

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY
VIGILS READINGS
Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time
October 6-12, 2019

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2019

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

Reading the holy gospel nourishes in us the habit of prayer, builds up our faith, and disposes us to trust in the Lord rather than in ourselves. What more powerful motive to prayer could be proposed to us than the parable of the unjust judge? An unprincipled man, without fear of God or regard for other people, that judge nevertheless ended by granting the widow's petition. No kindly sentiment moved him to do so; he was rather worn down by her pestering. Now if a man can grant a request even when it is odious to him to be asked, how can we be refused by the one who urges us to ask?

Having persuaded us, therefore, by a comparison of opposites that *we ought always to pray and never lose heart*, the Lord goes on to put the question: *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, do you think he will find faith on earth?* Where there is no faith, there is no prayer. Who would pray for something he did not believe in? So when the blessed apostle exhorts us to pray he begins by declaring: *Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*; but to show that faith is the source of prayer and the stream will not flow if its springs are dried up, he continues: *But can people call upon him in whom they do not believe?*

We must believe, then, in order to pray; and we must ask God that the faith enabling us to pray may not fail. Faith gives rise to prayer, and this prayer obtains an increase of faith. Faith, I say, gives rise to prayer, and is in turn strengthened by prayer. It was to guard against their faith failing in times of temptation that the Lord told his disciples: *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.*

Watch, he says: *and pray that you may not enter into temptation.* What does it mean to enter into temptation? It means to turn one's back on faith.

1 Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New Coty Press – 1994 – pg 122

Temptation grows stronger in proportion as faith weakens, and becomes weaker in proportion as faith grows strong. To convince you, beloved, that he was speaking of the weakening and loss of faith when he told his disciples to watch and pray that they might not enter into temptation, the Lord said in this same passage of the gospel: *This night Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail.* Is the protector to pray, while the person in danger has no need to do so?

But in asking whether the Son of Man would find faith on earth at his coming, the Lord was speaking of perfect faith. That kind of faith is indeed hardly to be found on earth. Look at God's Church: it is full of people. Who would come here if faith were non-existent? But who would not move mountains if that faith were present in full measure? Mark the apostles: they would never have left everything they possessed and spurned worldly ambition to follow the Lord unless their faith had been great; and yet that faith of theirs could not have been perfect, otherwise they would not have asked the Lord to increase it.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2019

From the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II on the Rosary²

The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millenium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless saints and encouraged by the magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millenium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which after 2,000 years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to Aset out into the deep@ (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even to cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, Athe way, and the truth and the life@ (Jn.14:6), Athe goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn@.

² **Rosarium Virginis Mariae** of Pope John Paul II - The Pope Speaks - vol. 48, #2, March, April, 2003

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium. It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation that began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people sit at the school of Mary and are led to contemplate the beauty of the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the mother of the Redeemer.

The Rosary, reclaimed in its full meaning, goes to the very heart of Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the people of God, and the new evangelization. But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery that I have proposed as a genuine Atraining in holiness@. AWhat is needed is a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer@. Inasmuch as contemporary culture, even amid so many indications to the contrary, has witnessed the flowering of a new call for spirituality, due also to the influence of other religions, it is more urgent than ever that our Christian communities should become Agenuine schools of prayer@.

The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the Aprayer of the heart@, or AJesus prayer@, that took root in the soil of the Christian East.

The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way, the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance that points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted themselves to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of her heart already turned to Him at the Annunciation, when she conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring His every word: AShe kept all these things, pondering them in her heart@ (Lk 2:19). The memories of Jesus, impressed on her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the

various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the Rosary that she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.

