

SUN 12.06.20 2nd SUN Advent

A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark by Origen ¹

Let us examine the scriptural texts foretelling the coming of Christ. One such prophecy begins with a reference to John the Baptist: *The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.* What follows, however, applies directly to our Lord and Savior, since it is by Jesus rather than by John that *every valley has been filled in.*

You have only to recall the kind of people you were before you put your faith in the Lord to see yourselves as deep valleys, as pits plunging precipitously into the lower depths. But now that the Lord Jesus has come and has sent the Holy Spirit in his name, all your valleys have been filled in with good works and the Holy Spirit's fruits. Love no longer tolerates the presence of valleys in your lives; if peace, patience, and goodness find a home in you, not only will each of you cease to be a valley, but you will actually begin to be a mountain of God.

Among the pagans we daily see this prophetic filling of every valley realized, just as among the people of Israel, now deprived of their former privileged status, we see the overthrowing of every mountain and hill. But *because of their offense, salvation has come to the pagans, to stir Israel to emulation.*

If you prefer you can visualize these fallen mountains and hills as the hostile powers that formerly raised themselves up in opposition to the human race. Such an interpretation is legitimate because, in order to fill in the kind of valleys we have been speaking of, the enemy powers – the mountains and hills – must be laid low.

Now let us turn to that part of the prophecy which also concerns the coming of Christ and see whether this too has been fulfilled. The text continues: *Every crooked way shall be straightened.* Each one of us was once crooked; if we are no longer so, it is entirely due to the grace of Christ. Through his coming to our souls all our crooked ways have been straightened out. If Christ did not come to your soul, of what use would his historical coming in the flesh be to you? Let us pray that each day we may experience his coming and be able to say: *It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me.*

Jesus my Lord has come, then. He has smoothed out your rough places and changed your disorderly ways into level paths, making in you an even unimpeded road, a road that is absolutely clear, so that God the father may walk in you and Christ the Lord make his dwelling in you and say: *My Father and I will come and make our home in them.*

¹Journey with the Fathers – Year B – New City Press – NY – pg 12

A Reading about our reception of the Word of God, from a treatise of St Ambrose.¹

May the study of wisdom be ever in our heart and on our lips. Let our tongue speak of justice, and the law of your God be in your heart. Hence, Scripture says: "Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest." (Dt 6:7) Therefore, let us speak of the Lord Jesus, for he is wisdom, he is the word, and the Word of God.

Indeed, it is also written: "Open your mouth to the Word of god." Diffuse this word which resounds with his discourses and meditate on his words. Let us always speak of him. When we speak of wisdom, he is present; when we expound on the virtues, he is present; when we treat of justice, he is present; when we discuss peace, he is present; when we speak of truth, life, and redemption, he is present.

"Open your mouth to the Word of God," it has been written. (Pro 31:8Vulg.) You open, and he speaks. Hence, David said: "I will hear what God proclaims," (Ps 85:9) and the Son of God himself says: "Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it." (Ps 81:11) However, not everyone can understand the perfection of wisdom as Solomon did, and not everyone can understand it as Daniel did. Yet to everyone the spirit of wisdom is poured out in accord with the capability of each--but only to those who are faithful. If you believe, you will possess the spirit of wisdom.

Therefore, meditate always, speak of the things that are of God, "sitting at home." (Dt 6:7) By the word "home: we can understand the Church, and our innermost part, and so speak within ourselves. Speak thoughtfully in order to avoid sinning, lest you fall by speaking too much. When sitting, speak to yourself as if you were the one who judges. Speak on the street, so that you may never be unoccupied. You speak on the street if you speak about Christ, for the street is Christ. On the street, speak to yourself, speak to Christ.

Listen to how you can speak to him: "It is my wish," he has said, "that in every place the men shall offer prayers with blameless hands held aloft, and be free from anger and dissension." (1Tim 2:8) Speak, O believer, when you are sleeping. so that the sleep

¹Explanations of the Psalms, 36, 65-66: CSEL 64, 123-125.

of death will not take you by surprise. Listen to how you could speak when sleeping: "I will give my eyes no sleep, my eyelids no rest, till I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."(Ps 132:4-5)

When you rise or awake, speak of him, in order to fulfill what is commanded you. Listen to how Christ awakens you. Your soul says: "I heard my brother knocking"; and Christ exclaims: "Open to me, my sister, my beloved."(Sng 5:2Vulg) Listen to how you can awaken Christ. The soul says: "I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, arouse and stir up love."(Sng 3:5) Love is Christ.

