

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by St Basil the Great ¹

“The land of a rich man produced abundant harvests, and he thought to himself: What am I to do? I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones.”

Now why did that land bear so well, when it belonged to a man who would make no good use of its fertility? It was to show more clearly the forbearance of God, whose kindness extends even to such people as this. *He sends rain on both the just and unjust, and makes the sun rise on the wicked and the good alike.*

But what do we find in this man? A bitter disposition, hatred of other people, unwillingness to give. This is the return he made to his Benefactor. He forgot that we all share the same nature; he felt no obligation to distribute his surplus to the needy. His barns were full to the bursting point, but still his miserly heart was not satisfied. Year by year he increased his wealth, always adding new crops to the old. The result was a hopeless impasse: greed would not permit him to part with anything he possessed, and yet because he had so much there was no place to store his latest harvest. And so he is incapable of making a decision and could not escape from his anxiety. *What am I to do?*

Who would not pity a man so moppessed? His land yields him no profit but only sighs: it brings him no rich returns, but only cares and distress and a terrible helplessness. He laments in the same way as the poor do. Is not his cry like that of one hard pressed by poverty? *What am I to do?* How can I find food and clothing?

You who have wealth, recognize who has given you the gifts you have received. Consider yourself, who you are, what has been committed to your charge, from whom have you received it, why have you been preferred to most other people? You are the servant of the good God, a steward on behalf of your fellow servants. Do not imagine that everything has been provided for your own stomach. Take decisions regarding your property as though it belonged to another. Possessions give you pleasure for a short time, but then they will slip through your fingers and be gone, and you will be required to give an exact account of them.

What am I to do? It would have been so easy to say: “I will feed the hungry, I will open my barns and call in all the poor. I will imitate Joseph in proclaiming my good will toward everyone. I will offer the generous invitation: “Let anyone who lacks bread come to me. You shall share, each according to need, in the good things God has given me, just as though you were drawing from a common well.

¹ Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – 1994 – pg 104

MON

08.05.19

From the Golden Epistle by William of St Thierry [1](#)

To “seek the face of God” is to seek knowledge of him face to face, as Jacob saw him. It is of this knowledge the Apostle says: “Then I shall know as I am known; now we see in a confused reflection in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face, we shall see him as he is.” Always to seek God in this life by keeping the hands unstained and the heart clean is that piety which, as Job says, “is the worship of God.” The man who lacks it “has received his soul in vain,” that is to say, lives to no purpose or does not live at all, since he does not live the life to live which he received his soul.

This piety is the continual remembrance of God, an unceasing effort of the mind to know him, an unwearied concern of the affections to love him, so that, I will not say every day, but every hour finds the servant of God occupied in the labor of asceticism and the effort to make progress, or in the sweetness of experience and the joy of fruition. This is the piety concerning which the Apostle exhorts his beloved disciple in the words: “Train yourself to grow up in piety; for training the body avails but little, while piety is all-availing, since it promises well both for this life and for the next.

The habit you wear promises not only the outward form of piety but its substance, in all things and before all things, and that is what your vocation demands. For, as the apostle says again, there are some who exhibit the outward form of religion although they are strangers to its meaning.

If anyone among you does not possess this in his heart, display it in his life, practice it in his cell, he is to be called not a solitary but a man who is alone, and his cell is not a cell for him but a prison in which he is walled. For truly to be alone is not to have God with one. Truly to be walled in is not to be at liberty in God. Solitude and being walled in are words that denote wretchedness, whereas the cell should never involve being walled in by necessity but rather be the dwelling-place of peace, an inner chamber with closed door, a place not of concealment but of retreat.

The man who has God with him is never less alone than when he is alone. It is then he has undisturbed fruition of his joy. It is then he is his own master and is free to enjoy God in himself and himself in God. It is then that in the light of truth and the serenity of a clean heart a pure soul stands revealed to itself without effort, and the memory enlivened by God freely pours itself out in itself. Then either the mind is enlightened and the will enjoys its good or human frailty freely weeps over its shortcomings.

Accordingly as your vocation demands, dwelling in heaven rather than in cells, you have shut out the world, whole and entire, from yourselves and shut up yourselves, whole and entire, with God. For the cell (*cella*) and heaven (*coelum*) are akin to one another: the resemblance between the words is borne out by the devotion they both involve. For both appear to be derived from *celare*, to hide, and the same thing is hidden in cells as in

heaven, the same occupation characterizes both the one and the other. What is this?
Leisure devoted to God, the enjoyment of God.

