

SUN 08.25.19

Commentary on Gospel of Luke by Anselm of Canterbury <sup>1</sup>

God cries out that the kingdom of heaven is for sale. The glorious bliss of this kingdom surpasses the power of mortal eye to see, mortal ear to hear, mortal heart to conceive. If anyone asks the price that must be paid, the answer is: The One who wishes to bestow a kingdom in heaven has no need of earthly payment. No one can give God anything he does not possess, because everything belongs to him. Yet he does not give such a precious gift gratis, for he will not give it to anyone who lacks love. After all, people do not give away what they hold dear to those without appreciation. So since God has no need of your possessions but must not bestow such a precious gift on anyone who disdains to value it, love is the one thing he asks for; without this he cannot give it. Give love, then, and receive the kingdom: love and it is yours.

To reign in heaven simply means exercising a single power with God and all the holy angels and saints through being so united with them in love as to want only what they want. Love God more than yourself, then, and already you will begin to have what you desire to possess fully in heaven. Be at one with God and with other men and women – so long as they are not at variance with God – and already you will begin to reign with God and all the saints. The desires of God and all the saints will be the same as yours in heaven, if your desires now are the same as those of God and other people. So if you want to be a king in heaven, love God and other people as you should and then you will deserve to become what you desire.

But you cannot have this perfect love unless you empty your heart of every other love. That is why those who fill their hearts with love of God and neighbor desire nothing but the will of God or that of some fellow human being – provided this is not contrary to God. That is why they devote themselves to prayer, spiritual conversations, and reflection, for it is a joy to them to long for God and to speak, hear and think about him whom they dearly love. That is why they rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep, show compassion to those in distress, and give to the needy, since they love others as themselves. Hence too their contempt for riches, power, pleasure, honor, and praise. Those who love these things frequently offend against God and their neighbor – for *the whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments*. So those who wish to possess the fullness of that love which is the price of the kingdom of heaven should love contempt, poverty, toil and subjection, as do the saints.

<sup>1</sup>Journey with the Fathers – Year C – New City Press – New York – 2000 – pg 110

MON 08.26.2019

**Death and the monk: a reading from *The Meaning of Monastic Life* by Louis Bouyer. 1**

---

It is not purely and simply by dying that we shall live, but by dying such a death that it kills death itself and it is only the death of Christ that can do that. For it is not the life of the mortal body which has injured the life of the soul. It is, on the contrary, the death of the soul which has injured the body and made it mortal. Life will be won back by the resurrection, not of the soul alone, but of the human being in its unity, inseparably body and soul. And if the passage through death can lead to the resurrection, it is only in as much as the soul, which has become alive again in Christ, has been made capable of burning away the death of the body as with a red-hot iron and of causing it to evaporate in its own flame.

The monk goes forward to meet death because he believes that this miracle, the greatest of all, has been accomplished in the death of Christ: because he believes that Christ was Life, the very Life of God, and that in making physical death his own, he has robbed the evil one of all his power and all his empire which are annihilated by this very act. Again he goes forward to meet death because he believes that Christ now and for the future lives in him: and finally because he believes that what has taken place in Christ will be reproduced in himself, in the same manner.

The death of the monk, so desired and sought after day after day, is then only the supreme evidence of his faith, his faith in Christ vanquishing death in himself, his faith in Christ present in his followers to vanquish it in them. The monk's mortification is ultimately nothing more than his witness given to Christ, the witness of his faith, which makes it clear that it is not only an intellectual thing but an engagement of the whole being.

TUES

8/27/19

**ON THE PRAYER OF HIS MOTHER MONICA FOR HIS CONVERSION**, from the Confessions of St Augustine<sup>1</sup>

---

You, O God, sent down your help from above (ps 143:7) and rescued my soul from the depths of this darkness because my mother, your faithful servant, wept to you for me, shedding more tears for my spiritual death than other mothers shed for the bodily death of a son. For in her faith and in the spirit which she had from you she looked on me as dead. You heard her and did not despise the tears which streamed down and watered the earth in every place where she bowed her head in prayer. You heard her, for how else can I explain the dream with which you consoled her, so that she agreed to live with me and eat at the same table in our home? Lately she had refused to do this, because she loathed and shunned the blasphemy of my false beliefs.

