

SUN

05.10.20 Fifth Sunday of Easter

A Commentary on the Gospel of John by St. Ambrose <sup>1</sup>

Let us march forward intrepidly to meet our Redeemer, Jesus, pursuing our outward course without swerving until we come to the assembly of the saints and are welcomed by the company of the just. It is to join our Christian forebears that we are journeying, to those who taught us our faith – that faith which comes to our aid and safeguards our heritage for us even when we have no good works to show. In the place we are making for the Lord will be everyone's light; the true light which enlightens every human person will shine upon all. In the house where we are going the Lord Jesus has prepared many dwelling places for his servants, so that where he is we also may be, for this was his desire. Hear his own words about them: *In my Father's house are many dwelling places*, and about his desire: *I will come again, he says, and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.*

“But he was speaking only to his disciples” you say, “and so it was to them alone that the many dwelling-places were promised.” Do you really suppose it was only for the eleven disciples they were prepared? And what of the saying about people coming from all corners of the earth to sit at table in the kingdom of heaven? Do we doubt that the divine will will be accomplished? But with Christ, to will is to do! Accordingly he has shown us both the way and the place: *You know where I am going*, he said, *and you know the way.* The place is where the father is; the way is Christ, according to his own declaration: *I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the father except through me.* Let us set out on this way, let us hold fast to truth, let us follow life. It is the way that leads us, the truth that strengthens us, the life that is restored to us through him.

To make sure that we really understand his will, Christ prays later on: *Father, it is my desire that those whom you have given me may be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory.* How graciously he asks for what he had already promised! The promise came first and then the request, not the other way around. Conscious of his authority and knowing the gift was at his disposal, he made the promise; then, as if to show his filial submission, he asked the father to grant it. He promised first to make us aware of his power; he asked afterwards to show us his loving deference to his Father.

Yes, Lord Jesus, we do follow you, but we can only come at your bidding. No one can make the ascent without you, for you are our way, our truth, our life, our strength, our confidence, our reward. Be the way that receives us, the truth that strengthens us, the life that invigorates us.

**A reading from a letter of St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius, on behalf of Peter the Venerable. 1**

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It would be silly for me to write you on behalf of the Lord Abbot of Cluny, to act as if I wanted to befriend a man whom the entire world befriends. But although he does not need me to write on his behalf, I am nevertheless doing so in order to satisfy my affection for him, for this purpose alone and no other. Although I cannot accompany him in body I shall be with him in spirit on his pilgrimage to Rome. Nothing can separate us, not the height of the Alps, nor the cold of the snows, nor the long distance of the journey. And I am present to him now, stretching out my hand to him in this letter. He cannot go anywhere without me because I am so much in his debt for the favor of his friendship. But his favor itself acquits me of the debt, for what was a duty has become a pleasure.

Honor this man as an honorable member of Christ=s body. He is a vessel fit for all honorable employment, a vessel full of grace and truth, full of all manner of good things. Send him back with joy to rejoice the hearts of many by his return. Show him great favor, so that when he returns we may all receive of his fullness. He should, of course, find no difficulty in obtaining from you anything he asks for in the name of the Lord Jesus. For, if you do not know it, he it is that holds out his hands to the poor of our Order; he it is that freely and frequently, as far as he may without offending his own people, supports our brethren from the possessions of his monastery.

But let me explain why I say >in the name of the Lord Jesus.= It is because I fear and suspect he may ask to be released from the rule of his monastery; and no one who knows him would consider this a petition made in the name of Jesus. I am very much mistaken if he is not more self-effacing than usual, if he has not become more perfect since he last saw you, although it is well known that almost from the first instant of assuming office he reformed his Order in many ways, in the matter, for instance, of fasting, silence, and costly and curious clothing.

TUE 05.12.20

From the Jerusalem Catecheses [1](#)

When you were baptized into Christ and clothed yourselves in him, you were transformed into the likeness of the Son of God. Having destined us to be his children by adoption, God gave us a likeness to Christ in his glory, and living as you do in communion with Christ, you yourselves are rightly called “Christs” or anointed ones. When he said: Do not touch my anointed ones, God was speaking of you.

You became “Christs” when you received the sign of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, everything took place in you by means of images, because you yourselves are images of Christ. Christ bathed in the river Jordan, imparting to its waters the fragrance of his divinity, and when he came up from them the Holy Spirit descended upon him, like resting upon like. So you also, after coming up from the sacred waters of baptism, were anointed with chrism, which signifies the Holy spirit, by whom Christ was anointed and of whom the blessed Isaiah prophesied in the name of the Lord: The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor.