TUE 12.08.20 Immaculate Conception

A Homily for the Immaculate Conception of Mary by Sophronius of Jerusalem [1](#)

Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you. Truly blessed are you among women, for you have changed the curse of Eve into a blessing and caused Adam, once accursed, to be blessed through you. Truly *blessed are you among women*, for it was through you that the Father's blessing dawned on humankind and freed it from the ancient curse. Truly *blessed are you among women*, for through you your ancestors will be saved, since you are going to bear the Savior who will gain them God's salvation. Truly *blessed are you among women*, for without seed you produced the fruit that brings blessing to all the earth, releasing it from the curse that made it bear thorns. Truly *blessed are you among women*, for though by nature you are a woman, you will in very truth become the mother of God: if he who is to be born of you is truly God incarnate, then, since you will be giving birth to God, you will with perfect justice be called the mother of God.

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God that can never be lost. You have won from God a most glorious favor, a grace long desired, a grace of great splendor, a saving grace, an unending grace, a grace that will last for ever. Many before you have been holy, but no one has been as favored as you, no one as blessed as you, no one as perfectly sanctified as you, no one as highly praised as you. No one else has like you been possessed from the first by purifying grace, no one else has been enlightened like you, or exalted like you, for no one has approached so close to God as you, or been enriched with such divine gifts, or endowed with such heavenly grace.

You surpass all human desire; you surpass all the gifts given by God to the whole human race, for God's dwelling within you has made you richer than all others. No one else has been able to contain God as you do; no one else has been capable of receiving God as you have; no one else has deserved to be so enlightened by God. And therefore you have not only received God, the Creator and Lord of the universe, but He has in an unheard-of way taken flesh from you; you bear him in your womb, and will later give birth to him who will redeem humankind from the Father's sentence, and confer on it eternal salvation.

WED 12/09/20

Sermon One for Advent by St Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

You should know, dearest brothers, that this blessed season which we call *Adventum Domini* - the Advent or coming of the Lord - represents two things to us. Therefore we should rejoice in both for both bring us benefit.

This season makes present to us both comings of our Lord. First of all, that utterly gentle coming when the Son of God, *the fairest of the sons of the human family, the longed-for of all nations*, gave to this world his visible presence in the flesh which had been long awaited and ardently desired by all the Fathers. At that time he came into this world to save sinners. And secondly, that coming which we must await with firm hope and indeed often call to mind with tears, when this same Lord of ours, who first came hidden in the flesh, will come manifested in all his glory. As we sing in the psalm: *God shall come manifestly*, that is, on the Day of judgment when he comes manifestly to judge. His first coming was made known to only a few just persons. In his second coming he will appear manifestly to the just and to sinners alike, as the Prophet clearly implies when he says: *All flesh shall see the salvation of God*. Just as the day which we shall in a short time celebrate in memory of his birth presents him to us as having been born - that is to say, it more expressly signals that very day and hour when he came into this world - so this season we are observing in preparation for that day makes him present as longed for, that is, as the longing maintained by the holy fathers, those who lived before his coming.

Beautifully then it is provided in the Church that during this season we read the words of those who lived before the Lord's first coming and their longings are recalled. Nor do we celebrate their longing for only one day, but for quite a long time. This is because whenever we are kept waiting a while for something we greatly long for, when what we love does come it seems sweeter to us. It is up to us, then, dearest brothers, to follow the example of the holy Fathers and to recall their longings and so to set our minds on fire with love of and desire for Christ.

You should know that it is for this reason that the observance of this season was enjoined on us: that we should consider the longing which the holy Fathers had for the first coming of the Lord. By their example let us learn to have a great longing for his second coming. We should reflect on what good things the Lord did for us by his first coming and what yet greater he will do for us by his second. And by considering this, we should love that first coming of his very much and very much long for the second.

¹Aelred of Rievaulx - The Liturgical Sermons - Cistercian Fathers Series - #58 - Cistercian Publications - Kalamazoo - 2001 - p 57f

And if we do not have a good enough conscience to dare to long for his coming, we should at least fear his coming and by that fear correct our faults. Then, even though we may not be able not to fear him now, we shall at least not fear him when he comes, but may be confident. It is indeed true, brothers, that those who pay careful attention to themselves now and fear the day of judgment before it comes will undoubtedly have no fear when it does come.

