofold harvest, the one already reaped, the other still to come. That of the Jews is over and done, but there is a crop yet to be gathered in from the Gentiles. Now let us see if this can be demonstrated. And what better place to look for evidence than the holy scriptures of the divine Lord of the harvest? Here in this very chapter of the gospel we have the saying: *The harvest is rich but the laborers are few; ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest.* This harvest is the people to whom the prophets preached, sowing the seed so that the apostles might gather in the sheaves. For the seed to sprout it was sufficient for the prophets to sow, but the ripe grain had to wait for the apostles' sickle.

Another time the Lord told his disciples: *You say that summer is still far off. Lift up your eyes and see that the fields are already white with ripe grain!* And he added: *Others have toiled over it, and you have entered into their labors.* Those others were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the prophets. Because they worked hard at sowing, at the Lord's coming the grain was found to be ripe. Then the reapers were sent out, wielding the gospel as their sickle. They were to greet no one on the road, which meant they were to have no aim or activity apart from proclaiming the Good News in a spirit of brotherly love. When they arrived at a house they were to say: *Peace be to this house.* This greeting was no mere formula; being filled with peace themselves, the apostles spread it abroad, proclaiming peace and at the same time possessing it. Consequently when one of them, fully at peace with himself, pronounced the blessing: *Peace be to this house,* then if a lover of peace were in that house, the apostle's peace would rest upon him.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – New York – 2000 – pg 96

MONDAY, JULY 8, 2019:

From a Letter of St. Bernard of Clairveaux to Pope Eugenius

The tidings of the great things which the Lord has done for you "have been heard in our land" and universally discussed. "Seeing I have once begun, I will speak to my lord". I no longer dare to call him my son, because the son has been made the father and the father has become the son. He who came after me, "the same is preferred before me". However, I do not envy him, because that which was wanting to myself, I now possess (as I trust) in him, who came not only after me, but through me as well. For if you will allow me to say so, I have in a manner "begotten you by the Gospel". "What, therefore, is our hope, our joy, our crown of glory?" for so it is written, "A wise son is the glory of his father". Yet you shall no longer be called son, but "you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord has named". "This is the change of the right hand of the Most High", and many shall rejoice in it. For just as of old Abram was changed to Abraham, and Jacob to Israel; and to present you with examples from among your predecessors - just as Simon was changed to Cephas, and Saul

to Paul, in the same way has my son Bernard been changed into my father Eugenius, by what I hope is a joyous profitable transformation. "This is the finger of God", Who "raises up the needy from the dust, and lifts up the poor from the dunghill, that he may sit with princes and hold the throne of glory".

It remains now that, beyond this change in yourself, she also who has been committed to your care, I mean the Spouse of the Lord, should be changed for the better, so that she may no longer be called Sarai, but Sara. For you must not regard her as in any sense your own, although you should be ready, if necessary, to lay down even your life for her. If you have been truly sent by Christ, you will consider yourself to have come not to be ministered to but to minister, and to minister not only your substance, but even your very life. The true successor of Paul will say with Paul, "Not because we exercise dominion over your faith; but we are helpers of your joy". And Peter's heir will listen to Peter's voice where he says, "Neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock". For thus, she - the Spouse - being no longer a slave, but free now and even beautiful, shall at last be admitted through you to the coveted embraces of her beautiful Bridegroom.

TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2019:

A Reading from Origen's Homilies on Genesis.¹

"And the spirit of Jacob their father was revived. And Israel said: 'It is a great thing for me if Joseph my son is still living.'"

What Latin expresses by saying: "his spirit was revived," is written in Greek *anezopyresen*. This means not so much to revive as to rekindle, so to speak, and reignite. This expression is usually used when, perhaps in some material, the fire fails to the point that it appears to be extinguished; and if perhaps it be renewed when kindling has been added, it is said to have been rekindled. Or if the light of a lamp should reach the point that it be thought to have gone out, if perhaps it be revived when oil has been

¹Origen: *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*. The Fathers of the Church Vol 71. Tr. Ronald E Heine. 1982. Homily XV p.205-7

poured in, although the expression is less precise, the lamp is said to have been rekindled. One will speak similarly also of a torch or other lights of this kind.