Even now, amid the joyful songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the reasons for her thanksgiving and praise remain unchanged. They inspire her maternal concern for the pilgrim Church, in which she continues to relate her personal account of the Gospel. Mary constantly sets before the faithful the Mysteries of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2019

A reading on the present, intimate coming of Christ; from a sermon by Guerric of Igny.¹

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see; I tell you there have been many prophets and holy men who longed to see what you see and never saw it, to hear what you hear and never heard it (Lk 10.23). Abraham, our father, was full of joy to see the day of Christ. He saw it — but in the lower regions — and rejoiced. In that day the coldness and hardness of our hearts will be greatly punished — I mean if we do not look forward with joy of spirit to the anniversary of Christ's birth which, we are promised, we shall, God willing, see very soon. In fact Holy Scripture seems to insist we have such joy so that our spirit, lifted out of itself, may run to meet the arrival of Christ in transports of joy, and, straining forward impatient of delay, may strive to pierce the future even now....

In this fashion it may happen that before his actual coming the Lord may come to us, and before he arrives for the world in his general visit he may pay us a friendly one. *I will not leave you orphans, he says, I will come to you (Jn 14.18).* And indeed, be it for a man's merits or ardent striving, that coming of the Lord to the individual is frequent in this middle time between his first coming and his final coming, conforming us to the first, preparing us for the last. He comes to us now

¹ Second Sermon for Advent, in CF8 pp. 9-10.

of course so that his first coming will not have been in vain nor his last in anger against us. In this coming he is intent to reform our spirit of pride, making it conform to his humility which he manifested in his first coming, so that he might also refashion our lowly body, making it like to his glorious body which he will manifest when he comes again the second time. Without any doubt that intimate visitation – which imparts to us the grace of the first coming and pledges the glory of the second – is to be desired with all longing and sought after with every care. For *God loves mercy and truth; the Lord will give grace and glory,*” (Ps 83.12) granting grace through his mercy, conferring glory through his truth.

And just as in the order of time, so to in the degree of its likeness this spiritual coming is midway between the two corporeal comings, like a mediator it participates in both. The first coming was hidden and lowly; the last will be public and glorious; this one is certainly hidden but no less wonderful. I say hidden not because it is unknown to the one visited but because he come to him secretly. This is why the soul filled with glory exults, saying to itself, *My secret is my own, my secret is my own* (Is 24.16). But not even the one to whom he comes can see him before he enters into full possession of him. As holy Job says of himself: *If he comes to me I will not see him; if he departs I shall not understand* (Job 9.11). Coming he is not seen, departing he is not understood; he who while he is present and only while he is present is light to soul and mind. In that light, invisible he is seen, inconceivable he is understood. On the other hand, how wonderful this coming of the Lord even though it is hidden.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

The Inheritance of Monks, from the book *Seasons of Celebration*, by Thomas Merton.³

The monk is a man of sorrow, a man discontented with every illusion, aware of his own poverty, impatient of evasion, who seeks the naked realities that only the desert can reveal. But the monk is also a man of joy, a man at peace with the

³[Seasons of Celebration](#), Thomas Merton, Farrar, Straus & Giroux/NY 1965. p.208-9.212-13.

emptiness of the wilderness, glad of his limitations, loving reality as he finds it, and therefore secure in his humility. He is a man of joy and a man of sorrow both together because he is a man of desires. And because he lives by pure hope, he has entered into the secret which Christ has taught his chosen ones: that hope gives us, even on earth, the secure possession of our inestimable heritage as sons of God. What is this inheritance, and what is this possession? It is the wisdom by which we find God in the Mystery of His Christ. It is the wisdom given by His Spirit to those who have left all things to follow Him - the wisdom of the Cross. By this wisdom, the eyes of our mind are enlightened not with speculative science but with the obscure existential knowledge begotten of love, whose eyes penetrate the inner meaning of the hope that is offered to us in the Cross of Christ. This gift of loving wisdom whose very poverty endows it with vision to penetrate the mystery of God, is what St Paul calls "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in deep knowledge of Him...so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe" (Eph 1:17-19)....

The wisdom of God, which is spoken by the apostles "in a mystery," is a wisdom which is hidden, but revealed by the Spirit of God. And the Spirit Himself is hidden. Nor is His voice heard with the ears.

