

SUN

07.26.20

A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by Origen ¹

To the seeker after the fine pearls may be applied the words: *Seek and you shall find*, and *Everyone who seeks will find*. If you ask what is to be sought, and what will be found by everyone who seeks for it, I say with confidence: pearls – especially that pearl which will be acquired for those who give their all, who sacrifice everything for it, the pearl Paul meant when he said: *I have accepted the loss of everything in order to gain Christ*. *Everything* means beautiful pearls; *to gain Christ* refers to the one pearl of great price.

Admittedly, a lamp is precious to people in darkness, and they need it until sunrise. Precious too was the radiance on the face of Moses – and I believe on the faces of the other prophets also. It was a sight of beauty leading to the point of being able to see the glory of Christ, to whom the Father bore witness in the words: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. But *compared with this surpassing glory. What formerly was glory now seems to have no glory at all*. We need at first a glory destined to be outshone by an all surpassing glory, just as we need the partial knowledge which *will be superseded when that which is perfect has come*.

Thus everyone beginning to live a spiritual life and growing toward maturity needs tutors, guardians, and trustees until the fullness of time arrives for him, so that after all this, he who at first was *no different from a slave although he owned the whole estate*, may on his emancipation receive his patrimony from his tutor, guardians and trustees.

This patrimony is the pearl of great price, and the coming of what is perfect to supersede what is imperfect when, after acquiring the forms of knowledge, if we may call them so, which are inferior to knowledge of Christ, one becomes able to understand the supreme value of knowing Christ. The law and the prophets fully comprehended are the preparation for the full comprehension of the gospel and the complete understanding of the acts and words of Christ Jesus.

¹ Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press, NY – 1984 - pg 110

Mon

07.27.20

THE WAR OF JOSHUA, from a Book by Damasus Winzen²

After the defilement brought on the Israelites by Achan has been removed, Joshua is able to conquer Ai, the second town in Canaan to fall to the Israelites. The inhabitants are put to the sword and the king is "hanged on a tree (i.e. crucified) and left until evening, but at sunset Joshua ordered his body to be taken down from the tree." (8:29) In the attack on Ai the Israelites use violence for the first time in their campaign to conquer Canaan. The battle against the five kings follows, and the defeat of the "kings of the north"; "and Joshua took and put to the sword and destroyed all the cities round about, and their kings"(11:12).

This war of extermination had nothing in common with the colonial wars which the white race fought during the last three centuries against practically all the rest of humanity. During the white conquest of colonial empires whole nations were sacrificed to the white race's skill in exploiting nature. The war of Joshua was directed against idolatry and sin. Recent excavations have proved the Canaanite culture at the time of the Hebrew invasion had reached its lowest level and found itself in a state of complete moral corruption. One should not forget that temple-prostitution, child-sacrifices, and such were public institutions in these little city-states. Their extermination through Joshua is the demonstration of the absolute opposition between the holiness of God and human sin. The wages of sin is death, because the living God is holy, and he hates sin. It is the plant which the heavenly Father has not planted and which, therefore, shall be rooted up (Mt 15:13).

There is no essential difference between Joshua and the messiah of whom David speaks: "the Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make of your enemies your footstool. The Lord at your right hand has broken kings in the day of his wrath; he shall fill ruins, he shall crush heads in the land of the many" (Ps.110:1,5-6). But the messiah Jesus has revealed a spiritual principle, here expressed in terms of war to be carried on by everyone in his own heart, when he said: "He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world, keeps it unto life eternal" (Jn 12:25). True to his teaching, he has fulfilled Joshua by carrying the burden of our sins in his own body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live in justice. The difference between the book of Joshua and the New Testament is not that the former belongs to a more primitive stage of the ethical development of the human race, in which violence is still considered a legitimate means of spreading religion, while the latter is pacifistic, but that Joshua hangs the evil kings on the tree, while Jesus takes on the likeness of sin and takes upon himself the death of the kings of Canaan. The difference between Joshua and Jesus is, therefore, that in Jesus charity has fulfilled justice, and death has been swallowed up in life.

²PATHWAYS IN SCRIPTURE, by Dom Damasus Winzen (Word of Life, Ann Arbor MI, 1976) pp. 93-94.

TUE

07.28.20

Divine Calls – a Sermon by Blessed John Henry Newman ³

We find in scripture a remarkable instance of a Divine Call, and the manner in which it is our duty to meet it. Samuel was a mere child when he was brought to the house of the Lord; and in due time he was called to a sacred office, and made a prophet. He was called, and he forthwith answered the call. He did not understand at first who called, and what was meant; but on going to Eli he learned who spoke, and what his answer should be. So when God called again, he said: “Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.” Here is prompt obedience.