Christ's anointing was not by human hands, nor was it with ordinary oil. On the contrary, having destined him to be the Savior of the whole world, the father himself anointed him with the Holy Spirit. The words of Peter bear witness to this: Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit. And David the prophet proclaimed: Your throne, O God, shall endure forever; your royal scepter is a scepter of justice. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above all your fellows.

The oil of gladness with which Christ was anointed was a spiritual oil; it was in fact the Holy Spirit Himself, who is called the oil of gladness because he is the source of spiritual joy. But you also have been anointed with oil, and by this anointing you have entered into fellowship with Christ and have received a share in his life. Beware of thinking of this charism as merely ordinary oil. As the eucharistic bread after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer ordinary bread but the body of Christ, so also the oil after the invocation is no longer plain ordinary oil but Christ's gift which by the presence of his divinity becomes the instrument through which you receive the Holy Spirit. While symbolically, on your foreheads and organs of sense, your bodies are anointed with this oil that we see, your souls are sanctified by the holy and life-giving Spirit.

WED

05.13.20 Our Lady of Fatima

### A Discourse of Pope St. John Paul II at Fatima

A particular manifestation of Mary's motherhood about men are the places, where she meets with them, the houses in which she lives; houses in which resides the special presence of the Mother. These are the Marian Shrines. It seems that even there, as in many other Marian shrines around the world, with a particular strength, these words resonate authenticity of today's liturgy: "You great pride of our people". These words resonate in Fatima as well as a special echo not only of the Portuguese nation, but also of many other nations and peoples that are on the globe: they are indeed the echo of the contemporary experience of all mankind, of all the human family.

Since the time when Jesus, dying on the cross, said to John: "Behold your Mother", since the time when "the disciple took her into his home, "the mystery of Mary's spiritual motherhood had its fulfillment in history with an amplitude without boundaries. Motherhood means concern for her son's life. Now, if Mary is the mother of all people, her concern for human life is universal in scope. The eagerness of a mother embraces the whole person. Mary's motherhood has its beginning in her maternal care for Christ. She has accepted in Christ under the cross John, and in him, she accepted every person and the whole person. Mary embraces everyone with a special concern in the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual motherhood of Mary is therefore participation in the power of the Holy Spirit, the One who "gives life. "It is with the humble service of the one who says of herself: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord"( *Lk1:38*). In the light of the mystery of Mary's spiritual motherhood, let us understand the extraordinary message, which began to resonate in the world by Fatima since May 13, 1917 and lasted for five months until October 13 of the same year. If the Church has embraced the message of Fatima it is mainly because it contains a truth and a call, which in their essential content is the truth and the call of the Gospel itself.

"Repent (repent) and believe in the Gospel"( *Mk1:15*), these are the first words of the Messiah addressed to humanity. The message of Fatima is in its core a call to conversion and penance, as in the Gospel. This call was issued at the beginning of the twentieth century, and, therefore, in this century has been particularly addressed. The Lady of the message seems to read with special insight the "signs of the times", the signs of our time.

The call to repentance is maternal and at the same time, strong and determined. The love that "rejoices in the truth"( *1 Cor13:6*), knows how to be outspoken and determined. The call to repentance is joined, as always, with the call to prayer. In accordance with the tradition of many centuries, the Lady of Fatima

message indicates the "Rosary", which can rightly be called "the prayer of Mary", in which she feels particularly united with us. She herself prays with us.

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When Jesus said on the cross: "Woman, behold your son"( Jn19:26) - in a new way he opened up the heart of his Mother, the Immaculate Heart, and revealed a new dimension of love and scope of the new love, to which she was called in the Holy Spirit with the power of the sacrifice of the Cross. In the words of Fatima we seem to find this dimension of maternal love, which extends all the way of man to God. The solicitude of the Mother of the Savior is a concern for the work of salvation: the work of her Son. Can the Mother, who with all the power of her love, which fosters in the Holy Spirit and desires the salvation of every person, keep quiet about what undermines the very foundations of this salvation? No, she can not!

This message is addressed to every person. The love of the Mother of the Savior goes everywhere. The object of her care are all people of our time, along with their societies, nations and peoples. The companies threatened by apostasy, threatened by moral degradation. The collapse of morality brings with it the collapse of society.

