

NT-LK27
09.29.19

A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by St John Chrysostom ¹

It is worthwhile inquiring why the rich man saw Lazarus in Abraham's arms, and not in the company of some other righteous person. The reason is that Abraham was hospitable, and so the sight of Lazarus with Abraham was meant to reproach the rich man for his own inhospitality. Abraham used to pursue even passers-by and drag them into his home, whereas the rich man disregarded someone lying in his own doorway. Although he had within his grasp so great a treasure, such an opportunity to win salvation, he ignored the poor man day after day. He could have helped him but he failed to do so. The patriarch was not like that but just the opposite. He would sit in his doorway and catch all who passed by. And just as a fisherman casting a net into the sea hauls up fish, yes, but also quite often gold and pearls, so Abraham while catching people in his net finished by catching angels, though strangely enough without knowing it.

Even Paul marvels at this and gives the advice: Remember to welcome strangers into your homes, for some by doing so have entertained angels without knowing it. And he did well to say without knowing it, for if Abraham had welcomed his guests with such kindness because he knew who they were he would have done nothing remarkable. He is praiseworthy only because, without knowing who the passers-by were and taking them to be simply human wayfarers, he yet invited them in with such good will.

And this is true of you also. If you show much eagerness in welcoming some famous and distinguished person you do nothing remarkable; often the high rank of a guest compels even a reluctant host to show every sign of courtesy. But we do something truly great and admirable when we give a most courteous welcome to all, even the outcasts of society or people of humble condition. Hence Christ himself praised those who so acted, declaring: Whatever you did for one of these very poor people you did to me. He also said: It is not your Father's will that one of these little ones should perish. Indeed throughout the gospel Christ speaks a great deal about the little people and those of the humblest condition.

And so Abraham also, knowing this, did not ask who travelers were or where they come from, as we do today, but simply welcomed them all. Anyone wishing to show kindness should not inquire into other people's lives, but has only to alleviate their poverty and supply their needs, as Christ commanded when he said: Imitate your Father in heaven, who makes his sun to rise on good and bad alike, and sends rain on the just and unjust.

¹ Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – 1984 – pg 120

09SN3002

09.30.2019

Saint Jerome's advice about Scripture: a reading from his letter to Paulinus. ¹

You see how, carried away by my love of the scriptures, I have exceeded the limits of a letter yet have not fully accomplished my object. We have heard only what it is that we ought to know and to desire, so that we too may be able to say with the psalmist: "My soul breaks out with the fervent desire it always has had for your judgments" (Ps 119.20). But the saying of Socrates about himself—"I only know this: that I know nothing"—is fulfilled in our case also.

The New Testament I will briefly deal with. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the Lord's team of four, the true cherubim or store of knowledge. [Like the description in the prophet Ezekiel,] with them the whole body is full of eyes, they glitter as sparks, they run and return like lightning, their feet are straight feet, and lifted up, their backs also are winged, ready to fly in all directions. They hold together each by each and are interwoven one with another: like wheels within wheels they roll along and go wherever the breath of the Holy Spirit wafts them. The apostle Paul writes to seven churches (for the eighth epistle, that to the Hebrews, is not generally counted in with the others). He instructs Timothy and Titus; he interceded with Philemon for his runaway slave. Of him I think it better to say nothing than to write inadequately. The Acts of the Apostles seem to relate a mere unvarnished narrative, descriptive of the infancy of the newly born church; but when once we realize that their author is Luke the physician whose praise is in the gospel, we shall see that all his works are medicine for the sick soul. The apostles James, Peter, John and Jude have published seven epistles at once spiritual and to the point, short and long, short that is in words but lengthy in substance so that there are few indeed who do not find themselves in the dark when they read them. The apocalypse of John has as many mysteries as words. In saying this I have said less than the book deserves. All praise of it is inadequate; manifold meanings lie hid in its every word.

I beg of you, my dear brother, to live among these books, to meditate upon them, to know nothing else, to seek nothing else. Does not such a life seem to you a foretaste of heaven here on earth? Let not the simplicity of the scripture or the pooriness of its vocabulary offend you: for these are due either to the faults of translators or else to deliberate purpose: for in this way it is better fitted for the instruction of an unlettered congregation as the educated person can take one meaning and the uneducated another from one and the same sentence. I am not so dull or so forward as to profess that I myself know it, or that I can pluck upon the earth the fruit which has its root in heaven, but I confess that I should like to do so. I put myself before the man who sits idle and, while I lay no claim to be a

master, I readily pledge myself to be a fellow-student. “Every one that asks, receives; and those that seek, find; and to those that knock, it shall be opened” (Mt 7.8).

