

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY

Vigils Readings

Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

October 4-10, 2020

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020

A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by St Basil the Great [1](#)

You need only look at the vine to be reminded of your own nature, that is, if you observe it intelligently. No doubt you remember the image used by the Lord in which he says that he is the vine and the Father the vinedresser. Each of us who have been grafted onto the Church by faith he calls branches, and he urges us to bear much fruit so as not to be rejected as useless and thrown into the fire.

Throughout the Scriptures the Lord continually likens human souls to vines. He says for instance: *My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hillside*; and again: *I planted a vineyard and put a hedge around it*. Clearly it is human souls that he calls his vineyard, and the hedge he has put round them is the security of his commandments and the protection of the angels; *for the angel of the Lord will encamp around those who fear him*. Moreover, by establishing in the Church apostles in the first place, prophets in the second, and teachers in the third, he has surrounded us as though by a firmly planted palisade.

In addition, the Lord has raised our thoughts to heaven by the examples of saints of past ages. He has kept them from sinking to the earth where they would deserve to be trampled on, and he wills that the bonds of love, like the tendrils of a vine, should attach us to our neighbors and make us rest on them, so that

always climbing upward like the vines growing on trees, we may reach the loftiest heights.

He also requires that we allow ourselves to be weeded. To be spiritually weeded means to have renounced worldly ambitions that burdened our hearts. Anyone who has renounced the love of material things and attachment to possessions, or who has come to regard as despicable and deserving of contempt the poor, wretched glory of this world, is like a weeded vine. Freed from the profitless burden of earthly aspirations, that person can breathe again.

Finally, following out the implications of the comparison, we must not run to wood, or, in other words, show off or seek the praise of outsiders. Instead, we must bear fruit by reserving the display of our good works for the true vine dresser.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – 1999 – pg 130

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2020

A reading about Jesus as the true successor to King David, from *The City of God* by St. Augustine. 1

Let me set forth what God promised to David, who succeeded Saul. It was this displacement of Saul that prefigured the ultimate displacement, on account of which so many of God's words were spoken and written down.

Because things at first had gone very well for David, he began to entertain the idea of building a house for God, none other than

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Fathers of the Church series, vol. 3, pp. 42ff.

that gloriously renowned Temple which King Solomon, his son, later on actually did build. As he was mulling over this project, the Prophet Nathan received a message from God for delivery to the king. In this message God said that David personally would never build Him a house, and that He had not, in all those long years, commended any one of His people to build Him a house of cedar.

Anyone who thinks that this grandiose promise as made good in Solomon is very far from the truth, for he pays too close attention to the verse: *He shall build a house to my name.* (Solomon did, in fact, erect that splendid Temple.) Meanwhile, he neglects to note the verse that follows: *And his house shall be faithful, and his kingdom forever before my face.* I suggest that such a reader take a good long look at Solomon's house, a house filled with his foreign wives worshiping false gods. Let him take a good look at Solomon, as well, the one-time wise monarch, bewitched by these women and dragged down into idolatry. Further, let him not venture to play with the idea that God made a lying promise, or that it was beyond His power to foresee that Solomon and his house would be such as they, in fact, turned out to be.

No, we should have no misgivings on this score, even if we did not see the pledge redeemed in Christ our Lord, *who was born according to the flesh of the offspring of David*, and were in the position of vainly looking here for somebody else. There was, admittedly, in Solomon, such as he was, some faint foreshadowing of the great reality that was to come, in so much, for instance, as he did build the Temple, and did have peaceful sway (his name means "the peacemaker") and was, at the outset, admirable. Nevertheless, while he foreshadowed Christ our Lord, he did not in his person resemble Him.

Solomon, it will be remembered, succeeded to the throne during his father David's lifetime, a kind of succession unique among Jewish kings, for no other reason save to furnish further clear evidence that Solomon is not the man our prophecy proclaims. Nathan says to David: *And when your days shall be fulfilled and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.* In view of these words, how can anyone think that Solomon is the subject of the prophecy, and fail to realize that in view of the earlier words, *And when your days shall be fulfilled and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you,* a different *Peacemaker* is promised, One to be raised up, not before David's demise as Solomon was, but afterwards? He who was promised in such terms to King David was destined to come after his death, the very same who was to build a house for God such as we rejoice to see rising up today, a house not fashioned of timbers and stones, but of human beings. It is these people, believers in Christ, whom St. Paul addresses in these words: *Holy is the temple of God, and this temple you are.*

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020

From a letter to his Carthusian sons by St. Bruno ¹

From the frequent and pleasant reports of our most blessed brother, I know of your reasoned and truly praiseworthy discipline, carried out with unwavering rigor. Since I have heard of your holy love and constant pursuit of honesty and virtue, my spirit rejoices in the Lord. I rejoice and am drawn to praise and give thanks to God, and still I long to love him. I rejoice, as I

¹ The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. IV – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1975 – pg 1468

should, in the growing fruits of your strength, and yet I grieve and am ashamed that I lie idle and senseless in the mire of my sins.

