

**LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY**

VIGILS READINGS

September 6-12, 2020

Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2020**

**A commentary on Matthew by St. John Chrysostom <sup>1</sup>**

The Apostle says: *Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

You will be doing everything for the glory of God if, when you leave this place, you make yourselves responsible for saving a brother or sister, not just by accusing and rebuking him or her, but also by advising and encouraging, and by pointing out the harm done by worldly amusements, and the profit and help that come from our instruction. You will also be preparing for yourself a double reward, since as well as greatly furthering your own salvation; you will be endeavoring to heal a fellow member of Christ's body. It is the Church's pride; it is the Savior's command, not to be concerned only about our own welfare, but about our neighbor's also. Think to what high honor you raise yourself when you regard someone else's salvation as a matter of extreme importance. As far as is humanly possible you imitate God Himself, for listen to what he says through the prophet: "Whoever leads another from wrong to right *will be as my own mouth.*" In other words, "Whoever tries to save those that are negligent, and to snatch them from the jaws of the devil, is imitating me as far as a human being can." What other work can equal this? Of all good deeds this is the greatest; of all virtue this is the summit.

And this is perfectly reasonable. Christ shed his own blood for our salvation; and Paul, speaking of those who give scandal and wound the consciences of people seeing them, cried out: *Because of your knowledge a weak brother or sister is destroyed – someone for whom Christ died!* So if your Lord shed his blood for that person, surely it is right for each of us to offer at least some words of encouragement and to extend a helping hand to those who through laxity have fallen into the snares of the devil.

But I am quite certain that you will do this out of the tender love you bear your own members, and that you will make every effort to bring your

neighbors back to our common Mother, because I know that through the grace of God you are able to admonish others with wisdom.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – NY – 1999 – pg 122

## **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2020**

### **The Meaning of Work – from the Catholic Catechism [1](#)**

Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty: “If anyone will not work, let him not eat” (2 Thess.3:10).

Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying his cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ.

In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of labor stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary. Work is for man, not man for work. Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community. Everyone has the right of economic initiative; everyone should make use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labor. He should seek to observe regulations issued by legitimate authority for the sake of the common good.

Economic life brings into play different interests, often opposed to one another. This explains why the conflicts that characterize it arise. Efforts should be made to reduce these conflicts by negotiation that respects the rights and duties of each social partner: those responsible for business enterprises, representatives of wage-earners (for example, trade unions), and public authorities when appropriate.

Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical or political vacuum. On the contrary it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. Hence the principal task of the state is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labors and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly. Another task of the state is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. However primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society.

Access to employment and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination: men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. For its part society should, according to circumstances, help citizens to find work and employment. Unemployment almost always wounds its victim's dignity and threatens the equilibrium of his life. Besides the harm it does to him personally, it entails many risks for his family.

[1](#)Catechism of the Catholic Church – Ligouri Publications – Ligouri, MO – 1994 – pg 583

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2020**

**A reading from a sermon for Our Lady's Birthday by Blessed Gueric of Igny (CF 32:192-193)**

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***As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor.*** Today we celebrate the birthday of the blessed Virgin Mother from whom the Life of all things took his birth. Today is the birthday of that Virgin from whom the Savior of all men willed to be born in order that he might give to all who were born to death the power to be reborn to life. Today is the birthday of that new Mother who has destroyed the curse brought by the first mother' so that all those who through the fault of the first had been born under the yoke of eternal condemnation might instead, through her, inherit a blessing. She is indeed the new Mother, for she has brought new life to her children already hardening with age and has healed the defect of both inborn and

acquired senility. Yes indeed. She is the new Mother, who by an unheard of miracle has given birth in such a way that, becoming a mother, she has not ceased to be a Virgin. And she has given birth to the Child who created all things, even the Mother herself.

It is indeed a wonderful new thing, this fruitful virginity, but far more wonderful is the novelty of the Child born of it. No one who admits that the Child was God, finds any difficulty in believing his Mother remained a Virgin. His birth in no wise could injure the physical integrity of his Mother, this Child who went about making even the diseased whole. Nor could the reality of the body he assumed be thought to limit the power of the Creator as if he could not retain for himself what he gives to many of his creatures. For you find not a few creatures that are born without any harm to the integrity of the parents. In their own way all these bear witness to their Creator's own immaculate birth.