What a tragedy for a monk to expound what he conceives to be a clear, definite, easily understandable explanation for his monastic life, for his vocation to be hidden in God! That means he has made the mistake of convincing himself that he understands the mystery of his vocation. Does he really understand? then there is no more mystery!

What is the monastic vocation? The monk is called to enter into the hiddenness and the silence of God. Does he think he knows what that means? Perhaps in the beginning, if he does not exactly think he already knows all about his vocation, he assumes he soon will. But understanding the monastic vocation is not a matter of absorbing what has been written about it in books, even by the saints. Words are only the threshold of the mystery, and the silence of God's love, selecting a soul for this strange life hidden in Himself, is too vast an ocean to be lapped up by the human tongue.

All the substance of the monastic vocation, therefore, is buried in the silence where God and the soul meet, not as object and subject, but as "one Spirit." The very essence of monasticism is hidden in the existential darkness of life itself. And life is inexplicable, irreducible to systematic terms. It is only understood by being lived.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019

A reading on how to prepare a throne for the Most High; continuing a reading from a sermon by Gueric of Igny (CF 8 : 19)

[Christ the Lord] is to be not merely invited but drawn into the guest chamber of our heart by the violence of our prayers and the vehemence of our fervor. [But] sometimes he makes as though he would go farther on; he does so for no other reason than that he may prove the zeal of your love.

But what does it mean, you say, that Jesus makes as though he would go further? What else than what Ecclesiastes tells us of himself: "I have said, I will be wise, and [wisdom] departed farther from me." The Spouse speaks more explicitly when, giving voice to our daily complaint, she says: "I rose up to open to my beloved, but he had turned aside and was gone. I sought him, and found him not, I called, and he did not answer me," just as he did not answer the Canaanite woman either. You too are wont to call on the Spirit of wisdom, you are accustomed to seek the Spirit of grace in prayer. If it seems that he draws farther away from you, do not despair but be more importunate in your pleading until you hear him answer you: "Great is your faith, be it done to you as you will."

But when you invite Jesus take care that you do not invite the God of majesty into an unclean and unworthy dwelling where a wrangling [spouse] or clouds of smoke or a dripping roof would not allow even yourself to dwell in peace. For his place is in peace and nowhere else. Right and justice are the pillars of his throne. "Now they seek me," he says, "from day to day, and desire to know my ways as a nation that has done justice and has not forsaken the will of their God." "Right," he says, "and justice are the pillars of his throne." Do not plead that it is a lavish dwelling

you have to prepare for so great and so powerful a guest and that it is beyond the limits of your poverty. You have the means at hand. I speak in human terms because of the infirmity of your flesh, or rather because of the narrowness of your mind. Make a perfect confession of your past life, have a good will in respect to all else (for there is peace to men of good will), and in this way you will have prepared with right and justice a throne for the Most High.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2019

Spiritual Testament and Last Wishes by St. Pope John XXIII 4

On the point of presenting myself before the One and Triune Lord who created me, redeemed me, chose me to be his priest and bishop, and covered me with unending graces, I entrust my poor soul to His mercy; I humbly ask pardon for my sins and deficiencies. I offer Him the little good, although petty and imperfect, that with His aid I have succeeded in doing, for His glory, for the service of Holy Church, for the edification of my brethren, begging Him finally to receive me, like a good and kind Father, with His Saints into eternal happiness.

I profess once again with all my heart my entire Christian and Catholic faith, my adherence and subjection to the Holy Apostolic and Roman Church, and my complete devotion and obedience to her August Head, the Supreme Pontiff, whom it was my great honor to represent for long years in various regions of the East and West, who at the end chose me to come to Venice as Cardinal and Patriarch, and whom I have always followed with sincere affection, aside from and above any dignity conferred upon me. The sense of my own littleness and nothingness has always been my good companion, keeping me humble and calm, and making me employ myself to the best of my ability in a constant exercise of obedience and charity for souls and for the interests of the Kingdom of Jesus, my Lord and my all. To Him be all glory; for me and for my merit, His mercy. "My merit is the mercy of the Lord. O Lord, You know everything: You know that I love You." This alone is enough for me.