THUR 12.10.20

A Continuation of the First Advent Sermon of St Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

The Lord came the first time to free us from our sins, but at his second coming he will heal *all our infirmities*. So it is that the person who bids his soul bless the Lord also gives his reason: *Who forgives all your iniquities, he says, who heals all your infirmities*. The one refers to the Lord's first coming, the other to his second. For by his first coming he eradicated our sins, but we still suffer great infirmities in punishment for those sins. Who can count all the infirmities of this life: hunger, thirst, toil, pain, disease, lethargy, weariness? Yet these apply to the body. How many infirmities of the soul are there? How much concupiscence, how many temptations! All these infirmities - and all the others which we cannot pause to mention - the Lord will heal by his second coming. Then will be fulfilled the apostle's words: *This perishable body must be clothed in incorruptibility*.

By his first coming our Lord raised us up only in soul; by his second coming he will raise us up in body too. As we now serve God with both - the body and the soul - so then in both shall we enjoy perfect happiness with God. At his first coming he gave us the faith that enables us to believe in him. At his second coming he will endow us with the capacity to see him, not as the wicked will see him on the day of judgment - for on that day of judgment the good and bad alike will see him in the likeness in which he bore his sufferings for us and in which he rose and ascended into heaven - but we shall see him as those who are pure of heart will be able to see him. For the Lord says: *Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God*. That is to say, we shall see his godhead too, that excellence and that beauty which now the angels see. For we shall be *like the angels of God in heaven*. Yet if we love him now and long for him and scorn all worldly pleasures and honors, then surely we shall see him confidently in the likeness in which he will judge *the living and the dead*. And we shall have the happiness of seeing him in that likeness in which he will show himself only to the good whom he will take with himself from judgment into the kingdom.

Let us think for a moment, so far as we can, about how much joy we shall have and how much happiness if - on that day when heaven and earth are in flames, when the

¹Aelred of Rievaulx - The Liturgical Sermons - Cistercian fathers Series #58 - Cistercian Publications - Kalamazoo - 2001 - p 60f

Lord comes with such power and might - we can be confident and not only not fear him when he comes but love him very much and look to him with confidence. And therefore, brothers, if we want to enjoy that gladness and confidence then, let us strive to love our Lord greatly. Whom should we love so much as our Creator and our Lord, and above all our Redeemer? There is this further point, that we can love nothing else with as much confidence, for whatever else we love we shall surely have to lose. If we take delight in things we must lose, then, when the time comes for us to lose them, we shall feel distress equal to our former delight. Let us, therefore, love confidently him who is eternal and who is eternally good in the same way and always delightful in the same way. Let us love him so much now, brothers, that when we see him coming *from heaven with his angels* we may have no fear of his coming but may immediately, with great longing, run to him as to a cherished friend.

FRI 12.11.20

A Continuation of Sermon One by Aelred of Rievaulx 2

Let us see how all the saints who lived before his first coming longed for him and let us follow their example, not the example of those who love the world. For scripture says: *The world will perish and so will its unruly appetites*. So those who love the world will perish together with the world when it perishes. To know how much the fathers longed to see our Lord, let us listen to what the Lord himself says in the Gospel: *Amen, I say to you, many kings and just persons have longed to see what you now see and did not see it*.

This is what Scripture signifies when it says of Solomon: *All the kings of the earth longed to see the face of Solomon and hear his wisdom*. Now surely only those who longed to see the face of Solomon and hear his wisdom are called to be kings. They are the ones who govern themselves well and keep their members free from the stain of sin. Those who possess extensive territories and have many people under them are not really kings, but are themselves slaves of sin, as our Lord says: *Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin*. Surely no should be called a king who is a slave and so vile a slave as to be dominated by sin. For that reason, brothers, let us work hard at governing ourselves well and keeping guard over our members. Then we too shall be kings and we shall begin to long to see the face of the true Solomon, our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no need brothers to tell you the reason why our Lord is called SALOMON. You have often heard it said that "Solomon" in our language means "Peacemaker", and our Lord is himself truly the peacemaker who has made peace between us and God and has reconciled us with his Father by his own blood.