This expression seems to indicate something like this also in Jacob. As long as he was far from Joseph and received no information about his life, his spirit had failed in him, as it were, and the light which was in him had been darkened, as the kindling already failed. But when those who reported to him about Joseph's life came, that is those who said that "the life was the light of men," he rekindles his spirit in himself, and the brightness of the true light is renewed in him.

But because occasionally the divine fire can be extinguished even in the saints and faithful, hear the apostle Paul warning these who were worthy to receive gifts of the Spirit and grace, and saying: "Extinguish not the Spirit." The Scripture says of Jacob, therefore: "It is a great thing for me if my son Joseph is still living," as if he has experienced something like that which Paul warned against and has renewed himself through those words which had been spoken to him about Joseph's life.

But this also should be noticed, that he who "rekindled his spirit," meaning, of course, that spirit which seemed almost extinguished, is said to be Jacob. But he who says: "It is a great thing for me if my son Joseph is living," as if he understands and sees that the life which is in the spiritual Joseph is great, is no longer called Jacob, but Israel, as it were, he who sees in his mind the true life which is Christ, the true God.

But he is excited not only about the fact that he has heard that "Joseph his son is living," but also especially about that which has been announced to him that it is Joseph who holds "dominion over all Egypt." For the fact that he has reduced Egypt to his rule is truly great to him. For to tread on lust, to flee luxury, and to suppress and curb all the pleasures of the body, this is what it means to have "dominion over all Egypt." And this is what is considered great and held in admiration by Israel.

But if there is someone who should subject at least some vices of the body, but yield to others and be subject to them, it is not said correctly that one holds dominion over the whole land of Egypt, but, such a one appears to hold dominion over one, perhaps, or two, or three cities. But Joseph, whom no bodily lust ruled, was prince and Lord "of all Egypt."

Therefore no longer Jacob, but Israel, whose spirit has been rekindled, says: "It is a great thing for me if Joseph my son is living. I will go and see him before I die."

But not even this is to be neglected idly, that the text says not the soul, but the spirit as it is better part, was revived or rekindled. For indeed the brightness of the light which was in him, even if it was not completely extinguished then when his sons showed him Joseph's robe stained with the blood of a kid, and he could be deceived by their lie so that "he tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned his son nor did he wish at all to be consoled," but said: "I go down to my son into the nether world, mourning," even if then, as we said, the light in him had not been completely extinguished, nevertheless it had been darkened in the greatest degree because he could be deceived, because he could tear his garments, because he could mourn by mistake, because he could call on death, because he desired to go down into the nether world, mourning. On account of these things, therefore, he now revives and "rekindles his spirit," because it followed logically that hearing the truth would rekindle and restore the light which the deceit of a lie had obscured in him.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019:

A Reading from Pathways in Scriptures by Damasus Winzen²

Among the descendants of Jacob, Joseph and Judah are outstanding - the former as a type of Christ, the latter as his ancestor. The story of Joseph is, from an aesthetic point of view, the unsurpassed jewel of Old Testament literary art. For one who reads it "in the Spirit" it is a story of the salvation of the world through Christ. Joseph, the son of Jacob, who through the jealousy of his brothers is sold into slavery, put into the pit and into prison, then exalted to the throne of Pharaoh, saves not only Israel but Egypt as well. His life is the prophetic prelude to the history of the suffering servant of God, the one refused by all the sons of Jacob, the brother sold for thirty pieces of silver, who descended into hell and was exalted to the

²Pathways in Scriptures, Damasus Winzen. Word of Life, Ann Arbor, Michigan: 1976 pp. 34-35.

right hand of the Father. At the blessing of Joseph's two sons by Jacob, divine love once again prefers the younger to the older. To put his right hand on the younger and his left hand on the elder one, Jacob must needs extend his hands in the form of the cross.

The words of the dying Jacob with which he blessed his son Judah clearly point to the messiah-king who will spring from the tribe of Judah: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the rod from between his feet, until the ruler comes to whom the nations shall be obedient... He washes his robe in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes". The rule of the messiah-king shall be universal. His robe signifies the Church which he washes in the "blood grapes" by cleansing her with his blood on the cross and in the sacrament of the holy Eucharist.

