

SUN

06.07.20

A Commentary on the Gospel by St. Athanasius ¹

It will not be out of place to consider the ancient tradition, teaching and faith of the Catholic Church, which was revealed by the Lord, proclaimed by the apostles, and guarded by the fathers. For upon this faith the Church is built, and if anyone were to lapse from it, that person would no longer be a Christian either in fact or in name.

We acknowledge the Trinity, holy and perfect, to consist of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this Trinity there is no intrusion of any alien element or of anything from outside, nor is the Trinity a blend of creative and created being. It is a wholly creative and energizing reality, self-consistent and undivided in its active power, for the father makes all things through the Word and in the Holy Spirit, and in this way the unity of the Holy Trinity is preserved. Accordingly in the Church, one God is preached, one God who is *above all things and through all things and in all things*. God is *above all things* as Father, for he is the principle and source; he is *through all things* through the Word; and he is *in all things* in the Holy Spirit.

Writing to the Corinthians about spiritual matters, Paul traces all reality back to the one God, the Father, saying: *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone.*

Even the gifts that the Spirit dispenses to individuals are given by the Father through the Word. For all that belongs to the Father belongs also to the Son, and so the graces given by the Son in the Spirit are true gifts of the Father. Similarly, when the Spirit dwells in us, the Word who bestows the Spirit is in us too, and the Father is present in the Word. This is the meaning of the text: *My Father and I will come to him and make our home with him*. For where the light is, there also is the radiance; and where the radiance is, there too are its power and resplendent grace.

This is also Paul's teaching in his Second Letter to the Corinthians: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all*. For grace and the gift of the Trinity are given by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Just as grace is given from the Father through the Son, so there could be no communication of the gift to us except in the Holy Spirit. But when we share in the Spirit, we possess the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Spirit himself.

¹A Word in Season – vol. III – Exordium Books – 1983 – pg 224

MON

06.08.20

Commentary on the Book of Genesis by St John Chrysostom ¹

What is read today is sufficient to teach us how great the harm of envy, and how this ruinous passion of ill-will demonstrated its typical force even to the extent of affecting brotherhood. “At the age of seventeen Joseph was tending the sheep with his brothers.” Why does the author indicate to us his age? For you to learn that his youth constituted no obstacle to virtue and for you to have a complete awareness of the young man’s obedience to his father and his sympathy for his brothers despite their savagery, and how despite his being so well disposed to them he was unable to win them over to concord with him on the grounds of his youth so as to be able to maintain the bond of love; instead they saw from the outset the youth’s inclination to virtue and the father’s favor from him and were prompted to envy of him. You see, they brought false reports about Joseph to their father Israel. See the extraordinary degree of their wickedness: they endeavored to undermine their father’s love and devised false stories about their brother, succeeding only in bringing to light their own envy.

What is meant by “he loved Joseph more than all his other sons, as he was a son of his old age”? You see, somehow the children born to one in old age seem particularly dear, and manage to attract their father’s favor in greater measure. However this was not the only factor in winning his father and causing him to prefer him to his brothers. For Scripture tells us that even after him another son was born. So what can it mean? That it was a kind of grace from on high that made the young man amiable and rendered him preferable to all the others on account of the virtue of his soul.

Envy is a terrible passion, you see, and when it affects the soul, it does not leave it before bringing it to an extremely sorry state, damaging the soul that gives it birth and affecting the object of its envy in the opposite way to that intended, rendering him more esteemed. Notice how this remarkable man is depicted as ignorant of what was going on and conversing cheerfully in great simplicity with them as his brothers, whereas they for their part were in the grip of the passion of envy and were thus brought to hate him.

Notice how it indicated as cause of their hatred this fact that had its roots in envy: “His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his other sons.” Their father’s affection gave rise to envy of him, whereas the boy’s virtue won the father’s favor. So they should have imitated their brother and followed his lead so that they might have won their father; yet far from giving thought to this, they displayed instead a common hatred for the one loved by

¹ The Fathers of the Church – vol 87 – St John Chrysostom on Genesis – vol. 3 – Catholic University of America Press – Washington DC – 1002 = pg 186

their father. Whereas they, for their part, like men involved in a feud, gave free rein to the evil lurking within them and had no kind word to say to him, conducting themselves treacherously, this remarkable man, on the contrary, maintained a brotherly regard for them, suspecting nothing in his trust in them as brothers, and attributed everything to himself.

