

SUN

06,21,20

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

Thanks be to that grain of wheat who freely chose to die and so be multiplied! Thanks be to God's only Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for whom the enduring of our human death was not a thing to be scorned if it would make us worthy of his life! Mark how alone he was before his passing: his is the voice of the psalmist who said: *I am all alone until I depart from this place* a solitary grain that nevertheless contained an immense fruitfulness, a capacity to be multiplied beyond measure.

How many other grains of wheat imitating the Lord's passion do we find to gladden our hearts when we celebrate the anniversaries of the martyrs! Many members has that one grain, all united by bonds of peace and charity, under the one head, our Savior himself, and as you know from having heard it so often, all of them form one single body. Their many voices can often be heard praying in the psalms through the voice of a single speaker calling on God as if all were calling together, because all are one in him.

Let us listen to their cry. In it we hear the words of the martyrs who found themselves hard pressed, beset by danger from violent storms of hatred in this world, a danger not so much to their bodies, which, after all. They would have to part with sometime, but rather to their faith. If they were to give way, if they should succumb either to the harsh tortures of their persecutors or to love of this life, they would forfeit the reward promised them by God who had taken away all ground for fear. Not only had he said: *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul*: he had also left them his own example. The precept he had enjoined on them he personally carried out, without attempting to evade the hands of those who scourged him, the blows of those who struck him. or the spittle of those who spat on him. Neither the crown of thorns pressed into his head nor the cross to which the soldiers nailed him encountered any resistance from him. None of these torments did he try to avoid. Though he himself was under no obligation to suffer them, he endured them for those who were, making his own person a remedy for the sick. And so the martyrs suffered, but they would certainly have failed the test without the presence of him who said: *Know that I am with you always, until the end of time.*

¹ Journey with the Fathers 0 Year A – New City Press – NY – 1992 – pg 100

MON

06.22.20

From a letter written in prison to his daughter, Margaret, by St Thomas More ²

Although I know well, Margaret, that because of my past wickedness I deserve to be abandoned by God, I cannot but trust in his merciful goodness. His grace has strengthened me until now, and made me content to lose goods, land, and life as well, rather than to swear against my conscience. God's grace has given the king a gracious frame of mind toward me, so that as yet he has taken from me nothing but my liberty. In doing this His Majesty has done me such great good with respect to spiritual profit that I trust that among all the great benefits he has heaped so abundantly upon me I count my imprisonment the very greatest. I cannot, therefore, mistrust the grace of God. Either he will keep the king in that gracious frame of mind to continue to do me no harm, or else, if it be his pleasure that for my other sins I suffer in this case as I deserve, then his grace shall give me the strength to bear it patiently, and perhaps even gladly.

By the merits of his bitter passion joined to mine and far surpassing in merit for me all that I can suffer myself, his bounteous goodness shall release me from the pains of purgatory and shall increase my reward in heaven besides.

I shall not mistrust him, Meg, though I shall feel myself weakening and on the verge of being overcome with fear. I shall remember how St. Peter at a blast of wind began to sink because of his lack of faith, and I shall so as he did: call upon Christ and pray to him for help. And then I trust he shall place his holy hand on me and in the stormy seas hold me up from drowning.

And if he permits me to play Saint Peter further and to fall to the ground and to swear and forswear, may God our Lord in his tender mercy keep me from this, and let me lose if it so happen, and never win thereby! Still, if this should happen, afterward I trust that in his goodness he will look on me with pity as he did upon Saint Peter, and make me stand up again and confess the truth of my conscience afresh and endure here the shame and harm of my own fault.

And finally, Margaret, I know this well: that without my fault he will not let me be lost. I shall, therefore, with good hope commit myself wholly to him. And if he permits me to perish for my faults, then I shall serve as praise for his justice. But in good faith, Meg, I trust that his tender pity shall keep my soul safe and make me commend his mercy.

And therefore, my own good daughter, do not let your mind be troubled over anything that shall happen to me in this world. Nothing can come but what God wills. And I am very sure that whatever that be, however bad it may seem, it shall be the best.