Only from the fact that the Messiah will be a son of Judah can the attitude of Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, be understood. Her deed typifies the longing of the Church to be the mother of the Messiah. That of Tamar's twin sons the younger one, Perez, becomes the ancestor of David, and therefore of Christ, represents another one of those strange "twists of fate" through which the love of God asserts its superiority over the claims of birth.

THURSDAY, JULY 11, 2019:

The Meekness of St. Benedict as our holy Father. From a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny³

"He sanctified him through his faith and meekness". (Sir. 45:4)
Moses is the real subject of this verse, but today I think it can be applied very well to Saint Benedict. Filled as he was filled with the spirit of all the saints, he must be considered much more to have not a little of the spirit of Moses. For if the Lord drew from the spirit of Moses and inspired with it every one of those who shared his ministry, how much more must it rest on

³ Liturgical Sermons of Gueric of Igny. vol. 2, Cistercian Fathers Series. Cistercian Publications. Spencer, MA. 1971. p. 24f.

him who more truly fulfilled on a more spiritual level the fullness of his whole ministry? Moses was the leader of those making their way out of Egypt; Benedict of those turning their backs on the world. They have both given a law. But the one was the minister of the letter that kills, the other, of the spirit that gives life. Moses, owing to the hardness of the hearts of the Jews, apart from a few guides to behavior, left no prescriptions adequate to the task of justification; Benedict however has handed on the unique purity of the Gospel teaching and the simplicity of its way of life. So many of the things about which Moses writes are difficult to understand, impossible or useless to perform. Benedict on the other hand wrote a most excellent Rule of life remarkable both for the lucidity of its style and for its discretion. Finally although Moses was the leader of the children of Israel when they left the land of Egypt he did not lead them into their promised resting-place; whereas our leader, like the standard bearer of the army of monks, has today gone before us along the straight path, the path leading eastward, into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore it is not absurd to consider his merits equal to those of Moses, whose ministry he is found even to have surpassed.

It will not be unfitting therefore to apply to him what we read was written about the other: "**He sanctified him through his faith and meekness,**" especially since it is of these two virtues, faith and meekness, that he is our teacher; he could never have lived otherwise than as he taught.

What could be more notable than his faith? While still a mere youth he scorned the world that smiled upon him. He trampled on the flowers of the world and of his own body as if they were already withered. He desired to suffer the hardships of the world for the sake of God rather than to make merry in it for the moment. What could be more like the faith of Moses, which the apostle praises in the words: "**By faith Moses, when he was grown up, denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God than to have the pleasure of sin for a time.**"

And what could be holier than the meekness of our Father? He even refused to be provoked by the spite of those who were plotting to kill him, offering poison instead of wine. Moses indeed, so the Scripture tells us, was a man exceedingly meek, above all that dwelt upon the earth. But does it

deny that his spirit was ever provoked? Does it not tell us that he was not only annoyed but terribly enraged against all who stood in his path? As for the gentleness of our teacher, I remember reading that it was remarkable not only toward those who spoke against him, but also toward those who tried to do him harm. Of his wrath I have no recollection. It must not however be considered prejudicial to the praise of holy meekness in either him or Moses if the just one burns with zeal against sinners, since this is the zeal without which meekness would sink to the level of tepidity or timidity. "Brethren, have peace among you," commands the Master, so meek and peace-loving. But before this he gives an admonition: "Have salt in you." For he realized without a doubt that the meekness of peace is the nurse of vice unless a demanding zeal first sprinkles it with searing salt, just as warm weather causes meat to decay unless it is salted. Therefore have peace among you, but a peace that is seasoned with the salt of wisdom. Seek after meekness, but a meekness that burns with faith.

FRIDAY, JULY 12, 2019:

The Meaning of Vocation – by St John Paul II ¹

Faith and love are not just words or vague feelings. Believing and loving God means a consistent life, lived wholly in the light of the Gospel. This is not easy. It often calls for great courage in going against the trends of fashion and the opinions of our world. But this is the one requirement for a truly successful and happy life.