But the Mother herself, who was quite aware of the mystery surrounding her, has spoken and taught us how and what she brought forth. She speaks however not in contemporary or recent arguments but in the ancient oracles of prophecy, because, as the Apostle Peter tells us, the word of prophecy is a stronger witness than miracles. Indeed what is less open to deceit or suspect of falsity than the testimony from heaven about one not yet borne Long before her birth therefore the Spirit, who would later make his abode in her, borrowed Mary's voice to defend both the divinity of the Child and the integrity of the Mother Call his own handiwork Cagainst the blasphemies of unbelievers. In her person, if we are to follow a common opinion, he uttered the words you have just heard: "As the vine, I have brought forth a pleasant odor."

In their context, these words must be applied to the Person of Wisdom himself, that is, the Son. But you know quite well from the rules of Sacred Scripture that this does not mean they cannot be applied also to the Mother, like so many other passages. You know too that there is other evidence, enough and more than enough, bearing on this question, which is more familiar to you and much clearer than this. But you must not be cheated in your expectations of what today's lesson can teach us.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2020**

**The patron of all missionary enterprises among Negroes: a reading about St. Peter Claver from Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.**

He was born in Catalonia, about 1581, and as he showed fine qualities of mind and spirit was destined for the Church and sent to study at the University of Barcelona. Here he graduated with distinction [and entered] the Society of Jesus. He left Spain forever in April 1610, and was ordained priest at Cartagena, in what is now the republic of Colombia. By the time of his ordination the slave trade had been established in the Americas for nearly a hundred years, and the port of Cartagena was one of its principal centers, being conveniently situated as a clearing house. The trade had recently been given a considerable impetus, for the local Indians were not physically fitted to work in the gold and silver mines, and there was a big demand for Negroes from Angola and the Congo.

At this time the leader of the work among the Negroes was Father Alfonso de Sandoval, a great Jesuit missionary who spent forty years in the service of the slaves, and after working under him Peter Claver declared himself "the slave of the Negroes forever". Although by nature shy and without self-confidence he threw himself into the work with method and organization. He enlisted bands of assistants, and as soon as a slave-ship entered the port he went to wait on its living freight. The slaves were disembarked and shut up in the yards. Into these yards or sheds St. Peter Claver plunged, with medicines and food, bread, brandy, lemons, tobacco to distribute among the Negroes, some of whom were too frightened, others too ill, to accept them. "We must speak to them with our hands, before we try to speak to them with our lips", Claver would say. When he came upon any who were dying he baptized them, and then sought out all babies born on the voyage that he might baptize them. He had a band of seven interpreters, one of whom spoke four Negro dialects, and with their help he taught the slaves and prepared them for baptism, not only in groups but individually. He made use of pictures, showing our Lord suffering on the cross for the; above all he tried to instill in them some degree of self-respect, to give them at least some idea that as redeemed

human beings they had dignity and worth, even if as slaves they were outcast and despised.

It is estimated that in forty years St. Peter Claver instructed and baptized over 300,000 slaves. When there was time and opportunity he took the same trouble to teach them how properly to use the sacrament of penance, and in one year is said to have heard the confessions of more than five thousand. Many of the stories both of the heroism and of the miraculous powers of St. Peter Claver concern his nursing of sick and diseased Negroes, in circumstances often that no one else, black or white, could face.

In 1650 he went to preach the jubilee among the Negroes along the coast, but sickness attacked his emaciated and weakened body, and he was recalled to the Jesuit residence at Cartagena. But here a virulent epidemic had begun to show itself, and one of the first to be attacked among the Jesuits was the debilitated missionary, so that his death seemed at hand. After receiving the last sacraments he recovered, but he was a broken man. For the rest of his life pain hardly left him, and a trembling in his limbs made it impossible for him to celebrate Mass. He perforce became almost entirely inactive, but would sometimes hear confessions, especially of his dear friend Doña Isabella de Urbina, who had always generously supported his work with her money. Otherwise he remained in his cell, not only inactive but even forgotten and neglected.