Very different in its circumstances was St. Paul’s call, but resembling Samuel’s in this respect, that, when God called, he also promptly obeyed. When St. Paul heard the voice from heaven, he said at once, trembling and astonished, “Lord, what will you have me do?” This same obedience is stated or implied in two accounts which he himself gives of his miraculous conversion. In chapter 22 he says, “And I said, What shall I do, Lord?” and in ch. 26 he tells King Agrippa: “Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision”. Such is the account given us in St. Paul’s case of that first step in God’s gracious dealings with him, which ended in his eternal salvation. “Whom He foreknew, He also predestined – and whom He predestined, He also called” – here was the first act which took place in time – “and whom He called He also justified, and whom He justified, He also glorified”. Such is the Divine series of mercies; and you see that it was prompt obedience on St. Paul’s part which moved Divine grace forward.

This, then, is the first lesson taught us by St. Paul’s conversion, promptly to obey the call. If we do obey it, to God be the glory, for He it is Who works in us. If we do not obey, to ourselves be all the shame, for sin and unbelief work in us.

Such is the state of mind expressed by holy David in Psalm 27: “When you said, Seek My face, my heart said to you: Your face, O Lord, will I seek”. And this also is illustrated in the case of many other saints in scripture shown in word and deed. For instance, we read of the apostles that “Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And He said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him”. Again, when He saw James and John with their father Zebedee, “He called them; and they immediately left the ship, and their father and followed Him.” And so also with St. Matthew at the custom house, “He said to him, Follow Me; and he left all, rose up and followed Him.”

³ Parochial and Plain sermons – vol. VIII – John Henry Newman – Longmans, Green & Co – London – 1891 – pg 17f

A reading about receiving Christ in our soul, from a Sermon by St. Aelred of Reivaulx (CSQ 32 : 45, 48)

Jesus entered a certain fortress, and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister named Mary. You have heard in the Gospel about the great happiness of the two women. Truly, brothers, great was the happiness of Martha, who welcomed such a guest, who waited upon him, who was completely engaged with serving him. Great was the happiness of Mary, who recognized the excellence of her guest, who listened to his wisdom and tasted his sweetness. For in this way the evangelist recounts the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ entered a fortress, where a certain woman who was called Martha welcomed him into her house and waited upon him. She had a certain sister, who was called Mary, who, as soon as Jesus entered, immediately hastened to his feet and sat there and listened to his sweet words. She was attentive upon the words of the Lord to such an extent, that she cared nothing about what might be done in the house, what anyone was saying, or indeed even how hard her sister was working.

And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house And she had a sister named Mary. If therefore, brothers, our soul according to what we have said, becomes a fortress, it is fitting that two women live in it: one who sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to his words, the other who waits upon Jesus and feeds him. Consider this brothers: if Mary were alone in this house, there would be no one to feed the Lord; if Martha were alone, there would be no one to take delight in the discourses and presence of the Lord. Therefore, brothers, Martha signifies that action by which a person labors for Christ, and Mary signifies that rest by which a person ceases from bodily activities and takes delight in the sweetness of God, either through reading, prayer, or contemplation. Therefore, brothers, as long as Christ is poor and goes about afoot on earth, and is hungry and thirsty, and is tempted, it is necessary that both of these women dwell in one house, that both of their actions be in one soul.

As long as you or I or anyone else is on earth, he himself is present in the world, if we are his members. Whenever those who are his members are hungry, thirsty, and tempted, then Christ will be hungry, thirsty, and tempted. For this reason, Christ himself will say on the day of judgment: Whenever you, did it to one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you did it to me. Therefore, brothers, in this miserable and burdensome life, it is necessary that Martha be in our house, that is, that our soul be busy with bodily activities. As long as we must eat and drink, then we have to labor. As long as we are tempted by carnal pleasures, it is necessary for us to tame the flesh by vigils, fasts, and bodily labor. This part is Martha's. Mary also should be in our soul, for she represents activity of spirit. We should not always give ourselves to bodily exercises but occasionally should rest and see how delightful, how sweet, is the Lord; we should sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his word. In no way ought you to neglect Mary because of Martha, nor again Martha because of Mary. If you neglect Martha who will feed Jesus? If

you neglect Mary, what will it benefit you that Jesus entered your house, since you taste nothing of his sweetness?

Thur 07.30.20

JOSHUA AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM, from Pathways in Scripture by Dom Damasus Winzen⁴

The whole purpose of the conquest of Palestine by Joshua is the establishment of the kingdom of God. Therefore an altar is built as soon as a firm foothold has been gained in the land, of unhewn stones to indicate that whatever serves God should be untouched by violence and corruption. One God, one country, one people, one altar: this fundamental principle of the kingdom of God seems to be endangered when the tribes living east of the Jordan build an altar for themselves. All Israel is ready to fight against them, until the eastern tribes explain that this altar is not being used to offer sacrifices, but only serves as a reminder to them that they also have the right to offer, and that they also "have a part in the Lord". In these tribes living outside the holy land, Israel in exile is prefigured; their altar is an anticipation of the synagogue which takes the place of the temple. God's mercy is not limited by geographical border lines; his altar is wherever there are hearts to adore him. Thus the altar east of the Jordan represents all those who, although they have not been incorporated into the Church "physically" through the sacraments, have nevertheless the sincere intention, in good faith, to serve God, who is the God in heaven and on the earth below...

