

NT-JN25

03.15.20

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

Wearied by his journey, Jesus sat down beside a well. It was about the sixth hour. Already divine mysteries begin. Not for nothing is Jesus wearied; nor for nothing does the Power of God suffer fatigue. Not for nothing does he who refreshes the weary endure weariness. Not for nothing is he wearied, whose absence makes us weary, whose presence gives us strength.

Jesus is tired, tired out by his journey. He sits down. On the edge of a well he seats himself. It is midday, and he sits there exhausted. All these details have meaning. They are meant to signify something. They capture our attention, persuading us to knock and investigate further. We have Christ's own exhortation to do so, for he said: *Knock, and it will be opened to you.* May he, then, open up the meaning of this text to us as well as to you.

It was for your sake that Jesus was wearied by his journey. In Jesus we encounter divine power together with weakness. He is strong and weak at one and the same time: strong, because *in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, present with God from the beginning.* Would you know how strong the Word of God is? *All things were made through him, and apart from him nothing came into being.* The whole universe was made without effort. Could any greater power exist than the power of one who was able effortlessly to construct the entire universe?

And would you know him in his weakness? *The Word was made flesh, and lived among us.* The power of Christ created you; the weakness of Christ recreated you. Christ's power caused what did not exist to come into being; Christ's weakness saved existing things from destruction. In his might he fashioned us; in his weakness he came in search of us.

Jesus, then, is weak, tired out after his journey. Now that journey of his, undertaken for our sake, was his incarnation. How could he otherwise journey when he is present everywhere, and absent from nowhere? To what place or from what place could he travel? In only one way could he come to us, and that was by assuming our visible human flesh. Since then he condescended to come to us in that way, and to appear in the condition of a servant by taking to himself a human nature, that assumption of our nature was his journey.

The fatigue caused by his journey, therefore, was the weariness Jesus experienced in our human nature. In his human body he was weak, but you must not be weak. You must be strong in his weakness, for *there is more power in divine weakness than in human strength.*

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – NY – 1992 – pg 40

LNT-36

03.16.20

A Sermon on Lent by St. Maximus the Confessor ¹

We must accept with all reverence, brethren, the sacred days of Lent, and not recoil because of the length of the season; for the longer the days of our fasting, the greater the grounds of our forgiveness; the longer the time of our self-denial, the greater the price paid for our soul=s salvation; the severer the treatment of our wounds, the more sure the healing of our offences. For God who is the Physician of our souls has instituted an appropriate time; sufficient for the just to make reparation and for sinners to ask for mercy; the one praying for peace, the other imploring pardon.

For the days of Lent are suited to our purposes; not short, so that we may plead in prayer; not long, for our need to gain merit. For in this fast of forty days any offence may be wiped out, and the severity of any judge softened. The time may be long and tedious for the one neither pleads for his sins, nor hopes for forgiveness. For he who despairs will neither confess his sins, nor hope in the mercy of the Judge.

Holy and salutary therefore is the time of Lent, in which the Judge is moved to mercy, the sinner to repentance, and the just to peace. For in these days the Divinity is inclined to be more merciful, the sinner to repent, and grace to be obtained. All things are now prepared: the heavens to pardon, the sinner to confess, the tongue to plead.

Mystical and salutary is this number forty. For when in the beginning the iniquity of mortals covered the earth, God, dissolving the clouds of heaven for the space of this number of days, covered the whole earth with a flood. You see then already that in this time the Mystery is put before us in Figure. For as it then rained for forty days, to cleanse the world, so now it also happens. Yet the deluge of those days must be called a mercy; in that through it, iniquity was crushed, and justice upheld. For it took place out of mercy, to deliver the just, and that the wicked might no longer sin. We see clearly it was through mercy it came, as a sort of baptism, in which the face of the earth was renewed; that is, so that mortals who wallowed in the dreadful sin of those abandoned might come to grace in the dwelling of Noah, and so that he who was then an abode of iniquity, might become a dwelling of holiness.

Holy and dedicated is this time of forty days, which immediately from the beginning began to divide the just from the unjust; and by a kind of judgment separate the good from the bad. And this takes place even in our time of forty days. For in these forty days the good are divided from the bad, that is, the chaste from the unchaste, the temperate from the intemperate, the Christian from the heathen. The wicked, as I say, are separated from the good, that is, the sinner from the just, the devil from the saint, the heretic from the faithful. For those others are lost, as in the Flood, in the disaster of this world, while the Church alone, with all its virtues, is like the Ark sustained above the deep.

