

NT-JN21

05.12.19

A Commentary on the Gospel of John by Cyril of Alexandria <sup>1</sup>

The mark of Christ's sheep is their willingness to hear and obey, just as the sign of those who are not his is their disobedience. We take the word "hear" to imply obedience to what has been said. People who hear God are known by him. No one is entirely unknown by God, but to be known in this way is to become his kin. Thus, when Christ says: *I know mine*, he means, "I will receive them, and give them permanent mystical kinship with myself."

It might be said that inasmuch as he has become man, he has made all human beings his kin, since all are members of the same race; we are all united to Christ in a mystical relationship because of his incarnation. Yet those who do not preserve the likeness of his holiness are alienated from him. *My sheep follow me*, says Christ. By a certain God-given grace, believers follow in the footsteps of Christ. No longer subject to the shadows of the law, they obey the commands of Christ, and guided by his words rise through grace to his own dignity, for they are called children of God. When Christ ascends into heaven, they also follow him.

Christ promises his followers as a recompense and reward eternal life, exemption from death and corruption, and from the torments the judge inflicts upon transgressors. By giving life Christ shows that by nature he *is* life. He does not receive it from another, but supplies it from his own resources. And by eternal life we understand not only length of days which all, both good and bad, shall possess after the resurrection, but also the passing of those days in peace and joy.

We may also see in the word "life" a reference to the eucharist, by means of which Christ implants in believers his own life through their sharing in his flesh, according to the text: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.*

<sup>1</sup>Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – 2000 – pg 54

05SN1301

05.13.19

### A Discourse of Pope John Paul II at Fatima

A particular manifestation of Mary's motherhood about men are the places, where she meets with them, the houses in which she lives; houses in which resides the special presence of the Mother. These are the Marian Shrines. It seems that even there, as in many other Marian shrines around the world, with a particular strength, these words resonate authenticity of today's liturgy: "You great pride of our people". These words resonate in Fatima as well as a special echo not only of the Portuguese nation, but also of many other nations and peoples that are on the globe: they are indeed the echo of the contemporary experience of all mankind, of all the human family.

Since the time when Jesus, dying on the cross, said to John: "Behold your Mother", since the time when "the disciple took her into his home," the mystery of Mary's spiritual motherhood had its fulfillment in history with an amplitude without boundaries. Motherhood means concern for her son's life. Now, if Mary is the mother of all people, her concern for human life is universal in scope. The eagerness of a mother embraces the whole person. Mary's motherhood has its beginning in her maternal care for Christ. She has accepted in Christ under the cross John, and in him, she accepted every person and the whole person. Mary embraces everyone with a special concern in the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual motherhood of Mary is therefore participation in the power of the Holy Spirit, the One who "gives life." It is with the humble service of the one who says of herself: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord" (*Lk1:38*). In the light of the mystery of Mary's spiritual motherhood, let us understand the extraordinary message, which began to resonate in the world by Fatima since May 13, 1917 and lasted for five months until October 13 of the same year. If the Church has embraced the message of Fatima it is mainly because it contains a truth and a call, which in their essential content is the truth and the call of the Gospel itself.

"Repent (repent) and believe in the Gospel" (*Mk1:15*), these are the first words of the Messiah addressed to humanity. The message of Fatima is in its core a call to conversion and penance, as in the Gospel. This call was issued at the beginning of the twentieth century, and, therefore, in this century has been particularly addressed. The Lady of the message seems to read with special insight the "signs of the times", the signs of our time.

The call to repentance is maternal and at the same time, strong and determined. The love that "rejoices in the truth" (*1 Cor13:6*), knows how to be outspoken and determined. The call to repentance is joined, as always, with the call to prayer. In accordance with the tradition of many centuries, the Lady of Fatima message indicates the "Rosary", which can rightly be called "the prayer of Mary", in which she feels particularly united with us. She herself prays

with us.

