

11.24.19

NT-LK35

**A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by St Bernard of Clairvaux †**

*The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.* These are the angel's words to the Virgin concerning the son he had announced, promising that he would succeed to the kingdom of David. No one questions the origin of our Lord Jesus from the line of David, but how, I wonder, will God give him the throne of David, since Jesus never reigned in Jerusalem and would not consent to the crowds who would make him king – he even protested before Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. Besides, what importance could be attached to his sitting on the throne of David his father when he was already seated on the cherubim, on a throne high and lifted up, as the prophet says? But we know that another Jerusalem is meant, different from the present one where David once reigned, a city much nobler and richer. God will indeed give him the throne of his father David when he has established him as king over Zion, his holy mountain – he will give him not a symbolic but a real throne, not a temporal but an eternal throne, not an earthly but a heavenly throne.

*He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.* Again, if we take this in a temporal sense, how is it that Christ will reign for ever over something not eternal in itself? We must look, then, for a house of Jacob that is eternal, over which he will reign for ever. Are there any among us who, in accordance with the meaning of the name Jacob (supplanter), will supplant the devil in their hearts, struggle against their vices and desires, so that sin will not reign in their bodies, but Jesus only, through grace now, through glory for all eternity? Blessed are they in whom Jesus will reign for ever, for they shall reign with him, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Oh how glorious is that kingdom where kings are gathered together to give united praise and honor to the King of kings and Lord of lords, in the contemplation of whose splendor the just shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. Oh that Jesus, out of the love he has for his people, may remember me, a sinner, when he comes into his kingdom! Oh that he may deign to come and save me on that day when he delivers up his kingdom to his God and Father, so that I may see the joy of his chosen ones and rejoice in the gladness of his people. Then I too shall be able to praise him together with his inheritance.

And now, Lord Jesus, come and remove the stumbling blocks within the kingdom which is my soul, so that you who ought to may reign in it. Greed comes along and claims its throne in me; arrogance would dominate me; pride would be my king. Comfort and pleasure say: “We shall reign!” Ambition, detraction, envy, anger fight within me for supremacy, and seem to have me entirely in their power. But I resist insofar as I can; I

struggle against them insofar as I receive your help. I protest that Jesus is my Lord. I keep myself for him since I acknowledge his rights over me. To me he is God, to me he is Lord, and I declare: I will have no king but the Lord Jesus! Come then, Lord, rout them by your power and you will reign in me, for you are my king and my God, who grant victories to Jacob.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – NY – 1997 – pg 136

**11SN2501**  
**11.25.19**

### **St. Catherine of Alexandria from Butler's Lives of Saints <sup>1</sup>**

Since about the tenth century, veneration of St. Catherine of Alexandria has been marked in the East, but from the time of the Crusades until the 18<sup>th</sup> century her popularity was even greater in the West. Numerous churches were dedicated in her honor, including the parish church of Gethsemani Abbey at New Haven, KY. She was venerated as patroness of maidens and women students of philosophers, preachers and apologists. Adam of St. Victor wrote a poem in her honor; hers was one of the heavenly voices heard by St Joan of arc. But not a single fact about her life or death has been established.

It is said in her Acts that she belonged to a patrician family of Alexandria and devoted herself to learned studies, in the course of which she learned about Christianity. She was converted by a vision of Our Lady and the Holy Child. When Maxentius began persecuting Christians, Catherine went to him and rebuked him for his tyranny. He could not answer her arguments against his gods, so summoned fifty philosophers to oppose her. These confessed themselves convinced by the learning of this Christian girl, and were therefore burned to death by the infuriated emperor. Then he tried to seduce Catherine with an offer of a consort's crown, and went off to inspect a camp. On his return he discovered that his wife and an officer had gone to see Catherine out of curiosity and had both been converted, together with two hundred soldiers of the guard. They accordingly were all slain and Catherine was sentenced to be killed on a spiked wheel. When she was placed on it, her bonds were miraculously loosed and the wheel broke, its spikes flying off and killing many of the onlookers. Then she was beheaded.

All the texts of the "acts" of Catherine state that her body was carried by angels to Mount Sinai, where a church and monastery were afterwards built. In 527 the Emperor Justinian built a monastery for hermits of the place, and the body of Catherine was said to have been taken there in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century. The monastery has borne her name since then. The great monastery of Mount Sinai still claim the alleged relics of St Catherine, in the care of the monks of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Archbishop Falconio of Santa Severina said that the meaning of the "angels" is that her body was carried by the monks of Sinai to their monastery. Tradition has referred to the monastic life as "the angelic life". This is still a current expression in Eastern monasticism.

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<sup>1</sup> Butler's Lives of Saints – vol. IV – P.J. Kennedy & Sons – New York – 1956 – pgt 420

11/26/19

Reading not available...