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

TUE 08.06.19

Sermon of Pope St. Leo on the Transfiguration of Our Lord. ²

The Lord reveals His glory before His chosen witnesses, and glorifies that bodily form which He has in common with others, so that His face was like the brilliance of the sun and His garments equal to the whiteness of snow. In this transfiguration it was intended principally to take away from the disciples' hearts the scandal of the cross, lest the voluntary abjectness of His Passion should shake the faith of those to whom had been revealed the excellence of His hidden Majesty.

But neither by a lesser providence was the hope of Holy Church established, in that the whole Body of Christ would recognize by what kind of recompense it was to be blessed, so that its members might promise to themselves a participation in that honor which had shone in their Head. Yet, while the apostles were being strengthened and raised up to the summit of learning, another lesson also was given in that wonderful act. For Moses and Elias, that is, the Law and the Prophets, appeared talking with the Lord, so that most assuredly in the presence of these five men was effected what had been declared: "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand."

What is more lasting, more firm than the Word, in the proclamation of which the trumpet of both the old and the new Testaments blares forth, since the forecasts of the ancient testimonies agree also with the teaching of the Gospel? For the pages of both Covenants corroborate one another, and Him whom the signs that went before had promised under the veil of mysteries, the splendor of His present glory reveals manifest and within sight.

So, being aroused by the revelations of these mysteries, the Apostle Peter, spurning the things of the world and loathing all earthly things, in a kind of ecstasy of mind was ravished with a desire for things eternal, and overflowing with joy at the whole vision, he was desirous of dwelling there with Jesus, where he was gladdened by His manifested glory. And therefore he said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us set up three tents here, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." But to this suggestion the Lord gave no answer, showing that what he desired was not indeed unrighteous, but out of order, since the world could not be saved except through Christ's death; indeed, by our Lord's example the faith of believers should be made to note that, while it is proper that the promises of final happiness should not be questioned, we should, nevertheless, realize that, in the midst of the trials of this life, we should ask for patience rather than glory.

² *Liturgical Readings*, St. Meinrad's Abbey Press, 1943, pp. 432-433.

WED

08.07.19

St. Cajetan - Taken from Butler=s Lives of the Saints³

St Cajetan (Gaetano) was son of Caspar, Count of Thiene, of the nobility of Vicenza, where he was born in 1480. Two years later his father was killed, fighting for the Venetians against King Ferdinand of Naples. Cajetan went for four years to Padua University, where he distinguished himself in theology, and took the degree of doctor in civil and canon law in 1504. He then returned to his native town, of which he was made senator. In pursuance of his resolve to serve God as a priest he received the tonsure. In 1506 he went to Rome. Soon after his arrival Pope Julius II conferred on him the office of protonotary, with a benefice attached. On the death of Julius Cajetan refused his successor=s request to continue in that office, and devoted three years to preparing himself for the priesthood. He was ordained in 1516, being thirty-three years old, and returned to Vicenza in 1518.

Cajetan had re-founded a confraternity in Rome called Aof the Divine Love@, which was an association of zealous and devout clerics who devoted themselves to labor with all their power to promote God=s honor and the welfare of souls. At Vicenza he now entered himself in the Oratory of St. erome, which was instituted on the plan of that of the Divine Love but consisted only of men in the lowest station of life. This circumstance gave great offence to his friends, who thought it a reflection on the honor of his family. He persisted, however, and sought out the sick and the poor throughout the whole town, served them and cared for those who suffered from the most loathsome diseases in the hospital of the incurables. He founded a similar oratory at Verona and then went in 1520 to Venice where he took up his lodgings in the new hospital of that city. He remained in Venice for three years. He introduced exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in that city, as well as continuing the promotion of frequent communion.

The state of Christendom at this time shocked and distressed Cajetan, and in 1523 he went back to Rome to confer with his friends of the Oratory of Divine Love. They agreed that little could be done other than by reviving in the clergy the spirit and zeal of those holy pastors who first planted the faith, and a plan was formed for instituting an order of regular clergy upon the model of the lives of the Apostles. The first associates of Cajetan were John Peter Caraffa, who later became pope under the name of Paul IV. The institute was approved by Clement VII, and Caraffa was chosen as the first provost general. From the name of his episcopal see of Theatensis these clerks regular came to be distinguished from others as Theatines.