¹ The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers, vol. 2, Henry Regnery Co. Chicago, 1958, pg 92

LNT-39

03.17.09

A Sermon of St Leo the Great of the Lenten practices ²

Among all the Christian solemnities the Paschal Mystery holds chief place, dearly beloved; for this the practices of the whole preceding year prepare us to worthily and rightly celebrate it. But earnest devotion is required of us especially in these days which are close to this most sublime mystery of the divine mercy. So it was right that the holy Apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, should ordain that during these days we are to observe severer fasts, so that we also, by a common sharing of Christ's Cross, might suffer a little of what He endured for us, as the Apostle says: *If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him*. For where there is a sharing of the passion of the Lord, there is a sure and certain expectation of our promised happiness.

There is no one, dearly beloved, to whom, because of the state of times, this fellowship of glory is denied, as though the tranquility of peace gave us no opportunity for the practice of heroic virtue! For the Apostle foretold that *All who live godly lives in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecutions*. So where people live in Christ there shall be no lack of trials or persecutions. The Lord Himself says to us: *Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me*. Nor should we doubt that these words were directed not only to the disciples of Christ, but also to all the faithful who are all taught unto salvation.

And as at all times we must live worthily, so at all times we must bear the Cross, which for each one is rightly called his or her own, for it is borne by each one in his own way and measure.

Iniquity does not dwell in peace with virtue; drunkenness hates sobriety; falsehood has nothing in common with truthfulness. Pride has no regard for humility, wantonness for modesty, greed for generosity. And this division awakens such enduring conflicts that though it may outwardly seem to subside, yet never does it cease from disturbing the inmost soul of the just of heart, so that it is indeed true that *All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecutions*; and true as well that all this life is a warfare. Let each faithful soul, learning from his own experiences, arm himself with the Cross of Christ, that he may be found worthy of Christ.

So now I wish to awaken your devotion in regard to what this holy season requires of us: that you beautify your holy and salutary fasting with works of piety. And since we are especially to labor for the pardon of our sins, you can be assured of the unfailing divine mercy if you likewise in your dealings with others change every offence into pardon.

For it is but fitting that the members of the Church of God should come together for this great festival in gentleness and harmony of spirit; and that the harshness of punishments should be mitigated more in the hearts of Christians. Rather the solicitude of the sanctified should be intent upon this: that no one suffer cold, that no one hunger, that

² The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers, vol. 2, Henry Regnery Co., 1957, pg 146

no one shall be in want, that no one be left to pine away in sorrow, that no one be bound in chains, that the jails should hold no prisoner.

For no matter how great the offenses between one person and another, yet we should rather keep in mind not so much the enormity of the offense, as the fact that we share a common nature; so that with what mercy we judge another, we shall obtain mercy from God. For Ablessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy@ from God.

LNT-40

03.18.20

Christ and Moses - From the Catechesis by St. John Chrysostom ³

The Israelites witnessed marvels; you also will witness marvels, greater and more splendid than those, which accompanied them in their departure from Egypt. You did not see Pharaoh drowned with his armies, but you have seen the devil with his weapons overcome by the waters of Baptism. The Israelites passed through the sea; you have passed from death to life. They were delivered from the Egyptians; you have been delivered from the powers of darkness. The Israelites were freed from slavery to a pagan people; you have been freed from the much greater slavery to sin.

Do you need another argument to show that the gifts you have received are greater than theirs? The Israelites could not look on the face of Moses in glory, though he was their fellow servant and kinsman. But you have seen the face of Christ in his glory. Paul cried out: *AWe see the glory of the Lord with faces unveiled@.*

In those days Christ was present to the Israelites as he followed them, but he is present to us in a much deeper sense. The Lord was with them because of the favor he showed to Moses; now he is with us not simply because of Moses but also because of your obedience. After Egypt they dwelt in desert places; after your departure you will dwell in heaven. Their great leader and commander was Moses; we have a new Moses, God Himself, as our leader and commander.

What distinguished the first Moses? *AMoses@*, Scripture tells us, *Awas more gentle than all who dwelt on the earth@.* We can rightly say the same of the new Moses, for there was with him the very Spirit of gentleness, united to him in his inmost being. In those days Moses raised his hands to heaven and brought down manna, the bread of angels; the new Moses raises his hands to heaven and gives us the food of eternal life. Moses struck the rock and brought forth streams of water; Christ touches his table, strikes the spiritual rock of the new covenant and draws forth the living water of the spirit. This rock is like a fountain in the midst of Christ=s table, so that on all sides the flocks may draw near to this spring and refresh themselves in the waters of salvation.

