

SUN

11.01.20

All Saints

A Sermon by St. Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

My brothers, if we are not qualified to speak of one of God's saints and proclaim her glory, how qualified are we to give a sermon of all of the saints? It is all the more necessary that we bear ourselves in a way enabling us to come to share their glory. What then must we do? How can we attain these heights? Accordingly, brothers, let us listen to some wholesome advice. For whom should we be more ready to believe than someone who has already attained that glory? He certainly knows the way by which he went up. Let us listen then to one of the great friends of Jesus telling us: *Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand that he may raise you up.*

You know how today throughout the entire world everyone is praising God's saints – the angels and archangels, the apostles, the martyrs, confessors, virgins. In their honor today in our holy Church there are canticles, hymns, torches and all the rest that goes with a feast. The canticles connote the everlasting celebration in which the saints live because of the inexpressible joy which is theirs in God. The hymns connote the inexpressible praise by which they are always praising God. So it is the Psalmist says: *Blessed are those who dwell in your house, O Lord; they will praise you through all ages.* The torches connote the everlasting light in which God's saints live. This is why this past night you sang: *Around you, Lord, is a light that will never fail where the souls of the saints find rest.* Now brothers, ponder, if you can, how exalted in heaven are those who can be exalted and honored in this way on earth. Surely, brothers, if we could behold all the glory of the world and all the praise of the world and all the joy of the world at the same time, in comparison with their joy it is nothing but absolute misery.

Therefore, brothers, you ought to know that we celebrate these feasts with torches, canticles and so on for only two reasons. (These things do not profit God's saints. They take no delight from this earthly singing, nor do they glory in this earthly torches and trifles. Their praise is Christ and he is their light, *who enlightens every person coming into this world.*)

The first reason for these things is that by these reminders we may rouse ourselves to greater devotion; then the second, because of the connotations of which we have already spoken. We ought, then, to do as much as is adequate to these two reasons. They do not celebrate these feasts well who by excessive pomp and ceremony pursue these external glories and splendours – with the result that the outer self becomes so intent on the canticles, the ornaments, the torches and such lovely trappings that the mind is scarcely able to conceive of anything but what it sees with the eyes, hears with the ears, or perceives with the other senses.

As for us, brothers, who do not see these things, let us ponder and delight in the true loveliness in which the saints live free of corruption; in those spiritual ornaments that the saints possess in righteousness and holiness: in the hymns and praises with which they praise God without weariness; and in that light which they see in the face of God. And let us keep our feasts in such a way that our mind is not turned back to those earthly and perishable delights but rather is roused to those that are spiritual and eternal. And so let

us reflect on their glory and exaltation. To enable us to reach this exaltation, let us listen to the advice of the Apostle: *Humble yourselves beneath the mighty hand of God*. The Apostle was very aware of the reason why we are cast down, why we have lost that exaltation in which we were created, why we were driven out into this unhappiness. What is this reason, brothers, if not pride? Therefore, to counteract this pride he taught humility. *Humble yourselves*, he says. But because he knew that not all those who humble themselves humble themselves wisely, he therefore added: *under the mighty hand of God*.

Now let us notice who they are who are humbled beneath the glorious hand of God. They are the good angels who, after the blessed Mary Mother of God, are the focus of this feast. They doubtless humble themselves beneath the glorious hand of God for they look for nothing from his hand but his glory in which they are happy without end, each one according to the rank in which they were created.

Therefore, brothers, let us humble ourselves *beneath God's mighty hand that he may lift us up at the time of his visitation*. May he lift us up through good deeds and through holy desires, so that when he comes at that great visitation when he will demand from everyone an account of what they have done in this life, he may lift us up totally and we may hear that endearing voice saying: *Come, you blessed of my Father. Receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world*.

MON

11.02.20

All Souls

From Purgation and Purgatory by St. Catherine of Genoa [1](#)

The souls in purgatory cannot think, "I am here, and justly so because of my sins," or "I wish I had never committed such sins for now I would be in paradise," or "That person there is leaving before me," or "I will leave before that one." They cannot remember the good or evil in their past nor that of others.

