

SUN

11.22.20

A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by Hippolytus <sup>1</sup>

As the holy gospel clearly proclaims, the Son of Man will gather together all nations. *He will separate people one from another, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep he will place at his right hand, the goats at his left. Then he will say to those right: Come, my Father's blessed ones. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Come you lovers of poor people and strangers. Come you who have fostered my love, for I am Love. Come, you who shared peace, for I am Peace.

*Come, my Father's blessed ones, inherit the kingdom prepared for you* who did not make an idol of wealth, who gave alms to the poor, help to orphans and widows, drink to the thirsty, and food to the hungry. Come, you who welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, visited the sick, comforted prisoners, and assisted the blind. Come, you who kept the seal of faith unbroken, who were swift to assemble in the churches, who listened to my Scriptures, longed for my words. Observed my law day and night, and like good soldiers shared in my suffering because you wanted to please me, your heavenly King. *Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Look, my kingdom is ready, paradise stands open, my immortality is displayed in all its beauty. Come now, all of you, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

Then, astounded at so great a wonder – at being addressed as friends by him who the angelic hosts are unable clearly to behold – the righteous will reply, exclaiming: *Lord, when did we see you hungry and and feed you? Master, when did we see you thirsty, and give you a drink? When did we see you the immortal One, a stranger and welcome you? When did we see you, lover of our race, sick or in prison and come to visit you?* You are the Eternal, without beginning like the Father, and co-eternal with the Spirit. You are the one who created all things from nothing, you are the King of the angels, you make the depths tremble, *you are clothed in light as in a robe;* you are our maker who fashioned us from the earth; you are the creator of the world invisible. The whole earth flies from your presence. How could we possibly have received your lordship, your royal majesty, as our guest?

Then will the King of kings say to them in reply: *Inasmuch as you did this to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.* Inasmuch as you received, clothed, fed and gave drink to those members of mine about whom I have just spoken to you, that is, to the poor, you did it to me. So come, *enter the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;* enjoy forever the gift of my heavenly Father, and of the most holy and life-giving Spirit. What tongue can describe these blessings? *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.*

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<sup>1</sup> Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – 1981 – pg 144

MON

11.23.2020

## On Discretion. From the Rule of St. Columban for Monks.<sup>2</sup>

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How necessary discretion is for monks is shown by the mistake of many, and indicated by the downfall of some, who beginning without discretion and passing their time without a sobering knowledge, have been unable to complete a praiseworthy life; since, just as error overtakes those who proceed without a path, so for those who live without discretion intemperance is at hand, and this is always the opposite of virtues which are placed in the mean between each extreme. Therefore we must pray God continually that He would bestow the light of true discretion to illumine this way, surrounded on every side by the world's thickest darkness, so that His true worshippers may be able to cross this darkness without error to Himself. So discretion has got its name from discerning, for the reason that it discerns in us between good and evil, and also between the moderate and the complete. For from the beginning either class has been divided like light and darkness, that is, good and evil, after evil began through the devil's agency to exist by the corruption of good, but through God's agency Who first illumines and then divides.

What things then are good? Doubtless those which are untouched, and have remained in the undefiled state of their creation; which God alone created and prepared, according to the Apostle, that we should walk in them; which are the good works in which in Christ Jesus we were created, namely goodness, innocence, righteousness, justice, truth, pity, love, saving peace, spiritual joy, together with the fruit of the Spirit - all these with their fruits are good. Since this is so, the good must be firmly held by those that have God's help, which is ever to be prayed for in prosperity and in adversity, lest either in prosperity we be lifted up to pride, or in adversity be cast down to despair. Thus we must always restrain ourselves from either danger, that is, from all excess by a splendid temperance and true discretion, which cleaves to Christian lowliness and opens the way of perfection to Christ's true soldiers, namely by ever discerning rightly in doubtful cases.

Thus between the little and the excessive there is a reasonable measure in the midst, which ever recalls us from every superfluity on either side, and in every case provides what is universally fixed by human need, and spurns the unreasonable demand of superfluous desire. And this measure of true discretion, weighing all our actions in the scales of justice, in no way allows us to err from what is just, or to suffer a mistake, if we ever follow straight behind it as our leader. For while we must always restrain ourselves from either side, according to that saying: "Keep yourselves from the right and from the left," we must ever proceed straight forward by discretion, that is, by the light of God, while very often we say and sing the victorious psalmist's verse: "My God, enlighten my darkness, since in You I am rescued from temptation. For temptation is the life of humans on earth."