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When Jesus said on the cross: "Woman, behold your son"( *Jn*19:26) - in a new way he opened up the heart of his Mother, the Immaculate Heart, and revealed a new dimension of love and scope of the new love, to which she was called in the Holy Spirit with the power of the sacrifice of the Cross. In the words of Fatima we seem to find this dimension of maternal love, which extends all the way of man to God. The solicitude of the Mother of the Savior is a concern for the work of salvation: the work of her Son. Can the Mother, who with all the power of her love, which fosters in the Holy Spirit and desires the salvation of every person, keep quiet about what undermines the very foundations of this salvation? No, she can not!

This message is addressed to every person. The love of the Mother of the Savior goes everywhere. The object of her care are all people of our time, along with their societies, nations and peoples. The companies threatened by apostasy, threatened by moral degradation. The collapse of morality brings with it the collapse of society.

Christ said on the Cross: "Woman, behold, your son."With those words there opened in a new way, the Heart of His Mother. Soon after, the spear of the Roman soldier pierced the side of Christ. That pierced heart has become the sign of the redemption accomplished through death by the Lamb of God. The Immaculate Heart of Mary, opened by the word: "Woman, behold your son", meets spiritually with the Heart of the Son opened by the soldier's lance. Mary's Heart was opened by the same love for the mortals and for the world, with which Christ has loved the human and the world, offering Himself on the Cross for them.

To consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother means returning beneath the Cross of her Son. More it means consecrating this world to the pierced Heart of the Savior, bringing the very source of his redemption. Redemption is always greater than the sin of man and the "sin of the world."The power of the Redemption infinitely surpasses the whole range of evil that is in mortals and in the world. The Heart of the Mother is aware of this, as no one else in the whole universe, visible and invisible. She calls not only for conversion; call to get help from her mother, to return to the source of the Redemption.

The Mother of Christ calls us and invites us to join the Church of the living God in the consecration of the world, this reliance by which the world, humanity, nations, all people are offered to the Eternal Father with power of Christ's redemption. They are offered in the pierced Heart of the Redeemer on the Cross. The Mother of the Redeemer calls us, invites us and helps us to unite ourselves with the consecration, to this dedication of the world. They are offered as close as possible to the Heart of Christ pierced on the Cross. The appeal of the Lady of Fatima is so deeply rooted in the Gospel and in the whole of tradition that the Church feels committed by this message. Yes, we can truly say: "Blessed are you, daughter, in front of the Most High God above all women on earth! .Really! You are blessed! Yes, here and throughout the Church, in the heart of every man and in the whole world be blessed Mary, our sweet Mother!

05SN1401  
05.14.2019

**A reading from a sermon by Bl John Newman on the feast of St. Matthias.** <sup>1</sup>

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This is the only Saint's day which is to be celebrated with mingled feelings of joy and pain. It records the fall as well as the election of an Apostle. St. Matthias was chosen in place of the traitor Judas. In the history of the latter we have the warning recorded in very deed, which our Lord in the text gives us in word, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And doubtless many were the warnings such as this, addressed by our Lord to the wretched man who in the end betrayed him.

The reflection which rises in the mind on a consideration of the election of St. Matthias, is this: how easily God may effect His purposes without us, and put others in our place, if we are disobedient to Him. It often happens that those who have long been in His favor grow secure and presuming. They think their salvation certain, and their service necessary to Him who has graciously accepted it. Now, this feeling of self-importance is repressed all through the Scriptures, and especially by the events we commemorate today.