Such is their joy in God's will, in his pleasure, that they have no concern for themselves but dwell only in their joy in God's ordinance. They see only the goodness of God, his mercy toward all. Should they be aware of other good or evil, theirs would not be perfect charity. Only once do they understand the reason for their purgatory: the moment in which they leave this life. After this moment, that knowledge disappears. Immersed in charity, incapable of deviating from it, they can only will or desire pure love. There is no joy save that in paradise to be compared with the joy of the souls in purgatory.

As the rust of sin is consumed the soul is more and more open to God's love. Just as a covered object left out in the sun cannot be penetrated by the sun's rays, in the same way, once the covering of the soul is removed, the soul opens itself fully to the rays of the sun. Having become one with God's will, these souls, to the extent that he grants it to them, see into God.

Joy in God, oneness with him, is the end of these souls, an instinct implanted in them at their creation. All that I have said is nothing compared to what I feel within, the witnessed correspondence of love between God and the soul; for when God sees the soul pure as it was in its origins, he tugs at it with a glance, draws it and binds it to himself with a fiery love. God so transforms the soul into himself that it knows nothing other than God. He will not cease until he has brought the soul to its perfection.

That is why the soul seeks to cast off any and all impediments, so that it can be lifted up to God; and such impediments are the cause of the suffering of the souls in purgatory. Not that the souls dwell on their suffering; they dwell rather on the resistance they feel within themselves against the will of God, against his intense and pure love bent on nothing but drawing them up to him. And I see rays of lightning darting from that divine love to the creature, so intense and fiery as to annihilate not the body alone but, were it possible, the soul. The soul becomes like gold that becomes purer as it is fired, all dross being cast out.

The last stage of love is that which does its work without human doing. If humans were to be aware of the many hidden flaws in them, they would despair. These flaws are burned away in the last stage of love. God shows the soul its weakness, so that the soul may see the workings of God. If we are to become perfect, the change must be brought about in us and without us; that is, the change is to be the work not of human beings but of God.

This, the last stage of love, is the pure and intense love of God alone. The overwhelming love of God gives the soul a joy beyond words. In purgatory great joy and great suffering do not exclude one another.

[1](#)A Word in Season – vol. IV – Sanctoral – Augustinian Press – 1991 – pg 215

TUE 11.03.20 St Martin de Porres

**A reading about the early life of St. Martin de Porres,
from a book by J. C. Kearns. 1**

Martin de Porres was born in the royal city of Lima, Peru, South America, on December 9th, 1579. His father was a Spanish nobleman, a native of Burgos and a knight of the Order of Alcántara, who like so many of the *conquistadores* had come to America to advance his fortunes, spurred on by the almost unbelievable stories of the fabulous wealth of the Indies. His name was Don Juan, and in his travels in the New World he had met a beautiful Negro woman in Panama, names Ana Velázquez. She was the mother of Martin. The child definitely inherited the dark skin and features of his mother=s race, which quickly displeased the Spanish cavalier, Y and the proud father felt that the dignity of his family had been impaired and he lost much of the affection he had entertained for the child=s mother. YDon Juan finally deserted Ana after the birth of another child, a daughter named JuanaY.

Little Martin endured all the pangs and sorrows of being an unwanted childY and he was little given to play or to a manifestation of interest in childish trifles. He was deeply religious, finding a refuge from the unfavorable environment of his childhood at devotions in the neighboring church. The boy was especially generous to the poor, often distributing to beggars the basket of provisions which he had purchased in the market for his mother. When he returned home with an empty basket, his mother would scold and chastise him, but soon this unique little boy became the object of admiration in the section of the city where he dwelt.

At the age of twelve he was apprenticed to a barber. In those days a barber did much more than cut hair and trim beards. He was also a surgeon, a physician, a druggist. Little Martin was delighted, for now he could learn to be of real service to his beloved friends, the poor. He learned with great eagerness how do bind up wounds, to allay fevers, how to brew soothing drugs form herbs, how to set broken limbs, to make poultices, and generally, all the medical knowledge of that era for the relief of the diseases and ailments of humanity.Y

Martin was deeply appreciative of the helpful interest which the barber-surgeon who was his teacher manifested towards him, and his teacher in turn seemed to realize the great good that his young apprentice was destined to accomplish in the future. Through study and practical experience Martin learned from him all about the *materia medica* of those days. In his charity, the young man practiced his profession gratuitously; any fees which were voluntarily given to him he soon distributed to the indigent. His own needs were very few; he led a life of unselfish zeal in behalf of his beloved poor and sick.