On September 6, 1654 he was taken very ill and became comatose. The rumor of his approaching end spread round the city, everyone suddenly remembered the saint again, and numbers came to kiss his hands before it was too late; his cell was stripped of everything that could be carried off as a relic. St. Peter Claver never fully recovered consciousness, and died two days later on the birthday of our Lady. The civil authorities who had looked askance at his solicitude for mere Negro slaves, and the clergy, who had called his zeal indiscreet and his energy wasted, now vied with one another to honor his memory.

St. Peter Claver was never again forgotten and his fame spread throughout the world: he was canonized in 1888 and was declared by Pope Leo XIII patron of all missionary enterprises among Negroes.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2020**

**SAMSON AS A FIGURE OF CHRIST, from Pathways in Scripture by Dom Damasus Winzen<sup>1</sup>**

Through his victory over the Ammonites, Jephthah had secured peace in the east. In the west the defeat of the Canaanites in the days of Deborah had freed the Israelites from any threat. But then a new power established itself in the fertile plains along the Mediterranean coast--the Philistines, from whom the whole country received the name Palestine. They came from the west, and brought with them much of early Greek civilization. Their political life was much better organized than that of the native Canaanites. They excelled in their metal-work, of which Goliath's armor is the outstanding example. (1Sam 17)

Against them God raises up Samson who is in every way the opposite of civilization, good manners, art and politics. No ropes are strong enough to hold him. The abundance of his vitality is the only law of his actions. He does not gather wealth or power. He has no education, no training, but he excels all in natural wit and sheer physical strength. It would be wrong, however, to see in the Samson stories only a protest against civilization in favor of a "return to nature."

The secret of Samson's greatness is his character as a Nazirite, a man who is separated from ordinary men and women to be consecrated to God. True, Samson's weakness does not allow him to keep the order of life which the vow imposes upon him, and therefore he ends in failure. But his death is, at the same time, the most glorious manifestation of his true nature as a figure of Jesus, the other great Nazirite (Mt 2:23). Both fight alone and singlehanded, in complete disregard of human cunning, in the supreme liberty which is present where the Spirit of God is. (2Cor 3:17) Samson reached in the grandeur of his death that freedom of the spirit which

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<sup>1</sup>PATHWAYS IN SCRIPTURE, by Damasus Winzen, (Word of Life, Ann Arbor, MI 1976) pp. 104-105.

neither unbridled nature nor civilization can secure, but only the sacrifice of self. Samson's death, through which he killed more of his enemies than he had ever killed during his life, makes him truly a figure of Christ who overcame his enemies through his death, and by his victory over Satan "solved" Samson's riddle: "Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong one came forth sweetness".

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2020**

**A reading about praying for our dead, from a sermon by Karl Rahner.** <sup>2</sup>

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Because we love our dead and we still love them we must be with them always. But are they also with us? Do they belong to this love and to the celebration of this love? They have departed, they are silent. No word from them reaches our ears; the gentle kindness of their love no longer fills our heart. How quiet the dead are, how dead they are! Do they want us to forget them, as we forget a casual acquaintance on a trip, with whom we exchanged a few insignificant words? If life is not taken away from those who depart this life in God's love, but changed into eternal, measureless, superabundant life, why then should it seem to us that they no longer exist? Is the inaccessible light of God into which they have entered so faint that it cannot penetrate to us down here? Does even their love (and not only their bodies) have to abandon us in order to live with God in his light? Does their silence imitate the silence of their God, to whose home they have gone?