Holy David himself was indeed one of those kings who longed to see the face of the true Solomon. This he made plain on one occasion when he longed for some water from the fountain which was in Bethlehem. Scripture tells how the king longed for it and said: *Oh, that someone would give me water from the cistern at the gate of Bethlehem*. Some of the men present thought that what he wanted was visible water from that

cistern, and at great risk they passed through the enemy camp, drew some of the water and brought it to the king. But because he wanted to show that he had said this through the spirit of prophecy and not to obtain that physical and useless water, he immediately poured it out on the ground. What he longed for was not water from that physical cistern

but water from that Fountain which was born in Bethlehem. That is what he says elsewhere: *My soul thirsts for God, the font of living water.* This is the true font, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem in Judah; he who says: *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come and drink, and streams of living water shall flow from within him.* This is the water holy David longed for. This is the Fountain to which he ran with great longing, as he immediately goes on to say in that verse> For afterwards he said: *As the hind longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God,* immediately adding: *When shall I come and appear before the face of God.*

Let us see, brothers, just how great his longing was. That Font was born in Bethlehem and from it waters flow throughout the world. The water which flows from this font, brothers, is Christ's teaching, which he proclaims in the Gospel. In it, all who are soiled and shackled by their sins wash themselves, as did those to whom the Lord said: *Now you are clean on account of the message I have spoken to you.* Notice, they were cleansed by Christ's teaching. This the water too, which those who thirst to know our Lord drink. For in Christ's teaching, we can know him. If our heart is not occupied by physical thoughts, if we listen gladly to God's word and understand it, there will be kindled in us a fire that will not allow us to think of anything except what concerns the love of our Lord.

We see that now is fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet greatly desired when he said: *Would that you would burst the heavens, Lord, and come down. The mountains would dissolve before our face.* Who do you think the holy prophet was longing for by these words? Christ's first coming, surely, and with great longing. And immediately he stated the reason for longing so ardently for him: *The mountains would dissolve before your face.* For that holy man saw how the devil, who fell from heaven, held the whole human race in his possession. He saw how the devil swelled with pride because the kings of this world adored him and because nearly every human person in the world was imitating his pride. That is why he said with great longing: *Would that you would burst the heavens, Lord, and come down.* The prophet knew that Providence had determined the time of his coming, but he found it very difficult to endure such delay. And therefore he longed for God, if it were possible, to anticipate the hour he had fixed. This is the meaning of the words: *Would that you would burst the heavens, Lord, and come down.*

THE APPEARANCE OF THE BL VIRGIN AT GUADALUPE, from the First Account in the Aztec Language³

[Juan Diego said to the heavenly woman who appeared to him]: "Well could I see from the way he, [the Bishop], was answering me that he was still thinking about whether this Temple of yours, which you wish that they make for you here, were not something I had merely created, rather than being from your lips.

Thus earnestly do I beg of you, my Sovereign, O Woman, my Maiden, that it be one of the esteemed gentry, one whose countenance is recognized, whose countenance is revered, and who himself is held in honor: let it be on him that you enjoy it, let it be he that bears it, that carries it, this utterance, this declaration of yours, that it be believed. For I indeed am pitifully poor, for I am harness, for I am hod, for I am all haunches, all elbows, for I am of the dispossessed, for I am a packcarrier; for it is not mine to exist there, for it is not mine to set foot there, there where you bid me to go.

O my Maiden, my Littlest One, Milady, O Woman, please do grant me pardon that I be troubling your countenance, your heart, that I be stepping, that I be stumbling into your frowning annoyance, into your rightful wrath, Milady, O my Sovereign."

And the wondrous ever Virgin made answer: "Do listen to this, my Littlest one, and let your heart be assured, that it is not to the wealthy ones among my stewards, my commissioners, that I am wont to leave it that they should bear my utterances, my declarations, or that they should realize my wishes. Thus rather is it necessary that it be you yourself who live this through, who act as spokesman on this matter, and that it be by your hand that it be realized, that it be done, this will, this wish of mine. And so well may I beg of you, my littlest one, and strongly do I bid you, that once more, on the morrow, you go, you go and visit the Bishop. On my behalf let him know, let him listen well, how it is my will and my wish that he realize, that he make the Temple for which I am asking. And indeed say to him once more how it is I myself, the ever Virgin Saint Mary, Mother of God, who am commissioning you."

So Juan Diego made answer and told her: "My Sovereign, O Woman, my Maid, let me not trouble your countenance, your heart; for indeed with all my own heart I shall go, I shall go and realize your utterance, your declaration. By no means shall I leave it aside or reckon the road laborious; I shall go, I shall go and do your will---though I well may not be listened to in goodly mood, and even if I am listened to, I may not be believed. Tomorrow then, in the afternoon, when the sun is entering its home, I shall come and bring back your utterance, your declaration, with whatever the priestly Chieftain shall have answered me. And now I beg to take leave of you, my Littlest one, my Maiden, Milady, O Woman. Do, then, rest yourself a little."

³GUADALUPE, a translation of the NICAN MOPOHUA by Fr Martinus, CARA Studies on Popular Devotion Vol II; Guadalupan Studies Monograph No. 6.