

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY

VIGILS READINGS

Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

May 31-June 6, 2020

SUNDAY, May 31, 2020

A READING ABOUT THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE INDWELLING OF THE BL. TRINITY, from a homily by St. Augustine.¹

A comforter, an advocate, (for both terms render the Greek Paraclete) was necessary for the disciples after Christ's departure. He had not spoken of the Paraclete from the beginning, because his own presence in the midst of them had consoled them, but now, when he was on the point of leaving them, it was fitting that he should speak of this: the Holy Spirit would come to them, and filling their hearts with ardent love, give them power to preach the word of God boldly; the Spirit would bear witness to Christ within their souls, so that they themselves would also bear witness, without being scandalized when their enemies would forbid them the synagogue, and put them to death. But charity "endures to the last" (1Cor 13,7), and it was to be poured out in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

"I can say truly that it is better for you I should go away; he who is to befriend you will not come to you unless I do go, but if only I make my way there, I will send him to you." That is to say: It is to your interest to be deprived of my presence under this form of a servant which I have taken; for though it is true that I live among you, the Word made flesh,

¹Treatise 94 on Jn's Gospel. Trans. Lectionary and Martyrology, ed. En Calcat Abbey, Dourgne-Tarn 1956, 245-246.

I do not want you to love me with a natural affection; nor do I want you to be satisfied with this milk alone and wish you could remain as babes. It is to your interest that I go: otherwise the Paraclete will not come to you; if I do not wean you from this childish food that I have given you so far, you will have no appetite for solid food; if you keep a natural affection for me you cannot receive the Holy Spirit.

But why does he say: "He who is to befriend you will not come unless I go?" Was it not then possible for Christ, being here, to send him? Who would dare to say it? The Son of God had not left the place where that Holy Spirit was: come from the Father, he still dwelt in the Father. And then, how could it have been impossible for him to send the Holy Spirit on earth when he was on earth himself? Do we not know that at his baptism the Holy Spirit descended on him and remained with him? Do we not know in fact that they were inseparable? What the gospel means is that the disciples could not receive the Spirit while they continued to know Jesus Christ only according to the flesh. And these words are an echo of those of St Paul, who himself had received the Holy Spirit: "Even if we used to think of Christ in a human fashion, we do so no longer"(2Cor 5,16). For we know even the flesh itself of Christ otherwise than in a human fashion, when we know spiritually the Word made flesh.

Christ had, then, to deprive his disciples of his human presence and then it would not be only the Holy Spirit, but the Father and the Son who would dwell in their souls. If Christ indeed withdrew from them in order to be replaced, and not accompanied, in them by the Holy Spirit, what becomes of his promise: "And behold I am with you all the days that are coming, until the consummation of the world" (Mt 28,20)? And again: "We will both come to him and make our continual abode with him"(Jn 14,23)? Since the Savior promised to send the Holy Spirit and also to remain always with his disciples, then when natural thoughts and feelings gave place to those of the Holy Spirit, a dwelling would be

prepared at the same time for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Besides, where any one of the three Persons is, there is the Trinity, one God. It was good, however, that the dogma of the Trinity was given to us under this form: to one who rightly understands it there can never be any diversity of substance, any separation of nature, but the recognition of the diversity of Persons one by one.

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2020

Mary, the Mother of God, in the Mystery of the Church - Taken from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from Vatican II [1](#)

Wishing in His supreme goodness and wisdom to effect the redemption of the world, “when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4-5). in this Church, adhering to Christ the Head and having communion with all His saints, the faithful must also venerate the memory “above all of the glorious and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.”

At the message of the angel, the Virgin Mary received the Word of God in her heart and in her body, and gave Life to the world. Hence she is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer. Redeemed in an especially sublime manner by reason of the merits of her Son, and united with Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the supreme office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God. As a result she is also the favorite daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit, Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all other creatures, both in heaven and on earth.

At the same time, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings in their need for salvation.

Indeed she is “clearly the mother of the members of Christ, since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful, who are members of Christ their Head.” Therefore she is also hailed as a pre-eminent and altogether singular member of the Church, and as the Church's model and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. Taught by the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother.

The Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined mother should precede the Incarnation, so that just as a woman contributed to death, so also a woman should contribute to life. This contrast was verified in outstanding fashion by the Mother of Jesus. She gave to the world that very Life which renews all things, and she was enriched by God with gifts befitting such a role. Adorned from the first instant of her conception with the splendors of an entirely unique holiness, the Virgin of Nazareth is, on God's command, greeted by an angel messenger as “full of grace”. To the heavenly messenger she replies: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word”.

By thus consenting to the divine utterance, Mary, a daughter of Adam, became the mother of Jesus. Embracing God's saving will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son. In subordination to Him and along with Him, by the grace of almighty God she served the mystery of redemption.

We have but one Mediator, “Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all”. The maternal duty of Mary toward humanity in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, For all the saving influences of the Blessed Virgin on all peoples originate, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brethren of her Son who still

journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties until they are led to their happy fatherland.

The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary. She experiences it continuously and commends it to the hearts of the faithful, so that encouraged by this maternal help they may more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer.

[1](#)The Documents of Vatican II – Walter Abbott – Herder & Herder – Association Press – 1966 – pg 85f

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2020

**A reading about the monk as a man of the Spirit,
from a book by Fr. Louis Bouyer. ¹**

It is contemplation, the twilight vision of the light of Tabor, possible even in this life, that is, so to speak, the heart of monastic life. But it is the divine Spirit alone who can make this heart beat.

In fact, the monk is and must be the "Spiritual" [person] in the Church, the one who is "of the Spirit" *par excellence*. All Christians have received the Spirit through the mystery of the Holy Chrism, but he does not manifest himself equally in all. We may even wonder if the gravest ill from which our Christianity is suffering is not that of having more or less "quenched the Spirit," to use an expression of St. Paul.

By his resurrection Christ has been made second Adam because he

¹ *The Meaning of Monastic Life*, New York, 1955, pp. 75-76, 78.

has been made life-giving Spirit. And he becomes in fact the head of a new race in so far as he animates it with this Spirit, who is the very Spirit of God. A Christian life which does not expand into life in the Holy Spirit thus remains radically incomplete. If, on the other hand, monastic life is defined as integral Christian life, it must essentially be the accomplishment of life in the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit in the original biblical sense of the term is the breath of life, but it is of divine life. It is the breath which, as it passes over the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision, will restore life to them. It is the breath which in the beginning had been breathed into the nostrils of Adam, and had brought forth its fragile image, the soul. Nevertheless, compared with the man in whom the Spirit himself lives and breathes, the first man, the living soul, was still only flesh. The last Man, on the other hand, that is the ultimate, final man, the risen Christ, is made "life-giving Spirit." This means that he has no longer merely the simple life of a creature made in God's image, because endowed with intelligence and will. His life, in his human nature itself, is henceforward the life of God; his intelligence is henceforward filled with the very knowledge of God and his heart loves what God loves, with the very love with which he loves it.

The first result of this is that he enters into a new world. It is not only that the tangible universe is no longer the true home of him who has received the Spirit, but that the new universe which is revealed to him, although it includes the created spiritual world, definitely penetrates beyond the sphere of created things. The world that the one-in-whom-the-Spirit-lives knows, is a world that is no longer the world as a separate object, in some sort existing outside God. It is the world such as it was when God sent it forth in the act of creation:

a world in which all beings and all things are in communion with each other through their communion with God. It is the world, immense yet one; of the divine Wisdom, in which the measureless fecundity of divine life is revealed in the wondrous multiplicity and order of creation, but without being broken up or separated. For all things are there found gathered up in the unbreakable unity of the life and thought of God. All things there become transparent to God. There God himself becomes all in all things.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2020

From the Homily at the Canonization of the martyrs of Uganda by Pope Paul VI 2

The African martyrs add another page to the martyrology – the Church’s roll of honor – an occasion both of mourning and of joy. This is a page worthy in every way of being added to the annals of that Africa of earlier times, which we, living in this era and being people of little faith, never expected to be repeated.