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<sup>2</sup> Sancti Columbani Opera, edited by G.S.M. Walker. The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. 1957. p.135.

TUE 11.24.2008

**The martyrs= share in Christ's victory, from a letter of St Paul Le-Bao-Tinh.**

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I, Paul, in chains for the name of Christ, wish to relate to you the trials besetting me daily, in order that you may be inflamed with love for God and join with me in his praises, for his mercy is for ever. The prison here is a true image of everlasting hell: to cruel tortures of every kind shackles, iron chains, manacles are added hatred, vengeance, calumnies, obscene speech, quarrels, evil acts, swearing, curses, as well as anguish and grief. But the God who once freed the three children from the fiery furnace is with me always; he has delivered me from these tribulations and made them sweet, for his mercy is for ever.

In the midst of these torments, which usually terrify others, I am, by the grace of God, full of joy and gladness, because I am not alone Christ is with me. Our Master bears the whole weight of the cross, leaving me only the tiniest, last bit. He is not a mere onlooker in my struggle, but a contestant and the victor and champion in the whole battle. Therefore upon his head is placed the crown of victory, and his members also share in his glory.

How am I to bear with the spectacle, as each day I see emperors, mandarins, and their retinue blaspheming your holy name, O Lord, who are enthroned above the Cherubim and Seraphim? Behold, the pagans have trodden your cross underfoot! Where is your glory? As I see all this, I would, in the ardent love I have for you, prefer to be torn limb from limb and to die as a witness to your love. O Lord, show your power, save me, sustain me, that in my infirmity your power may be shown and may be glorified before the nations: grant that I may not grow weak along the way, and so allow your enemies to hold their heads up in pride.

Beloved brothers, as you hear all these things may you give endless thanks in joy to God, from whom every good proceeds; bless the Lord with me, for his mercy is for ever. My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant and from this day all generations will call me blessed, for his mercy is for ever.

O praise the Lord, all you nations, acclaim him, all you peoples, for God chose what is weak in the world to confound the strong, God chose what is low and despised to confound the noble. Through my mouth he has confused the philosophers who are disciples of the wise of this world, for his mercy is for ever. I write these things to you in order that your faith and mine may be united. In the midst of this storm I cast my anchor toward the throne of God, the anchor that is the lively hope in my heart.

Beloved brothers, for your part so run that you may attain the crown, put on the breastplate of faith and take up the weapons of Christ for the right hand and for the left, as my patron Saint Paul has taught us. It is better for you to enter life with one eye or crippled than, with all your members intact, to be cast away. Come to my aid with your

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<sup>3</sup> *Le Clerge Tonkinois et Ses Pretres Martyrs*, A. Launay (Paris: Paris Foreign Mission Society, 1925), pp. 80-83.

prayers, that I may have the strength to fight according to the law, and indeed to fight the good fight and to fight until the end and so finish the race. We may not again see each other in this life, but we will have the happiness of seeing each other again in the world to come, when, standing at the throne of the spotless Lamb, we will together join in singing his praises and exult for ever in the joy of our triumph.

WED 11.25.20

St. Catherine of Alexandria from Butler's Lives of Saints <sup>4</sup>

Since about the tenth century, veneration of St. Catherine of Alexandria has been marked in the East, but from the time of the Crusades until the 18<sup>th</sup> century her popularity was even greater in the West. Numerous churches were dedicated in her honor, including the parish church of Gethsemani Abbey at New Haven, KY. She was venerated as patroness of maidens and women students of philosophers, preachers and apologists. Adam of St. Victor wrote a poem in her honor; hers was one of the heavenly voices heard by St Joan of arc. But not a single fact about her life or death has been established.

It is said in her Acts that she belonged to a patrician family of Alexandria and devoted herself to learned studies, in the course of which she learned about Christianity. She was converted by a vision of Our Lady and the Holy Child. When Maxentius began persecuting Christians, Catherine went to him and rebuked him for his tyranny. He could not answer her arguments against his gods, so summoned fifty philosophers to oppose her. These confessed themselves convinced by the learning of this Christian girl, and were therefore burned to death by the infuriated emperor. Then he tried to seduce Catherine with an offer of a consort's crown, and went off to inspect a camp. On his return he discovered that his wife and an officer had gone to see Catherine out of curiosity and had both been converted, together with two hundred soldiers of the guard. They accordingly were all slain and Catherine was sentenced to be killed on a spiked wheel. When she was placed on it, her bonds were miraculously loosed and the wheel broke, its spikes flying off and killing many of the onlookers. Then she was beheaded.