This was the passion that even in the beginning led Cain to rush headlong into murdering his brother. Do you see his brother suspecting nothing, but with full trust in his brother's plans going out and falling victim to that deadly blow. In the same fashion the remarkable Joseph dealt with them as brothers, unaware of their wicked complicity, he brought to their notice the revelation God had given him in a dream, foretelling the prosperity that would come his way and the subjection of his brothers.

These men, however, as I said before, neither had any respect for nature itself nor took account of the favor shown their brother from on high: from day to day they deepened their hatred, the fire that burnt secretly within them, without their father or the young man suspecting anything of the kind nor the fact that they were about to proceed to such awful folly.

Now all this happened as a type of things to come. As Joseph went off to his brothers to visit them, to those who had no respect for brotherhood nor for the reason of his coming, and who first intended to do away with him and then sold him to foreigners, so too our Lord in fidelity to his characteristic love came to visit the human race: taking flesh of the same source as ours and deigning to become our brother, he thus arrived among us. In this case things were prefigured as in shadow.

TUE

06.09.20

**The Place of the Departed in the Communion of Saints.
From a Homily by St. John Henry Newman.²**

The great and anxious question that confronts us is, what is to become of us after this life? We fear for ourselves, we are solicitous about our friends, just on this point. They have vanished from us with all their amiable and endearing qualities, all their virtues, all their active powers. Where is that spirit gone which once thought, felt, loved, hoped, planned, acted in our sight, and which, wherever it goes, must carry with it the same affections and principles, desires and aims? We know how it thought, felt, and behaved itself on earth; we know that beloved mind and it knows us, with a mutual consciousness; - and now it is taken from us, what are its fortunes? Now, here Scripture meets our need. It is enough, surely, to be in Abraham's bosom, in the Savior's presence; it is enough, after the pain and turmoil of this world, to be at rest.

Christ assures us that the departed "**rest** from their labors, and their works do follow them;" and we gather from the text that even that loneliness and gloom which, left to themselves, they would necessarily feel, though ever so secured from actual punishment, may, in truth, be mercifully compensated. The sorrowful state is there described, in which they would find themselves when severed from the body, and waiting for the promised glory at Christ's coming, and they are represented as sustained under it, soothed, quieted, consoled. As a parent would hush a child's restlessness, cherishing it in her arms and lulling it to sleep, or diverting it from the pain or fright which agitates it, so the season of delay, before Christ comes in judgment, tedious in itself, and solitary, is compensated to the spirits of the just by a present gift in earnest of their future joy. "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" Such is their complaint. "And white robes were given every one of them ; and it is said to them, that they should rest yet for a little season," till the end.

This, then, we may humbly believe to be the condition of the Saints before the Resurrection, a state of repose, rest, security; but again a state more like paradise than heaven - that is, a state which comes short of the glory which shall be revealed to us after the Resurrection, a state of waiting, meditation, hope in which what has been sown on earth may be matured and completed.

² Parochial and Plain Sermons. John Henry Newman. Ignatius Press. San Francisco. 1987. p. 839.

WED

06.10.20

A Commentary on the Book of Genesis by St John Chrysostom ³

Scripture tells us: “The Lord was with Joseph”. What is the meaning of this? Grace from on high stood by him, and smoothed over all his difficulties. It arranged all his affairs. It led those traders to sell him to the chief steward. Consider how he was not alarmed and did not give up hope or debate within himself in these terms: How deceitful those dreams that foretold such prosperity for me! But he said nothing of the sort; he gave it not a thought. On the contrary he bore everything meekly and nobly. “The Lord was with Joseph” after all, “and he became a man of means”.

What is the meaning of “a man of means”? Everything went well for him, grace from on high preceded him everywhere, and the grace that flourished in his regard was so obvious as to become plain even to his master, the chief steward. Joseph found favor with his master, who set him over his household and entrusted to him all his possessions. Why? Because along with power from on high he also contributed his own way of doing things.

Then the loving God, though wanting to make him feel completely secure, did not release him from slavery nor set him at liberty. This, after all, is ever his way; not to free virtuous men from dangers nor preserve them from trials, but in the midst of such trials, to give evidence of his characteristic grace to such an extent that the very trials prove an occasion of rejoicing for them.