Christ said on the Cross: "Woman, behold, your son. "With those words there opened in a new way, the Heart of His Mother. Soon after, the spear of the Roman soldier pierced the side of Christ. That pierced heart has become the sign of the redemption accomplished through death by the Lamb of God. The Immaculate Heart of Mary, opened by the word: "Woman, behold your son", meets spiritually with the Heart of the Son opened by the soldier's lance. Mary's Heart was opened by the same love for the mortals and for the world, with which Christ has loved the human and the world, offering Himself on the Cross for them.

To consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother means returning beneath the Cross of her Son. More it means consecrating this world to the pierced Heart of the Savior, bringing the very source of his redemption. Redemption is always greater than the sin of man and the "sin of the world."The power of the Redemption infinitely surpasses the whole range of evil that is in mortals and in the world. The Heart of the Mother is aware of this, as no one else in the whole universe, visible and invisible. She calls not only for conversion; call to get help from her mother, to return to the source of the Redemption.

The Mother of Christ calls us and invites us to join the Church of the living God in the consecration of the world, this reliance by which the world, humanity, nations, all people are offered to the Eternal Father with power of Christ's redemption. They are offered in the pierced Heart of the Redeemer on the Cross.

The Mother of the Redeemer calls us, invites us and helps us to unite ourselves with the consecration, to this dedication of the world. They are offered as close as possible to the Heart of Christ pierced on the Cross. The appeal of the Lady of Fatima is so deeply rooted in the Gospel and in the whole of tradition that the Church feels committed by this message. Yes, we can truly say: "Blessed are you, daughter, in front of the Most High God above all women on earth! .Really! You are blessed! Yes, here and throughout the Church, in the heart of every man and in the whole world be blessed Mary, our sweet Mother!

THUR 05.14.20 St Matthias

**A reading from a sermon by Cardinal Newman on the feast of St. Matthias.** <sup>1</sup>

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This is the only Saint's day which is to be celebrated with mingled feelings of joy and pain. It records the fall as well as the election of an Apostle. St. Matthias was chosen in place of the traitor Judas. In the history of the latter we have the warning recorded in very deed, which our Lord in the text gives us in word, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And doubtless many were the warnings such as this, addressed by our Lord to the wretched man who in the end betrayed him.

The reflection which rises in the mind on a consideration of the election of St. Matthias, is this: how easily God may effect His purposes without us, and put others in our place, if we are disobedient to Him. It often happens that those who have long been in His favor grow secure and presuming. They think their salvation certain, and their service necessary to Him who has graciously accepted it. Now, this feeling of self-importance is repressed all through the Scriptures, and especially by the events we commemorate today.

What solemn overpowering thoughts must have crowded on St. Matthias, when he received the greetings of the eleven Apostles, and took his seat among them as their brother! His very election was a witness against himself if he did not fulfill it. And such surely will ours be in our degree. We take the place of others who have gone before, as Matthias did; we are "baptized for the dead," filling up the ranks of soldiers, some of whom, indeed, have fought a good fight, but many of whom in every age have made void their calling. Many are called, few are chosen. The monuments of sin and unbelief are set up around us. The casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the Gentiles. The fall of one nation is the conversion of another. The Church loses old branches, and gain new. God works according to His own inscrutable pleasure....Thus the Christian of every age is but the successor of the lost and of the dead. How long we of this country shall be put in trust with Gospel, we know not; but while we have the privilege, assuredly we do but stand in the place of Christians who have either utterly fallen away, or are so corrupted as scarcely to let their light shine before others. We are at present witnesses of the Truth; and our very glory is our warning. By the superstitions, the profanities, the indifference, the unbelief of the world called AChristian,@ we are called upon to be lowly-minded while we preach aloud, and to tremble while we rejoice. Let us then, as a Church and as

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<sup>1</sup> *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987, pp. 300-301, 304-305.

individuals, one and all, look to Him who alone can keep us from falling. Let us with single heart look up to Christ our Saviour, and put ourselves into His hands, from whom all our strength and wisdom is derived.

FRI 05.15.2020 St Pachomius

### A reading about the monastic rule of St. Pachomius, by Thomas Merton.<sup>1</sup>

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Obedience is the distinctive factor of the new [communal] monasticism of St. Pachomius. The whole Pachomian structure is [actually] built on obedience, [which] is not just the docility of the hermit to a director, but the lifelong obedience of the subject to the superior, as well as of the son to the Father. It implies a real concept of self-emptying and subjection, a real renunciation of one's own freedom, "for keeps." Accordingly, all are to obey the Rule, superiors and subjects. No one in the monastery is to follow his own will. [Even] the heads of houses and their assistants, [for example,] had to weave a certain number of baskets in a certain time, as a *norm* for the others to meet....