Let us learn upon earth that knowledge which will continue with us in heaven.

[1](#)Letter LIII in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series Two, Volume 6; translated by W. H. Fremantle, p. 101-102.

10sn0102

10.01.2019

The mission of St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

a reading from a book by Hans Urs von Balthasar. ¹

There can be no doubt that Thérèse of Lisieux was directly entrusted by God with a mission to the Church. YThérèse=s mission, at the very first glance, displays the marks of a clearly defined, and quite exceptional character. This is much less due to the personal drama of the little saint than to the sacred Form into which the trickling grains of petty anecdotes are compressed, into a hard, unbreakable block, by a firm invisible hand. It is contrary to all expectation that the simple, modest story of this little girl should eventually culminate, as it irrefutably does, in the enunciation of theological truths. Originally she herself never dreamt that she might be chosen to bear some fundamental message to the Church. She only became aware of it gradually; in fact, it did not occur to her until her task was almost completed, after she had already lived out her teaching and was writing the last chapters of her book. Suddenly, as she saw it all laid out before her, she recognized its strangeness, that in her obedience she had unwillingly conceived something beyond her own personality. And now that she saw it she also understood it, and seized it with a kind of violence.

Ever since her childhood Thérèse had shown a striking inclination to meditating and reflecting upon herself. [This] meant that when she discovered her mission she became intensely conscious of it in a manner rare amongst the saints. At that moment she realized she was to be set on a pedestal, and that every bit of her life, even its smallest details, would be used as a pattern for many of the Alittle ones@.Y She regards the publication of her manuscript as Aan important work@; she knows Athat all the world will love me@, and that her writings Awill do a great deal of good@. During her last months, as if making her last will and testament, she repeats constantly: AOne must tell soulsY@ Exactly the same expressions recur in reference to the mission she is soon to begin in heaven: Al feel that my mission will soon begin C to teach souls to love God as I love Him, to give them my >little way=. If my wishes are realized, I shall spend my Heaven on earth until the end of the world.@ Y Similarly she recognizes the function within the Church of her mission. She not only foresees the proclamation of her own sanctity Y but she also, as it were, foresaw the canonization of her doctrine. The two are not separable C it is not so much her writings as her life itself which is her doctrine, especially since her writings speak about her life more than anything else. Nor does she hesitate to propose her life as an example for the Church, because it is in her life that she sees the realization of that doctrine which Acan do so much good.@

So her life only contains exemplary value for the Church insofar as the Holy Spirit has possessed her and used her in order to demonstrate something for the sake of the Church, opening up new vistas onto the Gospels. That, and that alone, should be the motive for the Church's interest in Thérèse. That, and that alone, should engage the attention of those who feel themselves put off by many features of her cultus, or even of her character, or who experience indefinable objections to them. In fact, there are few other cases in which it is so prudent to distinguish between the mission of a saint and its essentials.

In the case of Thérèse of Lisieux the dramatic tension between her mission and her person needs specially to be borne in mind, and to be appreciated primarily in theological terms; the essence of sanctity has to be grasped as truly evangelical, as belonging to the Church, as a mission and not simply as an individual ascetical, mystical manifestation. Moreover it is not just because of contemporary needs but because of the depth of revealed truth that portraits of the saints must in future be remodeled, so that the saints can again live amongst us, and in us, as the best protectors and inspirers of the community of the saints, which is the Church.

¹ Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Mission, trans. by Donald Nicholl, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954, pp xix ff.

10SN0201

10.02.19

From A sermon by St Bernard of Clairvaux ²

“He has given his angels charge over you to guard you in all your ways. Let them thank the Lord for His mercy; his wonderful works are for the children of earth.” Let them give thanks and say among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them. O Lord, what is man that you have made yourself known to him, or why do you incline your heart to him? And you do incline your heart to him; you show him your care and concern. Finally you send your only son and the grace of your spirit, and promise him a vision of your countenance. And so, that nothing in heaven should be wanting in your concern for us, you send those blessed spirits to serve us, assigning them as our guardians and teachers.