I ask pardon of those whom I have unwittingly offended, of all to whom I have not been a source of edification. I feel that I have nothing to forgive anyone, for all who have known and dealt with me – including those who have offended me, scorned me, held me in bad esteem (with good reason, for that matter), or have been a source of affliction for me – I regard solely as brothers and

4The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII – TPS Press – Washington DC – 1964 – pg 465

benefactors, to whom I am grateful and for whom I pray and always will pray.

Born poor, but of honorable and humble people, I am particularly happy to die poor, having given away, in accord with the various demands and circumstances of my simple and modest life, for the benefit of the poor and of Holy Church that had nurtured me, all that came into my hands – which was little enough as a matter of fact – during the years of my priesthood and episcopacy. Outward appearances of ease and comfort often veiled hidden thorns of distressing poverty and kept me from giving with all the largess I would have liked. I thank God for this grace of poverty which I vowed in my youth, poverty of spirit as a priest of the Sacred Heart, and real poverty. This grace has sustained me in never asking for anything, neither positions nor money, nor favors – never, not for myself, nor for my relatives or friends.

The goodness directed toward my poor person by all whom I met along the path made my life serene. As I face death, I recall each and every one – those who preceded me in taking the final step, those who will survive me and who will follow me. May they pray for me. I will repay them from Purgatory or from Paradise, where I hope to be received. I repeat it once again, not because of my merits, but because of the mercy of the Lord.

At the moment for saying farewell, or better still, *arrivederci*, I once more remind everyone of what counts most in life: blessed Jesus Christ, His Holy Church, His Gospel; and in the Gospel, above all, the *Pater noster* in the spirit and heart of Jesus and the Gospel, the truth and goodness, the goodness meek and kind, active and patient, victorious and unbowed.

My children, my brethren, *arrivederci*. In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2019

Concluding the sermon about preparing for the Lord by Gueric of Igny (CF 8 : 20-21)

Do you want to hear more explicitly about the confession you should make in preparation for the coming of the Lord? “A just man is the first to accuse himself,” says the Scripture. And what follows? His Friend comes, who before the accusation was withdrawing farther away, estranged. For when he said: “I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord,” the Lord forgave him. “He comes

and shall search him.” Indeed he shall search him like a strong draft searching the heart and the reins, reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit, drawing out all impurity from the recesses of the soul and the deep caverns of the mind, purging love that it may bring forth more fruit. God the Father, the husbandman, rejoices already over the first-fruits of that confession.

However, he who – after such confession – is present sometimes even before he is called on, at other times waits for you to invite him. And in order to increase your merits he often dissimulates for a long time so that by being more attentive at the psalmody and more instant in prayer you may in your gentle violence compel him to enter. If you do not, the prophet laments that the cities of the south are shut up, with none to enter them. When therefore you can say: “My heart is ready, O God,” because it is emptied of evil, “my heart is ready,” because it is full of holy desires, then busy yourself with what follows: “I will sing and recite a psalm.” And whatever may be your voice, singing or reciting, let this intention be in your mind: “Arise, my Glory, arise at my coming, for as far as it is in me [to go,] I have gone to meet you.”

O good Jesus, how swift and prompt, how full of joy and gladness are you in running to greet such devotion as this. How cheerful do you show yourself in these ways. As Isaiah says: “You have met him that rejoices and does justice: in your ways they shall remember you.” For if you sing wisely in the way of integrity, coming he will come and will bring to light what is hidden from you so that you may understand the mysteries of the Scriptures you do not at present know. Then it will be as you say: “I will sing and I will understand in the unspotted way when you shall come to me.” Stir up, Lord, your power, which at your coming stirs up our sluggishness, and come to save us, O Savior of the world, who live and reign, God for ever and ever. Amen.

END OF READINGS