What solemn overpowering thoughts must have crowded on St. Matthias, when he received the greetings of the eleven Apostles, and took his seat among them as their brother! His very election was a witness against himself if he did not fulfill it. And such surely will ours be in our degree. We take the place of others who have gone before, as Matthias did; we are "baptized for the dead," filling up the ranks of soldiers, some of whom, indeed, have fought a good fight, but many of whom in every age have made void their calling. Many are called, few are chosen. The monuments of sin and unbelief are set up around us. The casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the Gentiles. The fall of one nation is the conversion of another. The Church loses old branches, and gain new. God works according to His own inscrutable pleasure.... Thus the Christian of every age is but the successor of the lost and of the dead. How long we of this country shall be put in trust with Gospel, we know not; but while we have the privilege, assuredly we do but stand in the place of Christians who have either utterly fallen away, or are so corrupted as scarcely to let their light shine before others. We are at present witnesses of the Truth; and our very glory is our warning. By the superstitions, the profanities, the indifference, the unbelief of the world called AChristian,@ we are called upon to be lowly-minded while we preach aloud, and to tremble while we rejoice. Let us

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<sup>1</sup> *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987, pp. 300-301, 304-305.

then, as a Church and as individuals, one and all, look to Him who alone can keep us from falling. Let us with single heart look up to Christ our Saviour, and put ourselves into His hands, from whom all our strength and wisdom is derived.

05SN1504  
05.15.2019

**A reading about the monastic rule of St. Pachomius, by Thomas Merton.** <sup>1</sup>

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Obedience is the distinctive factor of the new [communal] monasticism of St. Pachomius. The whole Pachomian structure is [actually] built on obedience, [which] is not just the docility of the hermit to a director, but the lifelong obedience of the subject to the superior, as well as of the son to the Father. It implies a real concept of self-emptying and subjection, a real renunciation of one's own freedom, "for keeps." Accordingly, all are to obey the Rule, superiors and subjects. No one in the monastery is to follow his own will. [Even] the heads of houses and their assistants, [for example,] had to weave a certain number of baskets in a certain time, as a *norm* for the others to meet....

However, the superior must command, and he is to be obeyed as God. Furthermore, the brethren are to obey one another, but above all the superiors. In commanding, the superior himself obeys God who wants him to command according to the Rule. All must obey meekly and willingly, without murmuring. Unwillingness and resistance show lack of faith and seriously affect the spiritual vitality of the mystery of the common life. It is not just an individual defect, it affects the community.

Obedience is the highest value—with charity—in the common life. It is "*greater than sacrifices.*" That is to say that emphasis is systematically placed on what is enjoined by obedience, over what may be inspired by our own spontaneous religious desires, however good [they may be in and of themselves]. This is another fundamental principle [of communal monastic life,] of cenobitism. What is enjoined **in the name of the community**...leads to life much more surely and effectively than what is merely suggested by individual inspiration....

To illustrate the importance this,] Pachomius burned 500 mats that had been woven by the cook in the kitchen, while he was cooking. He had been ordered to cook **only**, not ordered to weave mats. Work over and above what was one's duty was not acceptable, because it was outside obedience. Hence, works of extra sacrifice are acceptable only when the approval of obedience brings them within the ambit of the common will and the common life. When a good work, of personal choice, is approved by the superior, then it becomes part of the common spiritual striving and merit of the community—it becomes a work of Christ. But

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<sup>1</sup> *Pre-Benedictine Monachism*, Abbey of Gethsemani, 1963; pp 49-50.

any work, however good, that is deliberately kept out of and apart from the common life stream, ceases to be a work of Christ. Hence it is not blessed. Hence it is a potential danger, to the individual and to the community.

Lastly, obedience is **according to the Rule**: there is no longer any purely subjective and arbitrary command permitted. In commanding, the superior must himself obey the Abba, the founder, and carry on the founder's will. He must run the institution according to the thought and mind of the founder, which is embodied in the Rule. The Rule represents the personal thought and desire of Abba Pachomius, and is not a mere legal document.

Thus, obedience, for Pachomius, strikes deep into the heart of the "mystery" of common life. If superiors do their own will and inferiors merely comply with that will, then there is not yet a religious mystery. This [mystery] is constituted by the participation of all in the sacrifice and obedience of Christ, in His self-emptying. All have renounced their will. When this happens in a community, the Holy Spirit then breathes in and through *all* [its members].