Therefore rejoice, my dearest brothers, because you are so blessed and because of the bountiful hand of God's grace upon you. Rejoice, because you have escaped the various dangers and shipwrecks of the stormy world. Rejoice, because you have reached the quiet and safe anchorage of a secret harbor. Many wish to come into this port, and many make great efforts to do so, yet do not achieve it. Indeed many, after reaching it, have been thrust out, since it was not granted them from above.

Therefore, my brothers, you should consider it certain and well-established that whoever partakes of this desirable good, should he in any way lose it, will grieve to his death, if he has any regard or concern for the salvation of his soul.

My dearest lay brothers, of you I say: "My soul magnifies the Lord". For I have learned of the generosity of his mercy toward you from the report of your Prior and dearest father; he rejoices and takes great pride in you. And let us rejoice that since you are acquainted with the knowledge of letters, almighty God will inscribe in your hearts with his finger not only his love but also the knowledge of his holy law. By your work you show what you love and what you know. When you observe true obedience with prudence and enthusiasm, it is clear that you wisely pick the most delightful and nourishing fruit of divine Scripture.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2020

A READING ABOUT THE ROSARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN,

To linger in the domain of Mary is something divinely great. One does not ask about the utility of truly noble things, because they have their meaning within themselves. So it is of infinite meaning to draw a deep breath of this purity, to be secure in the peace of this union with God.

With this we come back to what was said in the beginning. We need a place of holy tranquility that is pervaded by the breath of God and where we meet the great figures of the faith. This place is really the inaccessibility of God himself which is opened to us only through Christ. All prayer begins when we become silent, when we recollect our scattered thoughts and feel remorse at our trespasses, when we direct our thoughts toward God. If we do all this, the place is thrown open, not only as a domain of spiritual tranquility and mental concentration, but as something that comes from God.

We are always in need of this place, especially when the convulsions of the times make clear something that has always existed but which is sometimes hidden by outward well-being and a prevailing "peace of mind": namely, the homelessness of our lives. In such times, a great courage is demanded from us: not only a readiness to dispense with more and to accomplish more than usual, but to persevere in a vacuum we do not otherwise notice. So, we require more than ever this place of which we speak, not to creep into to hide, but as a place to find the core of things, to become calm and confident once more. For this reason the Rosary is so important in times like ours--assuming, of course, that all slackness and exaggeration are done away with, and it is

²The Rosary of Our Lady, New York 1955, 33-36.

used in its clear and original forcefulness. This is all the more important because the Rosary does not require any special preparation. We do not need to generate thoughts of which we are not capable at the moment or at any other time. We step into a well-ordered world, meet familiar images and find roads that lead us to the essential.

The Rosary has the character of a sojourn. Its essence is the sheltering security of a quiet, holy world that envelops the person who is praying. This is particularly evident when we compare it with the Stations of the Cross, which have the character of a journey. We follow the Master from one "station" to another, and feel at the end that we have reached our goal. The Rosary is not a road, but a place, and it has no goal but a depth. To linger in it has great compensations.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2020

A reading about the Temple built by King Solomon, from *Pathways in Scripture* by Dom Damasus Winzen.¹

The forty years of Solomon's reign are described in the first eleven chapters of the First Book of Kings. They constitute the most glorious period of Jewish history. The weakness of Egypt and Assyria, the two great powers on which the fate of Israel depended, gave Solomon an opportunity to reorganize the administration of his country, to fortify the towns, to set up industries and promote trade with foreign countries, and to crown his work with the building and the dedication of the Temple. [The Scriptures characterize the time in this way:] *"And Judah and Israel dwelt without any fear, everyone under his vine,*

¹ "The third and Fourth Books of Kings" in *Pathways in Holy Scripture*, Ann Arbor, MI: Word of Life, 1976, pp.

and under his fig tree, from Dan to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon” (1 Kgs 4.25).

...The crown of Solomon’s works is the **temple**, the beautiful symbol of a world restored to its original splendor as God’s “resting place”. A Jewish proverb says: “The country of Israel is in the heart of the earth. Jerusalem is in the heart of Israel. The temple is in the heart of Jerusalem. The ark of the Covenant is in the heart of the temple, and next to the ark is the cornerstone of the world.” The “cornerstone” is Christ. The temple is indeed a symbol and a promise that all creation will be restored under Christ as the head. The gold and silver of Arabia, the cedars of Lebanon, the wisdom of Hiram, king of Tyre, practically the whole world contributed to the building. The walls and doors of the temple were covered with reliefs of fruit trees and cherubim, reminiscent of the garden of Eden, which is itself a symbol of the world in peace with its Maker. The heart of the temple, however, was a windowless room in cubic form, without any image. It is the “Holy of Holies,” a symbol of the innermost sanctuary of heaven where God dwells in darkness, as Solomon said at the dedication of the temple: *“The Lord established the sun in the heavens, but He Himself said that He would dwell in thick darkness” (8.12).*