OT-SNG03

11/27/19

**From a Homily on the Song of Songs, by St. Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>2</sup>**

The Word himself testified, "You are wholly beautiful, and there is no spot in you." She is now disposed to receive God's appearance, but she does not yet receive the Word standing at her door; rather, she admires the sound of his voice. She says that this voice is not hers, but the bridegroom's at the door: "The voice of my beloved knocks at the door."

You see how boundless is the path for those rising up to God, ye how is it that what the soul has always comprehended is the beginning of something beyond her? We expected that the bride would come to a stop on her way on high because of the words addressed to her. (For what more could she seek after so great a testimony to her perfection?) We then see her inside, not outside her house. She has not yet delighted at the appearance of her groom's face, but is still led by hearing to participate in the good. We learn that for those who are always advancing to what is greater, the Apostle's words hold true, "If anyone thinks he knows something, he does not yet know as he should." Hitherto the soul understand only what she has understood, but what she still does not know is infinitely greater than what she has already comprehended. Because of this, the bridegroom often appears to the soul; although not present to her sight, he promises the bride by his voice that he will appear.

To clarify this point, I will give an example. If anyone happened to be near the fountain which scripture says rose from the earth at the beginning of creation and was large enough to water the earth's surface, he would approach it marveling at the endless stream of water gushing forth and bubbling out. Never could he say that he had seen all the water. (For how can what is hidden in the earth's bosom be seen? Even if he remained a long time near the gushing water, he would always behold the water as for the first time, for the water never ceases to gush forth). In the same way, the person looking at the divine, invisible beauty will always discover it anew

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<sup>2</sup>Song of Songs, Tr. McCambley. Hellenic College Press 1987. p.201-2

since he will see it a something newer and more wondrous in comparison to what he had already comprehended. He continues to wonder at God's continuous revelation; he never exhausts his desire to see more because what he awaits is always more magnificent and more divine than anything he has seen. Thus the bride wonders and is amazed at her knowledge. Despite this, she never ceases to long for further vision. Now the bride perceives the Word knocking and she rises at the sound saying, "The voice of my beloved is knocking at my door."

CM-THA01  
11.28.2019

**Thankfulness in our everyday lives,  
from a sermon by St. John Henry Newman.** <sup>1</sup>

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It would be well if we were in the habit of looking at all we have as God's gift, undeservedly given, and day by day continued to us solely by his mercy. He gave; He may take away. He gave us all we have, life, health, strength, reason, enjoyment, the light of conscience; whatever we have good and holy within us; whatever faith we have; whatever of a renewed will; whatever love towards him; whatever power over ourselves; whatever prospect of heaven. He gave us relatives, friends, education, training, knowledge, the Bible, the Church. All comes from him. He gave; he may take away. Did he take away, we should be called on to follow Job's pattern, and be resigned: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*"(Job 1:21) While he continues his blessings, we should follow David and Jacob, by living in constant praise and thanksgiving, and in offering up to him of his own.

We are not our own, any more than what we possess is our own. We did not make ourselves; we cannot be supreme over ourselves. We cannot be our own masters. We are God's property by creation, by redemption, by regeneration. He has a triple claim upon us. Is it not our happiness thus to view the matter? Is it any happiness, or any comfort, to consider that we *are* our own? It may be thought so by the young and prosperous. These may think it a great thing to have everything, as they suppose, their own way,--to depend on no one,--to have to think of nothing out of sight,--to be without the irksomeness of continual acknowledgment, continual prayer, continual reference of what they do to the will of another. But as time goes on, they, as all others, will find that independence was not made for man--that it is an unnatural state--may do for a while, but will not carry us on safely to the end. No, we are creatures; and, as being such, we have two duties, to be resigned and to be thankful.

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<sup>1</sup> *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987, pp. 1003-1005.

Let us then view God's providences towards us more religiously than we have hitherto done. Let us try to gain a truer view of what we are, and where we are, in his kingdom. Let us humbly and reverently attempt to trace his guiding hand in the years which we have hitherto lived. Let us thankfully commemorate the many mercies he has vouchsafed to us in time past, the many sins he has not remembered, the many dangers he has averted, the many prayers he has answered, the many mistakes he has corrected, the many warnings, the many lessons, the much light, the abounding comfort which he has from time to time given. Let us dwell upon times and seasons, times of trouble, times of joy, times of trial, times of refreshment. How did he cherish us as children? How did he guide us in that dangerous time when the mind began to think for itself, and the heart to open to the world! How did he with his sweet discipline restrain our passions, mortify our hopes, calm our fears, enliven our heavinesses, sweeten our desolateness, and strengthen our infirmities! How did he gently guide us towards the strait gate! How did he allure us along his everlasting way, in spite of its strictness, in spite of its loneliness, in spite of the dim twilight in which it lay! He has been all things to us. He has been, as he was to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our God, our shield, and great reward, promising and performing, day by day.