The success of the new congregation was not immediate, and in 1527, when it still numbered only a dozen members, the army of Emperor Charles V sacked Rome. The Theatines house was demolished and the members had to escape to Venice. Cajetan was sent to Verona, where both the clergy and the laity were opposing the reformation of

³ Butler=s Lives of the Saints, revised edition by Michael Walsh, Harper, San Francisco, 1991, pg. 240

discipline, which their bishop was endeavoring to introduce among them. A general improvement was the fruit of his example, preaching and labors.

Worn out with trying to appease civil strife in Naples, and disappointed at the suspension of the Council of Trent, from which he hoped so much for the Church's good, Cajetan had to take to his bed in the summer of 1547. The end came on Sunday, August 7. Many miracles wrought by his intercession were approved at Rome after rigorous scrutiny, and he was canonized in 1671.

A Reading from various writings on the history of the Order of Preachers.⁴

Dominic possessed such great integrity and was so strongly motivated by divine love, that without a doubt he proved to be a bearer of honor and grace. And since a joyful heart animates the face, he displayed the peaceful composure of a spiritual man in the kindness he manifested outwardly and by the cheerfulness of his countenance.

Wherever he went he showed himself in word and deed to be a man of the Gospel. During the day no one was more community-minded or pleasant toward his brothers and associates. During the night hours no one was more persistent in every kind of vigil and supplication. He seldom spoke unless it was with God, that is, in prayer, or about God; and in this matter instructed his brothers.

Frequently he made a special personal petition that God would deign to grant him genuine charity in caring for and obtaining the salvation of others. For he believed that only then would he be truly a member of Christ, when he had given himself totally for the salvation of others, just as the Lord Jesus, the Savior of all, had offered himself completely for our salvation. So, for this work, after a lengthy period of careful and provident planning, he founded the Order of Friars Preachers.

In his conversations and letters he often urged the brothers of the Order to study constantly the Old and New Testaments. He always carried with him the gospels according to Matthew and the epistles of Paul, and so well did he study them that he almost knew them from memory.

Two or three times he was chosen bishop, but he always refused, preferring to live with his brothers in poverty. Of him Pope Gregory IX declared: "I knew him as a steadfast follower of the apostolic way of life. There is no doubt that he is in heaven, sharing in the glory of the apostles themselves."

⁴Celebrating the Saints. Pueblo Publishing Co. 1973 p.208

FRI 08.09.19

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) ⁵

St Teresa Benedicta was born Edith Stein at Breslau, then in Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland), on October 12, 1891, the eleventh child of a Jewish family. Her mother was especially devout. As a schoolgirl and as a student Edith herself was a convinced atheist whose belief that there was no God nevertheless became her way to faith. When she was fifteen she decided never to pray again. But she was always in search of truth and subjected every issue to an intense intellectual scrutiny. As she recalled later, "My quest for truth was my only prayer."

At the universities of Gottingen and Freiburg she studied psychology, German literature, and history, but above all philosophy. She came under the influence of the phenomenological school and especially the thought of Edmmund Husserl. One of his pupils was the philosopher Heidegger, a former Jesuit novice and a major influence on thinkers as disparate as the philosopher Sartre and the theologian Karl Rahner.

At Gottingen, Edith was also impressed by the ideas of Max Scheler. He encouraged Edith to share his interest in the eliciting of ultimate, eternal and religious values as a prime philosophical task. He introduced her to the importance of contemporary Catholic thought. Edith wrote: "Suddenly the barriers of my rationalist prejudices, which I had never doubted as they developed in me, were lifted to reveal the world of faith."

She found the autobiography of St Teresa of Avila in a friend's house and read it in a single sitting. As she closed the book, she told herself "This is the truth!" She as baptized a Catholic on January 1, 1922. She was acutely aware of how this hurt her mother and later accompanied her to the synagogue and read the psalms with her. But Edith did not see her adoption of Christianity as a rejection of the Jewish people.

She was already drawn to the Carmelites, but it was ten years before she entered the Order. She taught philosophy at Speyer and Munster and consciously led her students along the way of knowledge to Christ. After her conscientious study of Thomism, and her grounding in phenomenology and in varieties of mystical thought, she herself became a profound thinker and mystic. Her writings testify to her constant exploration of the notions of love and sacrifice as concomitants of knowledge.