Since this fountain, this source of life, this table surrounds us with untold blessings and fills us with the gifts of the spirit, let us approach it with sincerity of heart and purity of conscience to receive grace and mercy in our time of need. Grace and mercy be yours from the only-begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; through him and with him be glory, honor and power to the Father and the life-giving Spirit, now and always and forever. Amen

³ The Liturgy of the Hours - vol. II - pg. 159f - Catholic Book Publishing Co. - 1976

03SN1904

03.19.20

From a Sermon by Jacques Benigne Bossuet 4

Among all the various vocations, I have noticed in Scripture two which seem complete opposites: the first is that of the apostles; the second that of St. Joseph. Jesus was revealed both to the apostles and to St Joseph, but for very different reasons. He was revealed to the apostles so that they could proclaim him to the whole world. He was revealed to Joseph so that he could remain silent and conceal him. The apostles were lights to make Jesus Christ visible to the whole world. Joseph was a veil to hide him, and under this veil of mystery were hidden for us the virginity of Mary and the greatness of the Savior. So we read in Scripture that when people wished to belittle him they would say: *Is he not Joseph's son?* For the apostles, then, Jesus was a Word to be proclaimed. *Preach the message of this gospel.* For Joseph, however, Jesus was an unspoken word which was not to be revealed.

See what the result is. The holy apostles proclaimed the word so loudly that their word was re-echoed in the heavens, and St. Paul dared to say that the heavenly powers learned the counsels of the divine Wisdom through the Church. On the other hand, when Joseph heard the marvels of Jesus Christ spoke of, he listened, wondered, and kept silence.

What is the meaning of this difference? Is God at odds with Himself in such contrasting vocations? No, you must not think so. All this diversity is meant to teach God's children the important truth that the whole of Christian perfection lies simply in submission. He who glorified the apostles by conferring on them the honorable duty of preaching, glorified Saint Joseph also by giving him the humble duty of keeping silent. We should learn from this that true Christian glory lies not in employments that win public acclaim, but in doing God's will.

If everyone cannot have the honor of preaching Jesus Christ, everyone can have the honor of obeying him, and that is the glory of Saint Joseph, the trustworthy honor of Christians. So do not ask me what Saint Joseph did in his hidden life. I cannot possibly tell you. I can only reply the words of the Psalmist: *But what has the just man done?* Usually the lives of sinners attract more attention than those of good people because it is excitement and passion which make a stir in the world. *The sinners have drawn the bow, says David, they have let fly at the righteous, destroyed, overthrown* – he

speaks only of worldly people – *for they have destroyed what you have made*. He goes on. *But what has the just man done?* He means that he has done nothing. Indeed he has done nothing for people to see, because everything he did was done for God.

That is the way Saint Joseph lived. He saw Jesus Christ and remained silent; he had experience of him but spoke no word. He did not share his glory with others, but was satisfied with God alone. He fulfilled his vocation because, just as the apostles were the ministers appointed to make Jesus Christ known, so Joseph was his minister and companion in his hidden life.

LNT-43

03.20.20

From a Sermon by St Leo the Great on Lent⁵

In the gospel of John the Lord says: *Aln this will all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another@.* In a letter of the same apostle we read: *ABeloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God; whoever does not love does not know God, for God is Love@.*

The faithful should enter into themselves and make a true judgment on their attitudes of mind and heart. If they find some store of love=s fruit in their hearts, they must not doubt God=s presence within them. If they would increase their capacity to receive so great a guest, they should practice greater generosity in doing good, with persevering charity.

Any time is the right time for works of charity, but these days of Lent provide a special encouragement. Those who want to be present at the Lord=s Passover in holiness of mind and body should seek above all to win this grace, for charity contains all other virtues and covers a multitude of sins.

As we prepare to celebrate that greatest of all mysteries, by which the blood of Jesus Christ did away with our sins, let us first of all make ready the sacrificial offerings of works of mercy. In this way we shall give to those who have sinned against us what God in his goodness has already given to us.

Let us extend to the poor and those afflicted in different ways a more open-handed generosity, so that God may be thanked through many voices and the relief of the needy supported by our fasting. No act of devotion on the part of the faithful gives God more pleasure than that which is lavished on his poor. Where he finds charity with its loving concern, there he recognizes the reflection of his own fatherly care.

In these acts of giving do not fear a lack of means. A generous spirit is itself great wealth. There can be no shortage of material for generosity where it is Christ who feeds and Christ who is fed. In all this activity there is present the hand of him who multiplies the bread by breaking it, and increases it by giving it away.

The giver of alms should be free from anxiety and full of joy. His gain will be the greatest when he keeps back least for himself. The holy Apostle Paul tells us: *AHe who provides seed for the sower will also provide bread for eating; he will provide you with more seed, and will increase the harvest of your goodness@,* in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy spirit for ever and ever. Amen

⁵ The Liturgy of the Hours - vol II - pg 295 - Catholic Book Publishing Co - 1976