The fame of this youthful doctor soon became a topic of conversation throughout all Lima. His skill as a physician, his evident self-forgetfulness, his intense interest in the welfare of his patients, the all-encompassing nature of his charity, his patent personal holiness, and manifold miraculous cures gave him a reputation from which in his modesty he naturally shrank. However, Martin's success made him all the more grateful to Almighty God for thus giving him the opportunity of doing good to so many. Yet he sensed the need of a higher sanction for the program of his Christian social service, which he was eventually to find in all its fullness as a member of the Order founded by St. Dominic.

WED 11.04.20 St Charles Borromeo

A reading about St. Charles Borromeo, from a homily by Ronald Knox. ¹

When our Lord's apostles came to look back upon that terrible night in the Lake of Galilee, when they strained every nerve against the tempest while their Master lay sleeping in the boat, they found in it an allegory of their own situation, as they launched out the frail bark of his Church upon waves so troubled, with prospects so uncertain. And in every age the Church has looked back to that picture and taken comfort from it in times of adversity. [With great confidence], the Church of God, which is Peter's boat, has breasted the waves all through her troubled history. It is not upon the captain's judgment or the pilot's experience, not human wisdom or human prudence, that she depends for her safe voyage: she rests secure in the presence of her inviolable passenger. Yet we should do ill if we grudged recognition and gratitude to those servants of his who at various times have steered our course for us through difficult waters, and especially to the saints of the Counter-Reformation — that remarkable group of saints whom God raised up at the time of Europe's apostasy, by whose influence, humanly speaking, the faith survived that terrible ordeal. And not the least, nor the least prominent, of these is [St. Charles Borromeo], who ruled the Church of Milan in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

¹ from *Occasional Sermons of Ronald Knox*, ed. by Philip Caraman, S.J., New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960, pp. 79-82.

Say what you will, Italy breeds the genius for government.... Anybody, in naming the world's great men, will give you almost at once the names of two Italians, Julius Caesar and Napoleon. And, whatever verdict history may pass on our own times, it is in Italy that the anarchical tendencies of the last half-century have provoked the first reaction in favor of efficient government. St. Charles came from a ruling family among that ruling race. Personal humility shone out in him as in the other saints; but there was something Latin all the same about the resolute competence with which he governed his diocese. Men called him a second St. Ambrose; and St. Ambrose, his predecessor in the See of Milan, was a civil magistrate before he was ever a bishop. It was not idle title to call St. Charles a prince of the Church.

Whatever be the rights and wrongs of all the controversies we hear about the medieval Church, this at least is clear, that in the days of the Council of Trent its organization needed reform. And reform needs more than mere legislation to decree it; it needs administration to execute it. That is St. Charles's characteristic legacy to the Church: it was the influence of his example, in great measure, that molded her organization on the new model which Trent had decreed. The bishop has got to be the center of everything in his diocese, and the clergy of the diocese are to be *his* clergy — a family of which he is to be the father, a guild of which he is to be the master. See how fond St. Charles was of synods: the whole of his comparatively short episcopate is a long record of the synods he gathered amongst his clergy. See how enthusiastic he is for the seminary idea; the bishop, henceforth, is not merely to ordain people, he is to know whom he is ordaining. And above all what was characteristic of St. Charles was the institute which he left behind him — a body of secular priests, putting themselves at the disposal of the bishop as absolutely as the religious puts himself at the disposal of his superior. Yes, there is much about St. Charles's life which is more exciting, and much which is more attractive, than all this; his boundless generosity to the poor, the relentless mortification that regulated his busy, competent life. But what makes him stand out among the saints more than either is his intense devotion even to the most uninspiring details of diocesan routine.