² The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. III – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – pg 1479

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

Joseph's father believed what the brothers told him – that Joseph was alive and was ruler in Egypt. He said: "It is wonderful news for me that my son Joseph is alive. I will go and see him before I die. So let us hasten now so that I may savor something of our meeting before I die. Once I have the good fortune to meet him and have the consummation of joy, I shall then bring my life to a close." Without delay the good man took to the road, showing all haste and anxiety to see the object of his desire and gaze upon him, dead for many years, as he thought, and now made king of Egypt. "

Arriving at the Oath Well, by way of offering prayers of thanksgiving, he offered a sacrifice to the God of his father Isaac. On hearing this, let us learn in whatever we do, whether embarking on some project or beginning a journey, first of all to offer a sacrifice to the Lord in prayer and, by calling on his help to address the matter at hand, thus also imitate those good people's godliness. Because he took the initiative in showing his own right attitude in thanksgiving, at once he felt the influence of grace from on high. I mean, because he had in view the length of the journey and kept in mind his advanced age, he was afraid that death might come upon him before the meeting and rob him of the sight of his son, so he offered prayers to God to grant him life enough to enable him to enjoy the final satisfaction.

Observe, however, how the good God reassures the good man. The text goes on, remember: "God spoke to Israel in a vision by night, "Jacob, Jacob, I am the God of your fathers. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt. I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down with you, and I will bring you back again. Joseph's hands will close your eyes in death." So quite happy and free from all concern, he took to the road.

Consider at this point, I ask you, with what cheerfulness the old man takes the journey, being reassured by God's promise. Jacob's company travelling to Egypt numbered sixty-six persons. Joseph and his sons born to him numbered nine; so the total including Joseph numbered seventy-five. Why did Sacred Scripture indicate the number to us precisely? So that we might be in a position to know how God's prediction took effect that said: "I will make you into a great nation there." You see, from these seventy-five persons, the people of Israel grew into six hundred thousand. You notice how it was not idly or to no purpose that it taught us the number of those that went down to Egypt but for us to know from how few that great number came and not to lose confidence in God's promise and the fact that his wishes can never fail, no matter how many people try their utmost.

"On learning of his father's arrival in Egypt, Joseph harnessed his chariot and went out to meet his father; catching sight of him, he fell on his neck and wept a flood of tears." You see, immediately there came to his mind what he himself has suffered, what his father had endured on his account. And he thought of the great length of time that had elapsed and the fact that, contrary to all expectation, he saw his father and his father set eyes on his son. I have attained the object of my desire, he is saying: I am ready for death.

³ The Fathers of the Church – St John Chrysostom – Homilies on Genesis – vol. 3 – Catholic University Press – Washington DC – 1992 – pg 245

WED 06.24.20

A reading about the burning and shining of John the Baptist, from a sermon by St. Bernard of Clairvaux. 1

Let us rejoice, dearly beloved, on the Nativity of blessed John [the Baptist], on the solemnity of whose birth is celebrated today, and let us rejoice in that very nativity. Our reason for remembering John is certainly rich, and the source of our rejoicing sundry. Listen, brothers, to what is said about John: He was a burning and shining lamp, Scripture says. A great testimony, my brothers: great is the one to whom it is given, but greater is the one who gives it. He was a burning and shining lamp. Only to shine is nothing; only to burn is not enough. To burn and shine is complete.

He was, Scripture says, a burning and shining lamp. It does not say shining and burning, because John's splendor came from his fervor, and not the fervor from his splendor. Some do not shine because they are burning, but rather they burn in order to shine: clearly these do not burn with the spirit of charity but with the zeal that comes from vanity. Do you want to know how John both burned and shone? I think that a threefold division can be found in both, that is, in his burning and in his splendor. He was burning in himself with the mighty rigor of his way of life, with the deep and complete fervor of his devotion to Christ, and with the constancy of his bold reproaches to his sinful neighbors. He was shining no less in his example, in pointing out Christ, in his word; showing himself for the purpose of imitation; greatly illumining what lay concealed for the remission of sins; and for correction, lighting up our darkness, as was written: Lord, you who light my lamp, lighten my darkness.

Let us rejoice, dearly beloved, on the Nativity of blessed John, and let us rejoice in that very nativity. Our reason for remembering John is certainly rich, and the source of our rejoicing sundry. He was a lamp, and the Jews were willing to rejoice in his light; John rejoiced rather in the fervor of his loyalty: as the bridegroom's friend, he rejoiced in the bridegroom's voice. We are to rejoice in both ways: on the one hand for him, and on the other, we are to rejoice together with him for ourselves. He burned for himself; he was shining for us. Let us rejoice in his fervor for the purpose of imitation; let us also rejoice in his light yet not remaining there, but that in his light we may see light, the true light, which is not John himself, but the One to whom he bears witness.