“He has given his angels charge over you to guard you in all your ways.” These words should fill you with respect, inspire devotion and instill confidence; respect for the presence of angels, devotion because of their loving service, and confidence because of their protection. And so the angels are here; they are at your side, they are with you, present on your behalf. They are here to protect you and to serve you. But even if it is God who has given them this charge, we must nevertheless be grateful to them for the great love with which they obey and come to help us in our great need.

So let us be devoted and grateful to such great protectors; let us return their love and honor them as much as we can and should. Yet all our love and honor must go to him, for it is from him that they receive all that makes them worthy of our love and respect.

We should then, my brothers, show our affection for the angels, for one day they will be our coheirs just as here below they are our guardians and trustees appointed and set over us by the Father. We are God’s children although it does not seem so, because we are still but small children under guardians and trustees, and for the present little better than slaves.

Even though we are children and have a long, a very long and dangerous way to go, with such protectors what have we to fear? They who keep us in all our ways cannot be overpowered or led astray, much less lead us astray. They are loyal, prudent, powerful. Why then are we afraid? We have only to follow them, stay close to them, and we shall dwell under the protection of God’s heaven.

² The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – pg 1454

10/3/19

**A READING ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AS THE NEW TEMPLE,
FROM A BOOK BY FR JEAN DANIELOU.³**

It is the manhood of Jesus that is the Temple of the new Law, but this manhood must be taken as a whole, that is to say, it is the Mystical Body in its entirety; this is the complete and final Temple. The dwelling of God is the Christian community whose Head is in heaven, and whose members are still making their earthly pilgrimage; it is the true Temple of which the Temple of stone was the figure. "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"(1Pt2,5). "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners: but you are fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: in whom all the building, being framed together, grows up into a holy temple in the Lord"(Eph2,19-21).

There is a basic difference between the Temple at Jerusalem and the Christian Church. Under the old law, the presence of God is connected with the building of stone; under the new law, it is connected with the spiritual community. The church of stone is not in the succession of the Temple, but of the synagogue; it is the assembly, the ecclesia, the meeting-place. Or rather, at the same time it continues both of them, since it is the normal place for the sacrifice. But it can be dispensed with; it is not necessary that it should be there for the celebration of the Mass, while the community is necessary.

Thus is fulfilled the saying of Jesus: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"(Mt18,20). It is the essential condition required for the offering of an acceptable host that is presented in the Sermon on the Mount, where it is written: "If you offer your gift at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has any thing against you, go first to be reconciled to your brother: and then coming you shall offer your gift"(Mt5,23-24). No offering is accepted save that which is made in charity, in community. For there the temple is, the one and only place where man is in the presence of God.

This is an extraordinary fact, as extraordinary in its own order as the presence of God in the Temple at Jerusalem. God enters into relationship not with isolated souls, but with the community. Through the baptismal rites, the entry of the catechumen into the church of stone is a figure of entry into the living Church, into the community which is the place of meeting with God. Of this meeting the Eucharist is the permanent sign, being at once the sacrament of the mystical body and the sign of the real presence, and bringing about at the same time union with God and the strengthening of the bonds of charity. Sin has the effect simultaneously of alienating the sinner from the presence of God, and of separating the sinner from the community. The primitive discipline of the Church made this clear when it excluded the sinner publicly from the community. The sinner still remains excluded from communion; and reconciliation with God is necessarily required by the community as intermediary. This is the meaning of confession, in which the priest represents the people, which itself represents God.

³The Presence of God, Jean Danielou, Baltimore 1958, 29-31.

This is why the Church has the deposit of the living Word of God. It is in her that the Word mysteriously dwells, thus continuing the Incarnation of the Logos. We come to faith in Christ not by the study of dead literary documents, but in a preliminary way through the living witness of an organism sustained and animated by Christ, through the teaching of the living Apostolic Church; in a full and effective way by immediate contact with the living Christ in the Church, through the operation of grace acting in all its fullness in the sacrament.