She dreamed that she was standing on a wooden rule, and coming towards her in a halo of splendor she saw a young man who smiled at her in joy, although she herself was sad and quite consumed with grief. He asked her the reason for her sorrow and her daily tears, not because he did not know, but because he had something to tell her, for this is what happens in visions. When she replied that her tears were for the soul I had lost, he told her to take heart for, if she looked carefully, she would see that where she was, there also was I. And when she looked, she saw me standing beside her on the same rule.

Where could this dream have come from, unless it was that you listened to the prayer of her heart? For your goodness is almighty; you take good care of each of us as if you had no others in your care, and you look after all as you look after each. And surely it was for the same reason that, when she told me of the dream and I tried to interpret it as a message that she need not despair of being one day such as I was then, she said at once and without hesitation 'No! He did not say "Where he is, you are", but "Where you are, he is".'

I have often said before and, to the best of my memory, I now declare to you, Lord, that I was much moved by the answer, which you gave me through my mother. She was not disturbed by my interpretation of her dream, plausible though it was, but quickly saw the true meaning, which I had not seen until she spoke. I was more deeply moved by this than by the dream itself, in which the joy for which this devout woman had still so long to wait was foretold so long before to comfort her in the time of her distress. For nearly nine years were yet to come during which I wallowed deep in the mire and the darkness of delusion. Often I tried to lift myself, only to plunge the deeper. Yet all the time this chaste, devout, and prudent woman, a widow such as is close to your heart, never ceased to pray at all hours and to offer you the tears she shed for me. The dream had given new spirit to her hope, but she gave no rest to her sighs and her tears. Her prayers reached your presence (ps 87:3) and yet you still left me to twist and turn in the dark.

---

<sup>1</sup>THE CONFESSIONS, by St Augustine trans. by R. S. Pine-Coffin (Penguin Books 1961) pp. 68-69.

WED

8/28/19

## OUR BEING MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, from a Treatise of St Augustine<sup>2</sup>

---

Now this trinity of the mind is the image of God, not because the mind remembers, understands, and loves itself, but because it also has the power to remember, understand, and love its Maker. And in doing this it attains wisdom. If it does not do this, the memory, understanding and love of itself is no more than an act of folly. Therefore, let the mind remember its God, to whose image it was made, let it understand and love Him.

In brief, let it worship the uncreated God who created it with the capacity for himself, and in whom it can be made partaker. Hence it is written: "Behold, the worship of God is wisdom"(Jb 28:28). By participating in that supreme Light, wisdom will belong to the mind not by its own light, and it will reign in bliss only where the eternal Light is. The wisdom is so called human wisdom as to be also that of God. If wisdom were only human it would be vain, for only God's wisdom is true wisdom. Yet when we call it God's wisdom, we do not mean the wisdom by which God is wise: He is not wise by partaking in himself as the mind is wise by partaking in God. It is more like speaking of the justice of God not only to mean that God is just but to mean the justice he gives to us when he "justifies the ungodly": to which the Apostle alludes when speaking to those who "being ignorant of God's justice, and wanting to establish their own justice, were not subject to the justice of God"(Rom 4:5). In this way we might speak of those who, ignorant of the wisdom of God and wanting to establish their own, were not subject to the wisdom of God.

There is an uncreated Being who has made all other beings great and small, certainly more excellent than everything he made, and thus also more excellent than the rational and intellectual being which we have been discussing, namely, the human mind, made to the image of its Creator. And the Being more excellent than all others is God. Indeed, he is "not far from any one of us," as the Apostle says, adding, "for in him we live and move and have our being"(Acts 17:27ff). Were this said in a material sense we could understand it of our material world: for in it also, in respect to our body, we live and move and are. The text should be taken, however, in a more excellent and also invisible and intelligible way, namely, with respect to the mind that has been made to his image.

In fact, what is there that is not in him of whom Holy Scripture says: "For from him and through him and in him are all things"(Rom 11:36)? If all things are in Him, in whom except in him in whom they are can the living live or the moving move? Yet all are not with him in the sense in which he says "I am always with you"(Ps 73:23). Nor is he with all things in the sense in which we say, "The Lord be with you." Our great misery, therefore, is not to be with him without whom we cannot exist. Unquestionably, we are never without him in whom we are; but if one does not remember him, does not understand him or love him, he is not with him.

---

<sup>2</sup>LIGHT FROM LIGHT, edited by Louis Dupre & James Wiseman, OSB--Selections from On The Trinity, (Paulist Press, NY, 1988) pp. 68-69.