If, in spite of your personal effort to follow Christ you are sometimes weak and do not live in conformity to the law of love, to the commandments, do not be discouraged. Christ continues to wait for you. He, Jesus, is the Good Shepherd who searches for the lost sheep and who tenderly bears it on his shoulder. Christ is the friend who never lets you down.

In the gospel story we see that the young man, having affirmed that he has kept the commandments, adds: "What do I still lack?" The young heart, moved by God's grace, felt a desire for greater generosity, more commitment, greater love. This desire for more is characteristic of youth; a

heart that is in love does not calculate, does not begrudge, it wants to give of itself without measure. “Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, come, follow me.”

To those who entered the path of life by observing the commandments, the Lord proposes new horizons; the Lord proposes to the means that are loftier and calls them to commit themselves to his love without reserve. To discover this call, this vocation, is to realize that Christ is looking on you and inviting you by his glance to give yourself totally in love. Before this glance, before his love, the heart opens its doors gradually and is capable of saying *yes*.

If some of you hear the call to follow Christ more closely, to dedicate your entire heart to him, like the apostles John and Paul, be generous, do not be afraid, because you have nothing to fear when the prize that you await is God Himself, for whom, sometimes without ever knowing it, all young people are searching.

Young people who are hastening to me, young people who more than anything else want to know what you must do to gain eternal life, always say yes to God and he will fill you with his happiness.

“There is one thing you lack, come, follow me”. Is Jesus perhaps repeating to some of you today: “There is one thing you lack?” Is he perhaps asking for even more love, more generosity, more sacrifice? Yes, the love of Christ involves generosity and sacrifice. To follow Christ and to serve the world in his name requires courage and strength. There is no place for selfishness – and no place for fear! Do not be afraid, then, when love makes demands. Do not be afraid when love requires sacrifice.

To each one of you I say, therefore: Heed the call of Christ when you hear him saying to you: “Follow me!” Walk in my path! Stand by my side! Remain in my love! There is a choice to be made: a choice for Christ and the way of life, and his commandment of love.

SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2019:

A Reading about Mary and Waiting for Christ, from a book by Fr Jean Daniélou.ⁱ

The Blessed Virgin had a most crucial role in the first coming of Christ. In her culminated all the expectation of the Jewish people, insofar as all the preparations, aspirations, inspirations, graces, prefigurations which had filled the Old Testament, all came together and were summed up in her; it is true to say that at the eve of Christ's coming she was the epitome and incarnation of the long waiting of twenty centuries. The whole of the Old Testament seems to come together in her with a more ardent longing and a more complete spiritual preparation for Our Lord's coming. *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.* The work of the Old Testament was one of education: the human race, rugged, coarse, as yet unformed, still utterly carnal-minded, must be made able, bit by bit, to take God's gifts, to receive the Holy Spirit. It was a long, progressive work of training. And the training culminated in the soul of the Blessed Virgin; and if we can say that in some sense her soul is outside time, and that in her eternity is present, then we may also say that she was prepared by the education of the whole of her people: she is the marvelous flower sprung out of Israel, the final point in the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of all the prophets and all the holy women of Israel. It is in fact, absolutely true to say that in her *every valley was filled, every mountain and hill brought low.* That is to say, in her our Lord's path was smooth before Him.

All this, which was simply the preparation and foreshadowing of Christ in Our Lady's soul, is a reality still present to us, for the mystery we are now living in the world is the mystery of Christ's gradual coming into all souls, into all nations. Christ had appeared in the flesh, the culmination of Israel's hopes; Mary had seen him for whom she had waited, she had held in her arms the child born in Bethlehem, and with Simeon had been able to salute Him as a Light to enlighten the Gentiles. Christ, then, had certainly come. He has come, but He is always He that is to come. He has come, but not yet wholly come; and though the waiting of Israel had been crowned, Israel is nonetheless still waiting. We live always during Advent, we are

always waiting for the Messiah to come. He has come, but is not yet fully manifest. He is not fully manifest in each of our souls; He is not fully manifest in the world as a whole: that is to say, that just as Christ was born according to the flesh in Bethlehem of Juda so must He be born according to the spirit in each of our souls.

¹."Advent", New York 1951, 102-103, 109-110.

END OF READINGS