10SN0404

10.04.2019

The humility of St. Francis of Assisi: a reading from *The Life of St. Francis* by St. Bonaventure. [1](#)

In order to render himself contemptible to others, he did not spare himself the embarrassment of bringing up his own faults when he preached before all the people. Once it happened that when he was weighed down with sickness, he relaxed a little the rigor of his abstinence in order to recover his health. When his strength of body returned, he was aroused to insult his own body out of true self-contempt: "It is not right," he said, "that the people should believe I am abstaining while, in fact, I eat meat on the sly." Inflamed with the spirit of true humility, he called the people together in the square of the town of Assisi and solemnly entered the principal church with many of the friars whom he had brought with him. With a rope tied around his neck and stripped to his underwear, he had himself dragged before the eyes of all to the stone where criminals received their punishment. He climbed up upon the stone and preached with much vigor and spirit although he was suffering from a fever and the weather was bitter cold. He asserted to all his hearers that he should not be honored as a spiritual man but rather he should be despised by all as a carnal man and a glutton. Therefore those who had gathered there were amazed at so great a spectacle. They were well aware of his austerity, and so their hearts were struck with compunction; but they professed that his humility was easier to admire than to imitate. Although this incident seemed to be more a portent like that of the Prophet [Isaiah] (Isa 20.3) than an example, nevertheless it was a lesson in true humility instructing the follower of Christ that he should despise the fame of transitory praise, suppress the arrogance of bloated bragging and reject the lies of deceptive pretense.

He often did many things like this so that outwardly he might become like a discarded utensil (Ps 30.13) while inwardly possessing the spirit of holiness. He strove to hide the gifts of his Lord in the secret recesses of his heart, not wanting them to be exposed to praise, which could be an occasion of a fall. For often when he was praised by the crowds, he would answer like this: "I could still have sons and daughters; don't praise me as if I were secure! No one should be praised whose end is still uncertain." This is what he would say to those who praised him, and to himself he would say: "If the Most High had given so much to a brigand, he would be more grateful than you, Francis." He often used to tell the friars: "No one should flatter himself for doing anything a sinner can also do. A sinner," he said, "can fast, pray, weep and mortify his flesh. This one thing he cannot do: be faithful to his Lord. Therefore we should glory in this: if we give back to the Lord the glory that is his, if we serve him faithfully and ascribe to him whatever he gives to us."

[1](#)Translation and introduction by Ewert Cousins, (Classics of Western Spirituality series), New York: Paulist Press, 1978, pp. 230-231.

MY-18
10.05.19

A reading about the silence and prayer of Mary, from a book by Adrienne von Speyr.⁴

A life of faith is a life of silence. Mary's existence as Mother is hidden in a great silence. All around and about her is silence. People knew nothing of her real life, of the mysteries of her virginity. Not even Joseph understood her. An angel had to enlighten him about her mystery. The silence that surrounds her is simply a reflection of her own silence. She did not become a subject of conversation, because she did not talk about herself. And in that way she safeguarded her secret. Later, too, when the Son appeared in public, she remained silent because it was not her task or mission to speak. But in her silence she participates in the dialogue between Father and Son which is the very substance of prayer. She remained silent out of respect, and in order not to drown the word of God with her own words.

Her silence also manifests her activity and her passivity, her strength and her weakness. Her activity and strength consist in her self-control, her weakness and passivity in allowing herself to be led. She is simply and solely the instrument of God. Strength and weakness, doing and suffering, all the tensions and stresses of life meet and join in her without occasioning the predominance of any one in particular. The priority is always decreed by the need of her mission. She did not cultivate, tend or encourage her good qualities for their goodness' sake (in the way that people do when they are conscious of their own gentleness and are disposed to go further in the same direction). She did not practice her virtues with a definite end in view; on the contrary, she quite simply allowed God to decide everything, to decree everything in accordance with her mission--and this is where her silence is so profound--without losing or giving up any of her complementary qualities. In her, silence is both complete self-renunciation and complete indifference.

All this co-exists in her with a perseverance that knows no limits, because her mission flows on accompanied by a parallel discretion that disturbs nothing. All her qualities participate to some extent in the glory of her conversation with the Angel: each decision is taken in the solitude and isolation imposed by the relation of her soul to God. Discretion, in this instance, is but another name for humility that asks no questions and never raises the dust. She asked the Angel of God one simple factual question, and with that she became the answer to all that God expected. Her life is therefore community in the Lord, solitude in God, and this communal solitude is called prayer.

⁴ *The Handmaid of the Lord*, New York, 1955, pp. 19-21.