THUR 11.05.20

**A reading about the mission of the prophet Elijah,
from a book by Adrienne von Speyr. 1**

This is primarily a mission of the contemplative life, that is, one of constant openness to what God may say at any moment. God speaks, and Elijah must listen. And listen each time in the precise manner that God's word requires; apprehend in such a way as to enable God to recognize Elijah's openness. It is not the case with him, as with others, that God must first overpower him in order to achieve his ends; rather, Elijah's longing for obedience, for carrying out God's will, is so strong as to result in a constant attitude of readiness. This readiness is childlike; he also experiences in a childlike way how God looks after his needs; for instance, in the years when God directly provides him with sustenance while he is devoted to prayer. He sees that his praying confirms his existence before God, that he inhabits a world transcending the confines of the earthly, that his contact with God remains a direct one. The way in which he is nourished favors the activity of prayer. And if God does not simply keep him alive without any nourishment at all, then this is in order that he might not entirely lose contact with the world, might not have only God's being in eternity constantly before his eyes, but can also observe God's workings within transient time. And through this observing, it is intended that his prayer will grow stronger, his faith increase, and his whole contemplative life be marked by an attitude of readiness.

Later on, this childlike aspect grows more mature: he becomes acquainted with anxiety. Anxiety about God, anxiety about the response that one makes to God which, for Elijah, still takes the form of anxiety about his own life, about the fate that awaits him. This anxiety is the sign of a one's level of maturity. It is an anxiety unknown to a child but one that befalls an adult because his knowledge is greater and because knowledge carries within itself the core of responsibility. This anxiety, like prayer, is a part of Elijah's mission. Also belonging to it are all the blows of fate that strike him, the sense of powerlessness he feels in himself, the being flung back and forth between his own unworthiness and the power suggestive of utmost worthiness that is bestowed on him. He is tossed in all directions, so as to be God's servant in going as well as coming and to bear witness to his Lord. He has to deal with the mighty of this world but also with the dead boy; these, too, are poles of his mission whose outer aspects symbolize something inner that God has implanted in them.

**A reading about the great revelation of God's mercy to Elijah,
from a book by Dom Damasus Winzen. 1**

These accounts in the books of Kings of the two kingdoms is not intended to be complete. These accounts show the development of history in the light of divine justice. God rewards faithfulness and punishes disloyalty; He fulfills His promise to David. Indeed, despite the disloyalty of the people, God never rejects His firstborn completely. In every decisive crisis a remnant is saved.

The most critical moment for the worship of the One True God in the northern kingdom of Israel came during the reign of Ahab and his wife Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon. She induced her husband to make the worship of Baal, the town-god of Tyre, the official religion of the country (1 Kgs 16.29-33). At this moment God raised up Elijah the prophet. His mission was to show against the heathen baals personifications of the powers of nature that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is not a part but the **Lord** of his creation. His name Elijah, Yahweh is the only God is already a profession of faith. His whole personality reflects the power of the Lord of heaven and earth. *He stood up like a fire, and his word burned like a torch*, [as the book of Sirach (48.1) describes him]. On the great Day of Decision on Mount Carmel his calm and quiet confidence in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob triumphed over the frenzy of the prophets of the Baals (1 Kgs 18.47-46).

God's fatherly hand, however, took Elijah and brought him from the height of victory on Mount Carmel which means garden of fruit trees into the desert to taste the bitterness of exile and defeat. Utterly exhausted, he sat down under a broom tree and requested for himself that he might die. *It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers* (19.4).

The titanic personality of Elijah had to go through the valley of death to receive on Mount Horeb the great revelation of God's mercy. Standing on the rock where Moses had seen the *goodness of the Lord* (Ex 33.19) after the incident of the Molten Calf, Elijah sees the Lord passing by. *But the Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire; but after the fire a still, small voice of silence* (1 Kgs 19.9-12). Thus the prophet of Divine Wrath was initiated into the secret of God's love.

Centuries later we find Moses and Elijah listening again to the *still, small voice of silence* when Christ was glorified on Mount Tabor, *and they spoke of His departure which he was to go through with at Jerusalem* (Lk 9.31). The *voice of silence* is the Lamb of God Who opened not His mouth when He was crushed for our iniquities. It was the *voice of silence* which rebuked James and John when they suggested that the Lord should send fire from heaven and consume the Samaritans, *even as Elijah did; the Son of Man has not come to*

destroy lives but to save them (Lk 9.54, 56). The God of Israel shows his superiority over the heathen gods of fertility, of animal growth and of sexual love, not by destroying His enemies, but by sending His Son to become a sacrifice for their sins. The Resurrection and the Ascension of the crucified Christ is the final triumph over the powers of nature. The historical mission of the great antagonist of the Baals, Elijah, end, therefore, with his assumption into heaven (2 Kgs 2.11).

SAT 11.07.20

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.