TM-EST73  
05.16.19

### **Christ Appears to his Disciples - from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny<sup>2</sup>**

You know that when Christ came to the disciples the doors were locked and he stood among them, but they were startled and frightened and supposed they saw a spirit. But when he breathed on them saying: *Receive the Holy Spirit*, and when later he sent from heaven the same Spirit with another gift, these gifts were indeed undeniable proofs and testimonies of resurrection and life.

It is the Spirit who bears witness in the hearts and on the lips of the saints that Christ is the truth, the resurrection and the life. Thus the Apostles who had previously doubted even after seeing his living body, after tasting his life-giving Spirit with great power gave testimony to his resurrection. So it is much more important to receive Jesus in our hearts than to see him with our eyes or hear him with our ears. The Spirit makes a much deeper impression on the interior person than material things make on the exterior senses. What room is left for doubt when he who bears witness and he who is the object of that witness is the one Spirit? If the Spirit is one there must be a complete understanding, everything fits together.

Now, my brethren, what witness to Christ's love does the joy of your hearts give you? I venture to judge, and rightly as you will see, that if you have ever loved Jesus alive or dead or risen from the dead, your heart rejoices within you today. As the tidings of his resurrection resound and re-echo again and again through the Church you will say to yourselves: *They have told me that Jesus my God is still alive. On hearing it my spirit, which was asleep through weariness, languishing through tepidity, disheartened through timidity, has revived.* For the joyful voice of this happy message raises even from death those buried deep in sin. Otherwise, if Christ, coming up from hell, left them there in the depths, there would certainly be no hope for them; their fate would be buried in forgetfulness. By this token you have clearly known that your soul lives again fully in Christ if it echoes this sentiment: *It is enough for me that Jesus is still alive.*

How faithful and worthy of a friend of Jesus is that voice, how pure that act of love which says: *It is enough for me that Jesus is still alive. If he lives, I live, for my spirit acts through his. Yes, he is my life, my all in all. For what can I lack if Jesus is still alive? Rather everything else may be taken from me, nothing else matters to me so long as he lives. If he wishes then, let him take no account of me. It is enough for me that he still lives even if he only lives for himself.* When the love of Christ so absorbs a person's affections that, unmindful and forgetful of himself, he has no feeling for anything but Jesus Christ and what pertains to him, then, I say, love has been made perfect in him. To one who so loves, poverty is no burden; he feels no hurt, laughs at insults, disdains misfortunes, and considers death as a gain. In fact he does not think in terms of death, knowing that he passes from death to life. And he confidently asserts: *I will go and see him before I die.*

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<sup>2</sup> Gueric of Igny - Liturgical Sermons - vol. II - Cistercian Publications - CF32 - Cistercian Publications - Spencer, MA - 1971

**TM-EST74**

**05.17.19**

**The Resurrection of Christ - from a Sermon by Bl Gueric of Igny <sup>3</sup>**

Let us go to see Jesus journeying to the mountain of the heavenly Galilee, where he awaits us. On the way our love will increase, and on our arrival at least, it will be perfected. On the way, the road, at first hard and difficult, will grow easier and the strength of the weak will increase. The flesh of Christ is our food for the journey, his Spirit our means of conveyance. He Himself is the food; he himself is the chariot and charioteer of Israel. When you arrive, all the goods, not of Egypt but of heaven, will be yours. There, in the best place in the kingdom, at the bidding of your Joseph you will take your rest. He who first sent angels, women and apostles as witnesses and messengers of his resurrection, now cries from heaven: Behold, I whom you have mourned as dead these three days did indeed die for you, but see, I live. And all power in heaven and earth is given unto me. Come to me all you that labor and are burdened with hunger, and I will refresh you. Come you blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you. @