In earlier times there occurred those famous deeds, so moving to the spirit, of the martyrs of Scilli, of Carthage, and of that “white robed army” of Utica commemorated by Saint Augustine and Prudentius; of the martyrs of Egypt so highly praised by Saint John Chrysostom, and of the martyrs of the Vandal persecution. Who would have thought that in our days we should have witnessed events as heroic and glorious?

Who would have predicted to the famous African confessors and martyrs such as Cyprian, Felicity, Perpetua and – the greatest of all – Augustine, that we would one day add names so dear to us as

Charles Lwanga and Matthias Mulumba Kalemba and their twenty companions? Nor must we forget those members of the Anglican Church who also died in the name of Christ.

These African martyrs herald the dawn of a new age. If only the human mind might be directed not toward persecutions and religious conflicts but toward a rebirth of Christianity and civilization!

Africa has been washed by the blood of these latest martyrs, the first of this new age (and God willing, let them be the last, although such a holocaust is precious indeed). Africa is reborn free and independent.

The infamous crime by which these young men were put to death was so unspeakable and so expressive of the times. It shows us clearly that a new people needs a moral foundation, needs new spiritual customs firmly planted, to be handed down to posterity. Symbolically, this crime also reveals that a simple and rough way of life – enriched by many fine human qualities yet enslaved by its own weakness and corruption – must give way to a more civilized life wherein the higher expressions of the mind and better social conditions prevail.

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2020

**A reading about human fulfillment as the gift of the Spirit,
from a book by Fr. Louis Bouyer.¹**

The real work of the Spirit, which causes him to reveal himself in us as the **Holy** Spirit, is that we should no longer live in ourselves but in

¹ *The Meaning of the Monastic Life*, New York, 1955, pp. 83-84.

another. The gift of the Spirit is the gift supreme which sets us free from the prison of individuality. He opens all that was closed. He breaks down all barriers. He annihilates all opposition.

The great work of the Spirit is to carry us over into Christ, the Wisdom of God. To have the Spirit in oneself is, while remaining personally distinct from Christ, no longer to exist outside him. It is no longer to live locked up in the deadly autonomy which through sin has sharpened the distinction between God and ourselves. On the contrary, it is this distinction that faith should take as its support, for in that way it may return to the free and fruitful unity of *agape*.

Through the gift of the Spirit we ultimately come to be conformed to the idea God had of us, as that idea exists in its perfect state. The Spirit, engrafting us into Christ, makes us live and be as God thinks us eternally in his Word. That is, he restores us to our place in the totality of the divine thought upon humanity and upon the world. He re-establishes the infinitely varied and harmonious richness of the relationships which God had willed for us and the rest of men. But, above all, he plunges us anew into the infinite unity of the Word, where our limitations vanish, where our own personal and inner life will be none other than the very life of God communicated to us. Thus we shall escape from our loneliness, from the solitude of every creature, of all creation separated from its Creator by sin.

Henceforward, literally, *"It is no longer I who live, it is Christ who lives in me."*

At the same time, precisely because we are restored after the pattern of our eternal Model, because we have come to take our place once again in the ideal which God conceived of us in creating us, our created nature, our very existence, far from being re-absorbed, comes finally to its fulfillment which had been retarded by the Fall. For we are not really ourselves, or, what amounts to the

same thing, we are not what God planned for us in creating us, until we become children of God. But we can only become children of God by being assimilated to his only Son. And this assimilation is effected only in the measure in which we have the Holy Spirit in us, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son, by whom the Father and the Son are one in their very distinction. Our adoption by the Father, effected in the Son by the gift of the Spirit, is thus the culmination of creation. It can be said that until this adoption is an accomplished fact, creation has not achieved its end. The perfect monk, that is the monk who has become in the full force of the term "the man of the Spirit," is thus clearly the eschatological man, the man of the last days, in whom the eternity promised to mankind is foreshadowed and inaugurated even here below.

FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2020

A Reading about St Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, by Christopher Dawson.³

In art and religion, in scholarship and literature, the Anglo-Saxons of the eighth century were the leaders of their age. At the time when continental civilization was at its lowest ebb, the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons marked the turn of the tide. The Saxon pilgrims flocked to Rome as the center of the Christian world and the Papacy found its most devoted allies and servants in the Anglo-Saxon monks and missionaries. The foundations of the new age were laid by the greatest of them all, St Boniface of Crediton, "the apostle of Germany", a man who had a deeper influence on the history of Europe than any

³"The Making of Europe", New York, 1956, pp 185-186.