However, the superior must command, and he is to be obeyed as God. Furthermore, the brethren are to obey one another, but above all the superiors. In commanding, the superior himself obeys God who wants him to command according to the Rule. All must obey meekly and willingly, without murmuring. Unwillingness and resistance show lack of faith and seriously affect the spiritual vitality of the mystery of the common life. It is not just an individual defect, it affects the community.

Obedience is the highest value—with charity—in the common life. It is "*greater than sacrifices.*" That is to say that emphasis is systematically placed on what is enjoined by obedience, over what may be inspired by our own spontaneous religious desires, however good [they may be in and of themselves]. This is another fundamental principle [of communal monastic life,] of cenobitism. What is enjoined **in the name of the community**...leads to life much more surely and effectively than what is merely suggested by individual inspiration....

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<sup>1</sup> *Pre-Benedictine Monachism*, Abbey of Gethsemani, 1963; pp 49-50.



To illustrate the importance this,] Pachomius burned 500 mats that had been woven by the cook in the kitchen, while he was cooking. He had been ordered to cook **only**, not ordered to weave mats. Work over and above what was one's duty was not acceptable, because it was outside obedience. Hence, works of extra sacrifice are acceptable only when the approval of obedience brings them within the ambit of the common will and the common life. When a good work, of personal choice, is approved by the superior, then it becomes part of the common spiritual striving and merit of the community—it becomes a work of Christ. But any work, however good, that is deliberately kept out of and apart from the common life stream, ceases to be a work of Christ. Hence it is not blessed. Hence it is a potential danger, to the individual and to the community. Lastly, obedience is **according to the Rule**: there is no longer any purely subjective and arbitrary command permitted. In commanding, the superior must himself obey the Abba, the founder, and carry on the founder's will. He must run the institution according to the thought and mind of the founder, which is embodied in the Rule. The Rule represents the personal thought and desire of Abba Pachomius, and is not a mere legal document.

Thus, obedience, for Pachomius, strikes deep into the heart of the “mystery” of common life. If superiors do their own will and inferiors merely comply with that will, then there is not yet a religious mystery. This [mystery] is constituted by the participation of all in the sacrifice and obedience of Christ, in His self-emptying. All have renounced their will. When this happens in a community, the Holy Spirit then breathes in and through *all* [its members].

SAT

05.16.20

From a Sermon by St. Gregory of Nyssa <sup>1</sup>

The reign of life has begun, the tyranny of death is ended. A new birth has taken place, a new life has come, a new order of existence has appeared, our very nature has been transformed! This birth is not brought about by *human generation, by the will of human beings, or by the desire of the flesh, but by God.*

If you wonder how, I will explain in clear language. Faith is the womb that conceives this new life, baptism the rebirth by which it is brought forth into the light of day. The Church is its nurse; her teachings are its milk, the bread from heaven is its food. It is brought to maturity by the practice of virtue; it is wedded to wisdom; it gives birth to hope. Its home is the kingdom; its rich inheritance the joys of paradise; its end, not death but the blessed and everlasting life prepared for those who are worthy.

*This is the day the Lord has made* – a day far different from those made when the world was first created, and which are measured by the passage of time. This is the beginning of a new creation. On this day, as the prophet says, God makes a new heaven and a new earth. What is this new heaven? You may ask. It is the firmament of our faith in Christ. What is this new earth? A good heart, a heart like the earth, which drinks up the rain that falls on it and yields a rich harvest.

In this new creation, purity of life is the sun, the virtues are the stars, transparent goodness is the air, and the *depths of the riches of wisdom and knowledge*, the sea. Sound doctrine, the divine teachings, are the grass and plants that feed God's flock, the people whom he shepherds; the keeping of the commandments is the fruit borne by the trees.

On this day is created the true human person made in the image and likeness of God. *For this day the Lord has made* is the beginning of this new world. Of this day the prophet says that it is not like other days, nor is this night like other nights. But still we have not spoken of the greatest gift it has brought us. This day destroyed the pangs of death and brought to birth the firstborn from the dead.

*I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.* O what wonderful good news! He who for our sake became like us in order to make us his brothers and sisters, now presents to his true Father his own humanity in order to draw all his kindred up after him.