In the last two chapters (23-24) Joshua renews the covenant, impressing upon the minds of the Israelites that the love of God, which has given them a land in which they had not labored and cities to dwell in which they had not built, does not take away from the freedom of choice. They have to decide whom they want to serve: the God of their fathers or the gods of the Amorites. When they choose to serve the God of their fathers he tells them that they will not be able to serve the Lord, but he and his house, they will serve the Lord. A true prophet, Joshua sees the apostasy of Israel, but also the loyalty of Jesus and his house, the Church.

⁴PATHWAYS IN SCRIPTURE, by Dom Damasus Winzen, (Word of Life, Ann Arbor, MI 1976) pp. 95-96.

Fri 07.31.20

RULES FOR THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS by St Ignatius Loyola⁵

1. In the case of those who go from one mortal sin to another, the enemy is ordinarily accustomed to propose apparent pleasures. He fills their imagination with sensual delights and gratifications, the more readily to keep them in their vices and increase the number of their sins.

With such persons the good spirit uses a method which is the reverse of the above. Making use of the light of reason, he will rouse the sting of conscience and fill them with remorse.

2. In the case of those who go on earnestly striving to cleanse their souls from sin and who seek to rise in the service of God to greater perfection, the method pursued is the opposite of that mentioned in the first rule.

Then it is characteristic of the evil spirit to harass with anxiety, to afflict with sadness, to raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul. Thus he seeks to prevent the soul from advancing.

It is characteristic of the good spirit, however, to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This he does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good.

3. Spiritual Consolations: I call it consolation when an interior movement is aroused in the soul, by which it is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and as a consequence, can love no creature on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of them all. It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears that move to the love of God, whether it be because of sorrow for sins, or because of the sufferings of Christ our Lord, or for any other reason that is immediately directed to the praise and service of God. Finally, I call consolation every increase of faith, hope and love, and all interior joy that invites and attracts to what is heavenly and to the salvation of one's soul by filling it with peace and quiet in its Creator and Lord.

4. Spiritual Desolation: I call desolation what is entirely the opposite of what is described in the third rule, as darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, inclination to what is low and earthly, restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations which lead to want of faith, want of hope, want of love. The soul is wholly slothful, tepid, sad, and separated, as it were, from its Creator and Lord. For just as consolation is the opposite of desolation, so the thoughts that spring from consolation are the opposite of those that spring from desolation.

⁵THE TREASURY OF CATHOLIC WISDOM, Ed by John A. Hardon, S.J. (Doubleday NY, 1987) pp. 408-409.

5. In time of desolation we should never make any change, but remain firm and constant in the resolution and decision which guided us the day before the desolation, or in the decision to which we adhered in the preceding consolation. For just as in consolation the good spirit guides and counsels us, so in desolation the evil spirit guides and counsels. Following his counsels we can never find the way to a right decision.

Though in desolation we must never change our former resolutions, it will be very advantageous to intensify our activity against the desolation. We can insist more upon prayer, upon meditation, and on much examination of ourselves. We can make an effort in a suitable way to do some penance.

Sat 08.01.20

From a sermon by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, bishop ⁶

All holiness and perfection of soul lies in our love for Jesus Christ our God, who is our Redeemer and our supreme good. It is part of the love of God to acquire and to nurture all the virtues that make one perfect.

Has not God in fact won for himself a claim on all our love? From all eternity he has loved us. And it is in this vein that he speaks to us: "O consider carefully that I first loved you. You had not yet appeared in the light of day, nor did the world yet exist, but already I loved you. From all eternity I have loved you."

Since God knew that we are enticed by favors, he wished to bind us to his love by means of his gifts: "I want to catch mortals with these snare, these chains of love in which they allow themselves to be entrapped, so that they will love me." And all the gifts which he bestowed on us were given to this end. He gave us a soul, made in his likeness, and endowed with memory, intellect and will; he gave us a body equipped with the senses; it was for us that he created heaven and earth and such an abundance of things. He made all things out of love for us, so that all creation might serve us, and we in turn might love God out of gratitude for so many gifts.

But God did not wish to give us only beautiful creatures; the truth is that to win for himself our love, he went so far as to bestow upon us the fullness of himself. The eternal Father went so far as to give us his only Son. When he saw that we were all dead through sin and deprived of his grace, what did he do? Compelled, as the Apostle says, by the superabundance of his love for us, he sent his beloved Son to make reparation for us and to call us back to a sinless life.

⁶ The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. III – pg 1568 – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York - 1975

By giving us his Son, whom he did not spare precisely so that he might spare us, he bestowed on us every good: grace, love and heaven; for all these goods are certainly inferior to the Son: *He who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for all of us; how could he fail to give us along with his Son all good things?*