Even the barbarian now learnt that the man thought to be a slave was particularly close to God. “He turned over all his possessions into Joseph’s keeping”. The slave, the captive, held in his care all his master’s possessions. That is what virtue is like: wherever it appears, it prevails over all things and controls them.

The wicked beast the devil, however, seeing the good man’s standing and the fact that he emerged even more conspicuous from these very things thought to be adversaries, prepared what he thought was a mighty precipice that would bring him to his ruin.

The text tells us: “Joseph cut a fine figure and was good looking”. It says this in order that we might learn that he was striking not only for charm of soul but also for his person. Sacred Scripture tells us this about him so as to teach us that the Egyptian woman was under the spell of the young man’s beauty in inviting him to that illicit union. “But he refused”, the text says. He realized the great ruin it would bring him; and instead of thinking of himself, he was greatly concerned to deliver her from this folly as far as possible. What a

³ The Fathers of the Church – SDt John Chrysostom – Homilies on Genesis – vol. 3 – Catholic University Press – Washington DC – 1992 – pg. 204.

grateful man! See how he counts his blessings from his master so as to demonstrate the ingratitude she shows to her partner. But despite such a victory, despite such wonderful fortitude, once more he endures countless troubles as though a guilty party. His master flew into a rage and cast him into prison. God in his resourcefulness caused him to give evidence of such mildness that even in prison he showed his virtue and arrived at authority in the kingdom.

Let us, therefore, make this our concern also, to have the Lord always with us so that what is done by us will be concluded successfully by him. So when some temptation disturbs us, let us turn these words over in our mind, and every unholy desire will immediately be put to flight.

THUR 06.11.20

St. Barnabas – from Butler’s Lives of the Saints ⁴

Although St Barnabas was not one of the twelve chosen by our Lord, yet he is styled an apostle by the early fathers and by St Luke himself on account of the special commission he received from the Holy Spirit and the great part he took in apostolic work. He was a Jew of the tribe of Levi, but was born in Cyprus. His name was originally Joseph, but the apostles changed it to Barnabas – which St Luke interprets as meaning “man of encouragement”. The first mention we find of him in the Holy Scriptures is in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where it is stated that the first converts at Jerusalem lived in common and that as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles for distribution. St. Barnabas’s sale of his estate is singled out for mention on this occasion. When Paul came to Jerusalem three years after his conversion the faithful were suspicious of the genuineness of this conversion, and avoided him. It was Barnabas who then “took him by the hand “and vouched for him among the other apostles.

Some time later, certain disciples having preached the Gospel with success at Antioch, it was thought desirable that someone be sent by the Church in Jerusalem to guide and confirm the neophytes. The man selected was Barnabas – “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith”, as we read in the Acts. Upon his arrival he rejoiced exceedingly at the progress the gospel had made and by his preaching added greatly to the number of converts. Finding himself in need of an able assistant he went to Tarsus to enlist the cooperation of St. Paul, who accompanied him back and spent a whole year at Antioch. Their

⁴ Butler’s Lives of the Saints – revised edition – Harper – San Francisco – 1984 – pg 176

labors were crowned with success, and it was in that city and at this period that the name “Christians” was first given to the followers of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit said to the apostles “Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work for which I have taken them.” Accordingly, after all had prayed and fasted, Paul and Barnabas received their commission by the laying on of hands and set forth on their first missionary journey. A miraculous cure wrought by St Paul upon a cripple at Lystra led the pagan inhabitants to conclude that the gods were come among them. They hailed Paul as Hermes or Mercury because he was the chief speaker, and Barnabas as Zeus or Jupiter. But with the proverbial fickleness of the mob, they soon rushed to the other extreme and stoned Paul.

At the Council of Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas gave a full account of their labors among the Gentiles and received approbation of their mission. Later a contention arose between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark and they separated, Paul proceeding on his projected tour with Silas, while Barnabas sailed to Cyprus with John Mark. Here the Acts leave him without further mention. He is said to have been stoned to death at Salamis.