Englishman who has ever lived. Unlike his Celtic predecessors, he was not an individual missionary, but a statesman and organizer, who was, above all, servant of the Roman order. To him is due the foundation of the medieval German Church and the final conversion of Hesse and Thuringia, the heart of the German land. With the help of his Anglo-Saxon monks and nuns he destroyed the last strongholds of Germanic heathenism and planted abbeys and bishoprics on the site of the old Folkburgs and heathen sanctuaries, such as Buraburg, Amoneburg, and Fulda. On his return from Rome in 739 he used his authority as Papal Vicar in Germany to reorganize the Bavarian Church and to establish the new dioceses which had so great an importance in German history. For Germany beyond the Rhine was still a land without cities, and the foundation of the new bishoprics meant the creation of new centers of cultural life. It was through the work of St Boniface that Germany first became a living member of the European society.

But in addition to this, Boniface was the reformer of the whole Frankish church. The decadent Merovingian dynasty had already given up the substance of its power to the mayors of the palace, but in spite of their military prowess, which saved France from conquest by the Arabs in 735, they had done nothing for culture and had only furthered the degradation of the Frankish Church. Charles Martel had used the abbeys and bishoprics to reward his lay partisans, and had carried out a wholesale secularization of Church property. As Boniface wrote to the Pope, "Religion is trodden under foot. Benefices are given to greedy laymen or unchaste and publican clerics. All their crimes do not prevent their attaining the priesthood; at last rising in rank as they increase in sin they become bishops, and those of them who can boast that they are not adulterers or fornicators, are drunkards, given up to the chase, and soldiers who do not shrink from shedding Christian blood." Nevertheless, the successors of Charles Martel, Pepin and

Carloman, were favorable to Boniface's reforms. Armed with his special powers as Legate of the Holy See and personal representative of the Pope, he undertook the desecularization of the Frankish Church.

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2020

From the Life of St Norbert 4

Norbert is deservedly numbered by historians among those who made an effective contribution to the reform movement under Pope Gregory VII. He established a clergy dedicated to the ideals of the Gospel and the apostolic Church. They were chaste and poor. They wore “the clothing and the symbols of the new man; that is to say, they wore the religious habit and exhibited the dignity proper to the priesthood.” Norbert asked them to “live according to the norms of the Scriptures with Christ as their model.” They were “to be clean in all matters pertaining to the altar and divine worship, to correct their faults and failings in their chapter meeting, and to care for and give shelter to the poor.”

The priests lived in community, where they continued the work of the apostles. Inspired by the practice of the early Church, Norbert exhorted the faithful to join the monastic life in some capacity. So many men and women responded to the invitation that many asserted that no man since the apostles themselves had inspired so many to embrace the monastic life.

When Norbert was appointed an archbishop, he urged his brothers to carry the faith to the lands of the Wends. In his own

4 The Liturgy of the Hours - vol. II - Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1976 – pg 1866

diocese he tried unsuccessfully to convince the clergy of the need for reform and was confronted with noisy protests both in the street and in the church.

One of the principal goals of Norbert's life was to foster harmony between the Apostolic See and the German empire. At the same time he wanted to maintain Rome's freedom in the matter of ecclesiastical appointments. Apparently his efforts were so successful that Pope Innocent II thanked him profusely in a letter in which he called him a "devoted son", and Lothair made him chancellor of the realm.

Norbert did all these things with a steadfast faith: "Faith was the outstanding virtue of Norbert's life, as charity had been the hallmark of Bernard of Clairvaux." Affable and charming, amiable to one and all, "he was at ease in the company of the humble and the great alike". Finally, he was a most eloquent preacher; after long meditation "he would preach the word of God, and with his fiery eloquence purged vices, refined virtues and filled souls of good will with the warmth of wisdom". He spent many hours in contemplation of the divine mysteries and fearlessly spread the spiritual insights which were the fruit of his meditation.

END OF READINGS