He shone, as I stated above, in his example, in pointing out Christ in his word, making himself known by his deeds, making Christ known by a sign, and making us known to ourselves by his preaching. His father Zechariah said: You, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give

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From *Sermons for the Summer Season: Liturgical Sermons from Rogationtide and Pentecost*, translated, with an Introduction, by Beverly Mayne Kienzle; additional translations by James Jarzembowski (CF 53); Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991, pp. 88-96.

knowledge of salvation to his people. He does not say to give salvation, for he was not the light, but to give knowledge of salvation', that he might bear witness to the light.

To give knowledge of salvation, he says, in the forgiveness of sins. Can a wise person make light of the knowledge of salvation? Yet let us suppose that John has not yet come, that he has not yet pointed out Christ. Where would we seek salvation? What then shall I do? I will go to John, and listen to the voice of gladness, the voice of mercy, the speech of grace, the word of forgiveness and peace. Behold the Lamb of God, he says, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. In another place he says: He who has the bride is the bridegroom. John is revealing that God comes, the Bridegroom, the Lamb. Since he is God, it is certain that he can take away sins; but whether he is willing remains a question. Surely he is willing, because he is the Bridegroom, because he is worthy of love. John is the Bridegroom's friend, because the Bridegroom can have none but friends. And although he wants a glorious bride, having no blemish or wrinkle, or any such thing, yet he does not seek such a one for where would she be found? But rather he himself makes such a one, such a one as he presents to himself.

Then why do we hesitate, brothers, and not approach the throne of glory with complete confidence? Let us give thanks to John, and, with him as mediator, let us journey to Christ, because, as John says, He must increase, but I must decrease. Decrease in what way? In splendor certainly, not in fervor. He withdrew his rays; he gathered himself up, so that he would not be like one who gives forth all his spirit. He must increase, John says, the one who can not be emptied, and from whose fullness all can receive. But I must decrease; I came before the sun, like the morning star; I must be hidden, because the sun has risen.

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THUR 06.25.20

Jacob Blesses the sons of Joseph ⁴

St John Chrysostom

Joseph realized that his father was ailing, that the hour of his demise was at hand.

He took his two sons and went to Jacob. Jacob was anxious to bless these two sons of Joseph. But instead of blessing the elder son first, Jacob changed his hands to give precedence to the younger, putting Ephraim ahead of Manasses. Do you see Jacob's insight and, at the same time, his humility? His insight in foreseeing with the eyes of faith and so giving precedence to Ephraim ahead of Manasses, and on the other hand his humility in making no mention of his own virtue but instead invoking a blessing on the basis of the satisfaction given by his forbearers and the kindnesses done to him. Don't think he is saying that it is just by chance or through ignorance that I have done this. I am aware of what I have done, and because I foresee later developments I blessed him as I did. You see. If Manasses had pride of place from nature, still the younger son will be greater." This is what prophecy is like, after all. Just as the eyes of the body can form an image of nothing beyond visible things, so the eyes of faith do not see visible things but form an image of things that are due to happen generations later.

We recommend to you, dearly beloved, to imitate this good man by bequeathing to your children such legacies as can never sustain damage from anyone. Such a treasure is incorruptible. It is not prey to human conspiracy nor can it be diminished by any other thing. Instead it lasts forever; after all, it is spiritual and not subject to human conspiracies. On the contrary, it will prepare them for everlasting dwellings.

Let us therefore not be anxious to amass money and bequeath it to your children. Rather, let us teach them virtue and call down blessings from God on them. Let us therefore teach our children to prefer virtue to everything else and give no importance to material wealth.

⁴ The Fathers of the Church – St John Chrysostom – Homilies on Genesis – vol. 3 – Catholic University Press – Washington DC = 1992 = pg 257

FRI

06.26.20

The Meaning of Vocation – by St John Paul II [1](#)

Faith and love are not just words or vague feelings. Believing and loving God means a consistent life, lived wholly in the light of the Gospel. This is not easy. It often calls for great courage in going against the trends of fashion and the opinions of our world. But this is the one requirement for a truly successful and happy life.