The windowless darkness of the Holy of Holies shows that God is the center of the universe but **not** a part of it. The Hebrew word for “Holy of Holies” —**debir**—could be related to [the Hebrew word for “word”], **dabar**, and has therefore been translated by St. Jerome with “**oraculum**—oracle,” a place where the People listen to God and where God listens to His People. The only “object” in the Holy of Holies is the ark containing the Law, surmounted by the two Cherubim facing each other and forming, with their outspread wings, the “mercy-seat,” ready to receive the Divine Presence (8.9). Solomon’s temple is not, like the temples of the

heathen gods, a place for the God of Israel to live in. At the dedication Solomon prays: *“If heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built. But have regard to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplications, O Lord my God ... that Thy eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the house of which Thou hast said: ‘My name shall be there’”* (8.27-29). Not an image but the “Name” of God is present in Solomon’s temple, as long as His Word is kept in obedience to the Law and His Name is invoked in prayer. It was “fulfilled,” therefore, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2020

ON AUTHORITY AND PRIVATE JUDGMENT,

from a Book by St. John Henry Newman³

It is the custom with Protestant writers to consider that, whereas there are two great principles in action in the history of religion, Authority and Private Judgment, they have all the Private Judgment to themselves, and we have the full inheritance and the superincumbent oppression of Authority. But this is not so; it is the vast Catholic body itself, and it only, which affords an arena for both combatants in that awful, never-dying duel. It is necessary for the very life of religion, viewed in its large operations and its history, that the warfare should be incessantly carried on. Every exercise of Infallibility is brought out into act by an intense and varied operation of the Reason, both as its ally and as its opponent, and provokes again, when it has done its work, a re-action of Reason against it; and, as in civil polity the State exists and endures by means of the rivalry and collision, the encroachments and

³APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA, by Card Newman, (Longmans, Green & Co. 1918), pp. 252-53

defeats of its constituent parts, so in like manner Catholic Christendom is no simple exhibition of religious absolutism, but presents a continuous picture of Authority and Private Judgment alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and flow of the tide;--it is a vast assemblage of human beings with willful intellects and wild passions, brought together into one by the beauty and the Majesty of a Superhuman Power, --into what may be called a large reformatory or training-school, not as if into a hospital or into a prison, not in order to be sent to bed, not to be buried alive, but (if I may change my metaphor) brought together as if into some moral factory, for the melting, refining, and molding, by an incessant, noisy process, of the raw material of human nature, so excellent, so dangerous, so capable of divine purposes.

St Paul says in one place that his Apostolic power is given him to edification, and not to destruction. There can be no better account of the Infallibility of the Church. It is a supply for a need, and it does not go beyond that need. Its object is, and its effect also, not to enfeeble the freedom or vigor of human thought in religious speculation, but to resist and control its extravagance. What have been its great works? All of them in the distinct province of theology:--to put down Arianism, Eutychianism, Pelagianism, Manichaeism, Lutheranism, Jansenism. Such is the broad result of its action in the past;--and now as to the securities which are given us that so it ever will act in time to come.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2020

**Solomon's temple and those who worship in spirit and truth,
from *Pathways in Scripture* by Dom Damasus Winzen. ⁴**

⁴ *Pathways in Scripture*, Dom Damasus Winzen (Word of Life, MI 1976) pp. 133-34.

Solomon's temple was not, like the temples of the heathen gods, a place for the God of Israel to dwell. At the dedication Solomon prays: "If heaven and the heavens of heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house which I have built. But have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his supplications, O Lord my God...that your eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the house of which you said: 'My name shall be there'"(8:27-29). Not an image but the "name" of God was present in Solomon's temple, for as long as his word was kept by obedience to the law and his name was invoked in prayer. It was "fulfilled," therefore, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Out of all the nations under the sky, God set apart one people to be his servant. From all countries of the world he selected one to be his holy land, and among all the mountain heights where people used to offer sacrifices he took possession of Mount Zion to dwell there, that from all over the world people might go to this one place to worship the one and only true God. Not because he was a local god, but because he was the one God of the universe, did the God of Israel choose Solomon's temple for his name and his eyes and his heart to be there (9:3). One God, one nation, one country, one temple--to prepare the way for the one in whom the Father was well pleased, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of David. He is God's chosen one, his holy land and the temple of his presence. When he is come, people will worship the Father neither on Mount Gerizim nor at Jerusalem, but in spirit and in truth. This however, does not mean that he will give everyone the license to worship the god of his fancy in the recesses of his heart. What Christ teaches the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well is not intended to abolish the one God who had promised to hallow the house Solomon had built for him and to put his name there forever. It is meant to show that he who speaks to the woman is the Messiah who has been foreshadowed

in the temple. Speaking of the temple of his body, he said:
"Destroy this temple, and in three days I shall raise it up"(Jn 2:19).
Since his resurrection he has become the chief cornerstone in
whom all the building, being framed together, grows up into a
holy temple in the Lord, in whom we are all built together into a
habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:20-22).

END OF READINGS