FRI 06.12.20

From the Life of St Alice the Leper by Arnold of Villiers ⁵

Alice was a nun of La Cambre in Brussels. She left her home when she was seven years old. From the beginning she endeavored to embrace a genuine love for God, such as would equip and train her to take a wise stand against any onslaught of the devil. Compared with this love, every transitory thing cheapened for her. For the sake of this love she spurned all things visible, except as required for bodily needs, and she patiently endured any adversity. As Alice grew, her virtues increased with her years and her skill in applying those virtues advanced even beyond her years. God in turn wanted her to become his vessel of election. He wished her to be thoroughly purged of all temporal din, all defilement from this secular world. God longed that his Bride be free, be at leisure for him alone. To this end He struck her a heavy blow, struck her down with an incurable disease of leprosy.

The contagious nature of her disease demanded sequestration from the community. Due to this her heart was severely crushed and bruised. Yet she

⁵ Alice the Leper: Life of St Alice of Schaerbeek by Arnold II of Villiers – Translated by Martinus Cawley, ocsa – Guadalupe Translations - 2000

remembered God and was consoled. And the loving Lord gazed with eyes of mercy upon this handmaid's humility and deigned to warm her heart with His Love, to the extent that Alice preferred to linger in this situation of hers, with God as her only visitor. She learned from many experiences that the surest thing for her to do in every trouble and anguish was to take refuge in God's own haven. She ever applied this against all weariness and all emptiness.

Alice lodged in one hut for the first four years, but after that another hut was built in view of her unique infirmity. When this had been completed and she had moved in, the Lord appeared to her, right inside and on the very first day. With open arms He embraced her, saying: "Welcome, dearest daughter! Long have I desired to welcome you into this tabernacle of my covenant. For your whole remaining sojourn in this body, I will abide with you and be, as it were, your cellarer, ministering to you in every need."

Once on the feast of St Ursula and her companions, at the time of Matins, Alice stepped across the threshold of her hut to face towards the church and hearken awhile to the voices of the nuns praising God. she became disturbed in mind that she could not keep company with the others at the psalmody in choir. But she turned to the Lord, saying, "This I ask of you, holy Father, I cannot now join the others in praising these holy Virgins as I would like, since the special gift you have given me does not allow me to be in community for now. But this at least I ask: after this life's misery if over, do not allow me to be separated from their companionship!" And the Lord answered her: "Sweetest daughter, it shall not be merely as you desire; in my Kingdom I shall set you in a place loftier yet!"

Wholly deprived of the use of her body and of any of its members, she was committed to her bed. She breathed her last breath on the 11th day of June, at sunrise, in the year of the Lord 1250.

SAT 06.13.20

From a Sermon by St. Anthony of Padua ⁶

The one who is filled with the Holy Spirit speaks in different languages. These different languages are different ways of witnessing to Christ, such as humility, poverty, patience and obedience. We speak in these languages when we reveal in ourselves these virtues to others. Actions speak louder than words; let your words teach and your actions speak. We are full of words but empty of actions, and therefore are cursed by the Lord, since he himself cursed the fig tree when he found no fruit but only leaves. Gregory says: "A law is laid upon

⁶ The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. III – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – pg 1470

the preacher to practice what he preaches.” It is useless for a person to flaunt their knowledge of the law if they undermine its teaching by their actions.

But the apostles *spoke as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech*. Happy the one whose words issue from the Holy Spirit and not from himself! For some speak as their own character dictates, but steal the words of others and present them as their own and claim the credit for them. The Lord refers to such people and others like them in Jeremiah: *So, then, I have a quarrel with the prophets that steal my words from each other. I have a quarrel with the prophets, says the Lord, who have only to move their tongues to utter oracles. I have a quarrel with the prophets who make prophecies out of lying dreams, who recount them and lead my people astray with their lies and their pretensions. I certainly never sent them or commissioned them, and they serve no good purpose for this people, says the Lord.*

We should speak, then, as the Holy Spirit gives us the gift of speech. Our humble and sincere request to the spirit for ourselves should be that we may bring the day of Pentecost to fulfillment, insofar as He infuses us with his grace, by using our bodily senses in a perfect manner and by keeping the commandments. Likewise we shall request that we may be filled with a keen sense of sorrow and with fiery tongues for confessing the faith, so that our deserved reward may be to stand in the blazing splendor of the saints and to look upon the triune God.