If, in spite of your personal effort to follow Christ you are sometimes weak and do not live in conformity to the law of love, to the commandments, do not be discouraged. Christ continues to wait for you. He, Jesus, is the Good Shepherd who searches for the lost sheep and who tenderly bears it on his shoulder. Christ is the friend who never lets you down.

In the gospel story we see that the young man, having affirmed that he has kept the commandments, adds: “What do I still lack?” The young heart, moved by God's grace, felt a desire for greater generosity, more commitment, greater love. This desire for more is characteristic of youth; a heart that is in love does not calculate, does not begrudge, it wants to give of itself without measure. “Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, come, follow me.”

To those who entered the path of life by observing the commandments, the Lord proposes new horizons; the Lord proposes to the means that are loftier and calls them to commit themselves to his love without reserve. To discover this call, this vocation, is to realize that Christ is looking on you and inviting you by his glance to give yourself totally in love. Before this glance, before his love, the heart opens its doors gradually and is capable of saying *yes*.

If some of you hear the call to follow Christ more closely, to dedicate your entire heart to him, like the apostles John and Paul, be generous, do not be afraid, because you have nothing to fear when the prize that you await is God Himself, for whom, sometimes without ever knowing it, all young people are searching.

Young people who are hastening to me, young people who more than anything else want to know what you must do to gain eternal life, always say yes to God and he will fill you with his happiness.

“There is one thing you lack, come, follow me”. Is Jesus perhaps repeating to some of you today: “There is one thing you lack?” Is he perhaps asking for even more love, more generosity, more sacrifice? Yes, the love of Christ involves generosity and sacrifice. To follow Christ and to serve the world in his name requires courage and strength. There is no place for selfishness – and no place for fear! Do not be afraid, then, when love makes demands. Do not be afraid when love requires sacrifice.

To each one of you I say, therefore: Heed the call of Christ when you hear him saying to you: "Follow me!" Walk in my path! Stand by my side! Remain in my love! There is a choice to be made: a choice for Christ and the way of life, and his commandment of love.

[1](#)The Meaning of Vocation – St John Paul II – Scepter Publishers – Princeton, NJ – 1997 – pg 18

SAT 6.27.20

A Reading about Mary and Waiting for Christ, from a book by Fr Jean Daniélou.ⁱ

The Blessed Virgin had a most crucial role in the first coming of Christ. In her culminated all the expectation of the Jewish people, insofar as all the preparations, aspirations, inspirations, graces, prefigurations which had filled the Old Testament, all came together and were summed up in her; it is true to say that at the eve of Christ's coming she was the epitome and incarnation of the long waiting of twenty centuries. The whole of the Old Testament seems to come together in her with a more ardent longing and a more complete spiritual preparation for Our Lord's coming. *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.* The work of the Old Testament was one of education: the human race, rugged, coarse, as yet unformed, still utterly carnal-minded, must be made able, bit by bit, to take God's gifts, to receive the Holy Spirit. It was a long, progressive work of training. And the training culminated in the soul of the Blessed Virgin; and if we can say that in some sense her soul is outside time, and that in her eternity is present, then we may also say that she was prepared by the education of the whole of her people: she is the marvelous flower sprung out of Israel, the final point in the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of all the prophets and all the holy women of Israel. It is in fact, absolutely true to say that in her *every valley was filled, every mountain and hill brought low.* That is to say, in her our Lord's path was smooth before Him.

All this, which was simply the preparation and foreshadowing of Christ in Our Lady's soul, is a reality still present to us, for the mystery we are now living in the world is the mystery of Christ's gradual coming into all souls, into all nations. Christ had appeared in the flesh, the culmination of Israel's hopes; Mary had seen him for whom she had waited, she had held in her arms the child born in Bethlehem, and with Simeon had been able to salute Him as a Light to enlighten the Gentiles. Christ, then, had certainly come. He has come, but He is always He that is to come. He has come, but not yet wholly come; and though the waiting of Israel had been crowned, Israel is nonetheless still waiting. We live always during Advent, we are always waiting for the Messiah to come. He has come, but is not yet fully manifest. He is not fully manifest in each of our souls; He is not fully manifest in the world as a whole: that is to say, that just as Christ was born according to the flesh in Bethlehem of Juda so must He be born according to the spirit in each of our souls.

ⁱ-"Advent", New York 1951, 102-103, 109-110.