All the texts of the "acts" of Catherine state that her body was carried by angels to Mount Sinai, where a church and monastery were afterwards built. In 527 the Emperor Justinian built a monastery for hermits of the place, and the body of Catherine was said to have been taken there in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century. The monastery has borne her name since then. The great monastery of Mount Sinai still claim the alleged relics of St Catherine, in the care of the monks of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Archbishop Falconio of Santa Severina said that the meaning of the "angels" is that her body was carried by the monks of Sinai to their monastery. Tradition has referred to the monastic life as "the angelic life". This is still a current expression in Eastern monasticism.

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<sup>4</sup> Butler's Lives of Saints – vol. IV – P.J. Kennedy & Sons – New York – 1956 – pgt 420

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11.26.2019

**Thankfulness in our everyday lives,  
from a sermon by St. John Henry Newman.** <sup>1</sup>

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It would be well if we were in the habit of looking at all we have as God's gift, undeservedly given, and day by day continued to us solely by his mercy. He gave; He may take away. He gave us all we have, life, health, strength, reason, enjoyment, the light of conscience; whatever we have good and holy within us; whatever faith we have; whatever of a renewed will; whatever love towards him; whatever power over ourselves; whatever prospect of heaven. He gave us relatives, friends, education, training, knowledge, the Bible, the Church. All comes from him. He gave; he may take away. Did he take away, we should be called on to follow Job's pattern, and be resigned: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*" (Job 1:21) While he continues his blessings, we should follow David and Jacob, by living in constant praise and thanksgiving, and in offering up to him of his own.

We are not our own, any more than what we possess is our own. We did not make ourselves; we cannot be supreme over ourselves. We cannot be our own masters. We are God's property by creation, by redemption, by regeneration. He has a triple claim upon us. Is it not our happiness thus to view the matter? Is it any happiness, or any comfort, to consider that we *are* our own? It may be thought so by the young and prosperous. These may think it a great thing to have everything, as they suppose, their own way,--to depend on no one,--to have to think of nothing out of sight,--to be without the irksomeness of continual acknowledgment, continual prayer, continual reference of what they do to the will of another. But as time goes on, they, as all others, will find that independence was not made for man--that it is an unnatural state--may do for a while, but will not carry us on safely to the end. No, we are creatures; and, as being such, we have two duties, to be resigned and to be thankful.

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Let us then view God's providences towards us more religiously than we have hitherto done. Let us try to gain a truer view of what we are, and where we are, in his kingdom. Let us humbly and reverently attempt to trace his guiding hand in the years which we have hitherto lived. Let us thankfully commemorate the many mercies he has vouchsafed to us in time past, the many sins he has not remembered, the many dangers he has averted, the many prayers he has answered, the many mistakes he has corrected, the many warnings, the many lessons, the much light, the abounding comfort which he has from time to time given. Let us dwell upon times and seasons, times of trouble, times of joy, times of trial, times of refreshment. How did he cherish us as children? How did he guide us in that dangerous time when the mind began to think for itself, and the heart to open to the world! How did he with his sweet discipline restrain our passions, mortify our hopes, calm our fears, enliven our heavinesses, sweeten our desolateness,

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<sup>1</sup> *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987, pp. 1003-1005.

and strengthen our infirmities! How did he gently guide us towards the strait gate! How did he allure us along his everlasting way, in spite of its strictness, in spite of its loneliness, in spite of the dim twilight in which it lay! He has been all things to us. He has been, as he was to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our God, our shield, and great reward, promising and performing, day by day.

FRI 11,27.20

A Commentary on the Book of Ezra by St Bede <sup>5</sup>

One should note the devotion of the people reformed after he captivity; when the feast that had been determined by the Lord's law had been duly completed, they immediately came together of their own accord with fasting and with repentance, and they diligently carried out what on the days of sacred readings and rejoicing they had heard must be done by separating themselves in mind and body from fellowship of those who were proven to be alienated from the Lord and his worship, lest through the association and examples of the wicked they should again fall into the evils of captivity and hardship that, they discerned, they had just at that time barely escaped after lonh revolutions of times and ages. And what are we tp reflect on mystically about these matters except that, following the examples of such people, whatever we have learned in a public meeting or reading should be done, we should reflect on again with mutual discussion among ourselves. And we should stret ch out with careful scrutiny the ways we can fulfill each day with the reproof of our heart and body.