OT-SNG04

11.29.2019

### From a Sermon on the Song of Songs, by John of Ford.<sup>3</sup>

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"Where did your beloved go, O fairest of women? Which way did your beloved turn, that we may go with you to seek him?"

The daughters of Jerusalem have two questions to put to the bride, where her beloved has gone, and which way he has turned. The result is that they seem to be proposing an alternative, and the bride is apparently free to tell them either where her spouse has gone, or, on the other hand, which way he has turned. As far as we have any right to make conjectures about his 'ways', which Paul describes as 'unsearchable', he never goes or turns away from his bride without advantage to her. He never withdraws unless to provide her with something, to bring back with him from his journey something that will be to her profit. That is why she must wait patiently for him if he is slow in returning. It is surely her interest that is being furthered in the meanwhile, and the longer the journey and the more protracted his absence, the more richly laden with blessings is he restored to her.

The gospel is our authority that the spouse did sometimes turn away, has sometimes even gone away. "Jesus turned away from the crowd," says the evangelist, 'which was gathered in that place.' And he says again, 'Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.' But you will object that this kind of withdrawal has nothing whatever to do with the bride. These are not signs of love so much as tidings of anger. We find it said, 'Do not withdraw in anger from your servant,' and to my mind, the speaker is afraid, he mistrusts every withdrawal of Jesus, even the most momentary. But we must take note of those withdrawals of his in which there are no grounds for mistrust. A clear instance is when his disciples were pulling hard at the oars, and 'he came to them, walking upon the sea. He wanted to pass them by,' the gospel tells us. But they were astonished to see so unexpected a sight, and 'cried out for fear'. So the unexpectedness resulted in astonishment, the astonishment resulted in fear, the fear resulted in a shout, and the shout resulted in them being listened to with compassion. Being listened to gave them confidence, and confidence in the end gave them the accustomed and long desired presence of Jesus. For the children of grace, then, his turning aside was not in anger but in grace. He kept away for a little while, but only so as to return to them more wonderfully and with greater grace.

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<sup>3</sup>John of Ford On the Song of Songs, CF 43. Cistercian Publications, 1982. Sermon 42, p.147-8

**11SN3001**

**11.30.2019**

**TAKING UP HIS CROSS AND FOLLOWING CHRIST, from a Sermon by St Bernard<sup>4</sup>**

Today we celebrate the festival of St Andrew, and if we ponder it lovingly we shall find much for the building up of our souls...

You will surely have noticed how St Andrew, when he reached the place where the cross was prepared, was strengthened in the Lord, and began to utter those burning words, through the Spirit whom he had received in tongues of fire, along with the other apostles... His mouth spoke from the abundance of his heart, and that love which burned in his heart flashed forth as bright flame in his voice. And what did blessed Andrew say, when as I said, he saw in the distance the cross which had been prepared for him? 'O cross,' he said, 'so long desired and now made ready for my eager spirit! With joy and confidence I come to you, therefore do you too receive me gladly, as the disciple of him who hanged on you; for I have always been your lover and have longed to embrace you'...

From where come such hitherto unknown joy and exultation? Whence such constancy in fragility? Whence, in a mere human, such spiritual ardor, such burning love, such vigor of soul? Far be it from us to imagine that it comes from his own strength. It is a perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights, for he alone does great wonders.(Ja 1:17) It was indeed the Spirit, beloved brethren, who came to the aid of his weakness, through whom that love strong as death was poured into our hearts, indeed it is stronger than death. May God give us a share in it!... If we grow weary and sleep at vigils, it is only because of our feeble spirit. If the Holy Spirit is present, doubtless he helps our infirmity; what he did for St Andrew on the cross and in his death, he will also do for us in our toil and penance: not only will he make these seem no longer burdensome, he will even make them a desire and a delight. 'My Spirit', says the Lord, 'is sweeter than honey', so that the bitterness of death, no matter how bitter, would not be able to lessen its sweetness...  
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<sup>4</sup>Deuxieme sermon pour la fete de St Andre, 1, 3-5, 7: PL 183, 509-512.

Let us seek this Spirit, my brethren, let us do our utmost to gain him, or to possess him more fully if he is not already in us. Because 'anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'(Rom 8:9). 'We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God'.(1Cor 2:12)

We must take up our cross with St Andrew, or rather, with him whom St Andrew followed, the Lord our Savior. The cause of his joy and exultation was that he was dying not only for his Lord but also with him, in like manner, that suffering with him he might reign with him. And we too, if we are to be crucified with him, let us listen with the ears of our heart to his voice saying: 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'... (Mt 16:24) For in the cross is our salvation, provided we cleave to it firmly. 'The word of the cross,' says the Apostle, 'is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God'. (1Cor 1:18)