That is the way it is. For God is silent just like the dead. For us to celebrate his feasts in our hearts, this silent God must certainly be with us, even though he seems so distant and so silent. We certainly must love him, too, as we love our dead, the distant and silent dead, who have entered into the night. Does he not give to our love an intelligible answer when we call him to the feast of the heart, and ask him for a sign that his love exists for us and is present to us? And that is why we cannot lament the silence of the dead, for their silence is only an echo of God's silence. But if we keep silent

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<sup>2</sup> From *The Eternal Year*, Helicon Press, 1964, pp. 140-141.



and meek, if we listen to this silence of God's, then we begin to grasp with a comprehension that exceeds our own power to evoke or even to understand why both God and the dead are so silent. Then it dawns on us that they are near us precisely when we remember and pray for them. God's silence is the boundless sphere where alone our love can produce its act of faith in his love. He has veiled his love in the stillness of his silence so that our love might reveal itself in faith. God has apparently forsaken us so that we can find him. For if his presence in our midst were obvious, in our search for him we would find only ourselves. We must, however, go out from ourselves, if we are to find him where he is really himself. Because his love is infinite, it can dwell openly and radiantly only in his own infinity; and because he wants to show us his infinite love, he has hidden it from us in our finiteness, whence he calls out to us. Our faith in him is nothing but the dark road in the night between the deserted house of our life with its puny, dimly lit rooms, and the blinding light of his eternal life. His silence in this world is nothing but the earthly appearance of the eternal word of his love.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2020**

**SAINT PETER, ARCHBISHOP OF TARENTOISE -from Butler's Lives of the Saints<sup>3</sup>**

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St Peter of Tarentaise was born near Vienne in the French province of the Dauphine. He early displayed a remarkable memory, coupled with great inclination for religious studies, and at the age of twenty he entered the abbey of Bonnevaux. After a time, his father and the other two sons followed Peter to Bonnevaux, while his mother, with the only daughter, entered a neighboring nunnery.

He was not quite thirty when he was chosen superior of a new house built at Tamie, in the desert mountains of Tarentaise. It overlooked the pass which was then the chief route from Geneva to Savoy, and the monks were able to be of great use to travellers. There, with the help of Amadeus III, Count of Savoy, who held him in high esteem, he founded a hospice for the

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<sup>3</sup>BUTLER'S LIVES OF THE SAINTS, Ed. by Michael Walsh (Harper & Row, CA 1985) p. 138.

sick and for strangers, in which he was wont to wait upon his guests with his own hands.

In 1142 came his election to the archbishopric of Tarentaise, and Peter was compelled by St Bernard and the general chapter of his order, though much against the grain, to accept the office. He found the diocese in a deplorable state, due mainly to the mismanagement of his predecessor, an unworthy man who had eventually to be deposed. In place of the cathedral clergy whom he found lax and careless, St Peter substituted canons regular of St Augustine. He undertook the constant visitation of his diocese; recovered property which had been alienated; appointed good priests to various parishes; made excellent foundations for the education of the young and relief of the poor; and everywhere provided for the due celebration of the services of the Church..

In 1155, after he had administered the diocese for thirteen years, Peter suddenly disappeared. Actually he had made his way to a remote Cistercian abbey in Switzerland, where, he was accepted as a lay-brother. Not until a year later was he discovered. His identity having been revealed to his new superiors, Peter was obliged to leave and return to his see, where he was greeted with great joy. He took up his duties more zealously than ever. He rebuilt the hospice of the Little St Bernard and founded other similar refuges for travelers in the Alps...

It was not granted to the saint to die among his mountain flock. His reputation as a peacemaker led Alexander III to send him in 1174 to try effect a reconciliation between King Louis VII of France and Henry II of England. St Peter, though he was old, set out at once, preaching everywhere on his way. As he approached Chaumont in the Vexin, where the French court was being held, he was met by King Louis and by Prince Henry, the rebellious heir to the English throne. The latter, alighting from his horse to receive the archbishop's blessing, asked for the saint's old cloak, which he reverently kissed. Both at Chaumont and at Gisors where he interviewed the English king, St Peter was treated with utmost honor, but the reconciliation for which he labored did not take place until after his death. As he was returning to his diocese he was taken ill on the road near

Besancon, and died as he was being carried into the abbey of Bellevaux.  
This St Peter was canonized in 1191.

**END OF READINGS**