Blessed and holy is he who has a share in the first resurrection. @ I am the resurrection and the life @, Jesus said. He indeed is the first resurrection; he is also the second resurrection. For rising from the dead as the first fruits of those who sleep Christ both brings about for us the first resurrection by the mystery of his own resurrection and by the example of that same resurrection will bring about for us the second. The first is that of souls, when he raises them together with himself to newness of life; the second will be that of bodies, when he forms this humbled body of ours anew, molding it into the image of his glorified body. Christ does well then to proclaim himself the resurrection and the life since it is through him and into him that we rise in order to live according to him and with him; now according to him in holiness and justice, afterwards with him in happiness and glory. Now the first resurrection of our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the cause and the proof of the second resurrection which will be that of his whole body. So also for each of us the first resurrection of the soul, by which it comes to life again from the death of sin, is the proof and the cause of its second resurrection, by which the body will be freed not only from the

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<sup>3</sup>Gueric of Igny - Liturgical Sermons - vol. II - Cistercain Publications - CF32 - Cistercian Publications - Spencer, MA - 1971

corruption of death but also from every tendency to corruption and death. That the one is proof of the other St Paul shows clearly in the words: AIf the Spirit of Christ who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he will also give life to your perishable bodies on account of his Spirit who dwells in you.

**TM-EST75**

**05.18.19**

### **How we Share in Christ=s Resurrection - from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny<sup>4</sup>**

It is well said: Blessed is he who has a share in the first resurrection. @ Holy, that is, on account of the first, which he has already obtained through the renewal of his soul; blessed on account of the second, which he happily awaits when the body is restored. The reason for this blessedness is indicated by the same passage of Scripture, which goes on: AOver these (who have a share, that is, in the first resurrection), the second death has no power @, even if the first death seemed to exercise its dominion over them for a passing hour. For death has reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin according to the likeness of Adam=s transgression. But as with Christ so with the Christian; rising from the dead he dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. So over those blessed neither has the second death any power nor will the first keep the power, which it had for a time. For the one death of Christ triumphed over both of ours, setting free from the one those who were already its captives, from the other, those who would be its captives. It prevented us from falling into the one, from remaining in the other.

How true, how devout and at the same time how magnificent is that threat he uttered as he died: AI will be your death, O death. @ How fittingly and wonderfully he triumphed who tasted death on behalf of all and so swallowed up both his own death and all the dying of all peoples. Truly death has been swallowed up in victory. Free from fear he may mock at it, whomever that blessed one is who has a share in the first resurrection: Where is your victory, death? Where is your sting, death? You have been conquered, you who conquered all things. You have lost even the arms in which you trusted. For where is yours sting? The sting of death is sin, which when it once pricked the roots of the human race spread death=s incurable poison throughout the whole stock. As St Paul says: Through one man sin came and through sin death, and so it passed into all. @ Death reigned as conqueror then from the first Adam to the second; for just as by the law of its origin the whole human race was subject to the chains of sin, so also to the debt of death.

Thanks be to God who has given us the victory both over sin and over death, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wholly innocent of sin and therefore free from the debt of death, he yet paid it, dying of his own will on our behalf; and rising he has set us free from sin. For as St Paul says: Christ died for our sins and rose for our justification. @ By dying he underwent the punishment due to our sins, and by rising he established for us the form and the cause of everlasting justification. Christ rising from the dead dies no more, death has no further dominion over him. So also the Christian rising together with Christ, should no longer commit deadly sin nor should sin have any further dominion over him.

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<sup>4</sup> Gueric of Igny - Liturgical Sermons - vol. II - Cistercian Publications - CF32 - Cistercian Publications - Spencer, MA - 1971

This is that holy and blessed one who has a share in the first resurrection, over whom the second death too will have no power; even the first death will be swallowed up in the victory of Christ=s resurrection. This is the one who has not only recognized but has also taken hold of the power of Christ=s resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. He has been molded into the pattern of his death, so that he may arrive at resurrection from the dead.