Edith finally joined the Carmelites at Cologne on October 12, 1933, after Hitler had been voted into power and become chancellor of Germany. She told her superior: "Human action cannot help us but only the sufferings of Christ. My aspiration is to share them." She made her final profession in 1938. In one of her letters she compared herself

⁵ Butler's Lives of the Saints – New Full Edition - August – Burns & Oates – The Liturgical Press – Collegeville, MN – 1998 – pg 75f

to Queen Esther in exile at the Persian court. "I believe that the Lord has called me on behalf of all my people."

Again and again Sr Teresa Benedicta referred to her increasing understanding of the destiny of the people of Israel in the light of the Cross and her personal sense of her task of expiation. She became convinced that "my people's destiny is also my own". In one of her prayers she says that she knows that it is the Cross of Christ that the Jewish people must bear and that anyone who realizes this must willingly agree to bear it on behalf of all: "I wanted to bear it. All he had to do was to show me how."

Sr Teresa left Cologne to protect her sisters in religion from Nazi persecution and went to the Carmelite house at Echt, in the Netherlands, determined to share the sufferings of Christ.

Unlike the bishops of other countries occupied by the Germans, where the policy of racial murder was generally enforced, the Catholic bishops of the Netherlands issued a pastoral letter protesting against the deportations. In response the Germans ordered that Christians of Jewish descent or converted from Judaism and resident in the Netherlands should be rounded up and dispatched for "resettlement". Accordingly, Sr Teresa, together with her sister Rosa, who had also taken refuge with the Echt Carmelites, was arrested on August 2, 1942. As they left the convent, Edith took her sister's hand and said: "Come on – we are on our way to our own people." She was murdered on August 9, 1942 in the gas chambers of the German extermination camp at Auschwitz, Poland. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II at Cologne on May 1, 1987 and canonized by him in 1998.

SAT 08.10.2019

From a sermon by St Augustine on the feast of St Lawrence ¹

The Roman Church commends to us today the anniversary of the triumph of St. Lawrence. For on this day he trod the furious pagan world underfoot and flung aside its allurements, and so gained victory over Satan's attack on his faith. As you have often heard, Lawrence was a deacon of the Church at Rome. There he ministered the sacred blood of Christ; there for the sake of Christ's name he poured out his own blood. St John the Apostle was evidently teaching us about the mystery of the Lord's supper when he wrote: *Just as Christ laid down his life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* My brethren, Lawrence understood this and, understanding, he acted on it. Just as he had partaken of a gift of self at the table of the Lord, so he prepared to offer such a gift. In his life he loved Christ; in his death he followed in his footsteps.

Brethren, we too must imitate Christ if we truly love him. We shall not be able to render better return on that love than by modeling our lives on his. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps.* In saying this, the Apostle Peter seems to have understood that Christ suffered only for those who follow in his steps, in the sense that Christ's passion is of no avail to those who do not. The holy martyrs followed Christ even to the shedding of their life's blood, even to reproducing the very likeness of his passion. They followed him, but not they alone. It is not true that the bridge was broken after the martyrs crossed; nor is it true that after they had drunk from it, the fountain of eternal life dried up.

I tell you again and again, my brethren, that in the Lord's garden are to be found not only the roses of his martyrs. In it there are also the lilies of the virgins, the ivy of wedded couples, and the violets of widows. On no account may any class of people despair, thinking that Christ has not called them. Christ suffered for all. What the Scriptures say of him is true: *He desires all to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.*

Let us understand, then, how a Christian must follow Christ even though he does not shed his blood for him, and his faith is not called upon to undergo the great test of the martyr's sufferings. The apostle Paul says of Christ our Lord: *Though he was in the form of God he did not consider equality with God a prize to be clung to.* How unrivaled his majesty! *But he emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave, made in human likeness, and presenting himself in human form.* How deep his humility!

Christ humbled himself. Christian, that is what you must make your own. *Christ became obedient.* How is it that you are proud? When this humbling experience was completed and death itself lay conquered, Christ ascended into heaven. Let us follow him there, for we hear Paul saying: *If you have been raised with Christ, you must lift your thoughts on high, where Christ now sits at the right hand of God.*

¹The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – pg 1305 – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York - 1975