And they rose up to stand, and they read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God four times a day and four times a night they confessed and prayed to the Lord their Hod. For who would not be amazed that such a great people had such extraordinary concern for devotion that four times a day – that is, at the first hour of the morning, the third, the sixth and the ninth, when time was to be made for prayer and psalmody – they gave themselves over to ,listening to the divine law in order to renew their mind in God and come back purer and more devout for imploring his mercy but also four times a night they should shake off their sleepiness and get up in order to confess their sins and to beg pardon. From this example, I think, a most beautiful custom has developed in the church, namely, that through each hour of daily psalmody a passage from the Old or New Testament is recited by heart for all to hear, and thus strengthened by the words of the apostles or prophets, they bend their knees to perseverance in prayer, but also at night when people cease from the labors of doing good works, they turn willing ears to listen to divine readings.

And Ezra said, "You yourself, O Lord, you alone made the heaven, the heaven of heavens, and all their host, the earth and all that is in it," and so on up until the end of his prayer or confession. It was said above they were confessing their sins and the sins

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<sup>5</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – Old Testament – vol. V – InterVarsity Press –Downers Grove, IL - 2008 – pg 359

of their ancestors; here, when Ezra prays, it is shown more fully how this was done. But whereas he says at the end, "Because of all this, therefore we ourselves are making a covenant and writing it down, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are signing it. : and so on; it is shown more clearly with what gracious devotion all the various persons made a new assembly after the feast of the Tabernacles, namely, so that after purging themselves with resolved purpose from the contagions of their wrongdoings, they might unite themselves to the divine covenant and confirm its terms ny word and writing. Thus separated from association of the ungodly, they would more confidently complete the word they began long ago, that is, to choose citizens from among the devout who were suitable to rebuild the city.

SAT 11.28.20

### **Mary comes as a mother<sup>6</sup>**

From a book by Fr Raymond Flanagan, OCSO

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You have noticed of course that when a child is afraid it will run to its mother, but when the child is in danger, it is the mother who runs - and she runs to her child. That is the whole meaning of the many apparitions of Mary with which this past century has been blessed. We "children of larger growth" were too sophisticated to be wise; we were not afraid of the very real dangers that threatened us. So our Lady-Mother ran to us in 1830 by appearing to Catherine Laboure in Paris. Sixteen years later she was found weeping at LaSalette, begging her children to "change their minds and hearts." No one prays unless they remember their humanity. No one does penance unless they remember that God is outraged by sin. So Mary came to cure our amnesia. In 1858 she was at the Grotto of Massabielle, near Lourdes, praying the Rosary with Bernadette and using the one word "penance." Twelve years later she blazoned the sky over Pontmain with the burning plea: "My children, pray!" And in our own century did she not come on the 13th of every month from May to October to that lonely place in Portugal, appearing as the Lady of Light, who asked but one thing of humanity - a metanoia - prayer and penance?

There is something exquisitely tender in this sending of God's Mother to us in this mad twentieth century. She is sent at a time when our sins have merited a flood of Sodom's fire. She comes at a time when the world is pagan - and does not know it! When it is worshiping Mars, Mammon, and Moloch - and does not know it! When Venus, Bacchus, and Pirapus have been placed forward in the modern pantheon, when all America has as its idol what Lloyd Morris rightly called the "bitch goddess" - Success. She comes to us from heaven as "Our life, Our Sweetness, and Our Hope!" She is not a prophet but the Queen of Prophets. She comes not with threats of vengeance, but promises of peace,

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<sup>6</sup>God, A Woman, and the Way. Fr Raymond OCSO, Bruce, '54, pp.14-19.

not foretelling destruction, but our restoration - if we would but have metanoia; if we will but remember.

Yet in that very tenderness there is a terrifying element. Mary is the Queen of Prophets and the Mother of God. The fact that it is she who comes to us makes it look as if the plea of Dives, the rich man, won hearing from God; makes it look as if no angel, archangel, prophet, or saint would do.

The dogma of the infinite value of each human being is before us. God and God's Mother have walked parallel Ways for the eternal happiness of every one of us. Those ways have met. That is why each of us can be utterly fearless though skies fall, continents disappear, oceans dry up; for we can walk the Way that leads to everlasting peace!