THUR

08.29.2019

John the Baptist – the Precursor of Christ in birth and death -  
From a Homily by St Bede the Venerable 3

As a forerunner of our Lord's birth, preaching and death, John showed in his struggle a goodness worthy of the sight of heaven. In the words of Scripture: "Though in the sight of men he suffered torments, his hope is full of immortality." We justly commemorate the day of his birth with a joyful celebration, a day which he himself made festive for us through his suffering and which he adorned with the crimson splendor of his own blood. We do rightly revere his memory with joyful hearts, for he stamped with the seal of martyrdom the testimony which he delivered on behalf of our Lord.

There is no doubt that blessed John suffered imprisonment and chains as a witness to our Redeemer, whose forerunner he was, and gave his life for him. His persecutor had demanded not that he deny Christ, but only that he should keep silent about the truth. Nevertheless, he died for Christ. Does Christ not say: "I am the truth?" Therefore, because John shed his blood for the truth, he surely died for Christ. Through his birth, preaching and baptizing, he bore witness to the coming birth, preaching and baptism of Christ, and by his own suffering he showed that Christ also would suffer.

Such was the quality and strength of the man who accepted the end of this present life by shedding his blood after the long imprisonment. He preached the freedom of heavenly peace, yet was thrown into irons by ungodly men; he was locked away in the darkness of prison, though he came bearing witness to the Light of life and deserved to be called a bright and shining lamp by that Light itself, which is Christ. John was baptized in his own blood, though he had been privileged to baptize the Redeemer of the world, to hear the voice of the Father above him, and to see the grace of the Holy spirit descending upon him. But to endure temporal agonies for the sake of the truth was not a heavy burden for such men as John; rather it was easily borne and even desirable, for he knew eternal joy would be his reward.

Since death was ever near at hand through the inescapable necessity of nature, such men considered it a blessing to embrace it and thus gain the reward of eternal life by acknowledging Christ's name. Hence the apostle Paul rightly says: "You have been granted the privilege not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for his sake." He tells us why it is Christ's gift that his chosen ones should suffer for him: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us."

FRI 08.30.19

From The Golden Epistle by William of St Thierry [1](#)

The apostle enumerates the kinds of prayer in a certain order: supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgiving. Petition is what we put in the first place and it is concerned with obtaining temporal benefits and what is necessary for this life. When a man makes petition God indeed approves his good will but he follows his own better judgment and enables the one who makes petition in the right spirit to acquiesce in his will. It is of this that the Psalmist says: "My prayer is still for what pleases them." That is to say, what pleases even godless men, for all people alike, but especially the children of this world, desire the tranquility of peace, bodily health, good weather and whatever else contributes to a right use of this life and the satisfying of its needs, even indeed what serves the pleasure of those who make ill use of life. Those who in faith make their petitions for these intentions, although they only ask for them to meet their needs, none the less always submit their will in this respect to the will of God.

Supplication is a troubled and insistent turning to God during one's spiritual exercises, in which to add fresh knowledge before grace comes to the assistance is to add fresh pain. Prayer is the affection of a person who clings to God, a certain familiar and devout conversation, a state in which the enlightened mind enjoys God as long as it is permitted.

Thanksgiving is an unwearied and undistracted attention of the good will to God in understanding and knowledge of God's grace, even if sometimes outward activity or interior affection is either non-existent or sluggish. It is of this that the apostle says: "Praiseworthy intentions are always ready to hand, but I cannot find my way to the performance of them." As if to say: good will indeed is always present, but at times it is ineffective because although I seek to perform some good work I do not find the means. This is charity which never fails.

It is the uninterrupted prayer or thanksgiving of which the Apostle says: "Pray without interruption and give thanks at all times." For it is a certain unchanging goodness of the mind and of the well-ordered spirit and a certain resemblance to the goodness of their Father, God, on the part of God's children. It prays for everyone always and gives thanks for everything. It continually pours itself out before God in as many kinds of prayer or thanksgiving as its devout affection finds occasion in its needs or consolations, and also in sharing its neighbor's pains or joys. It is constantly absorbed in thanksgiving because to be in such a state is to be always in the joy of the Holy Spirit.

When it is a question of petitions prayer should be made devoutly and with faith but without obstinate persistence, since it is not we but our Father who is in heaven who knows what we need in these temporal things. Sometimes, however, by dint of hard work, he obtains when he asks, he finds when he seeks, the door is opened to him when he knocks. The toil of supplication is found worthy to obtain at length the consolations and sweetness of prayer.

SAT 08.31.19

**A Reading About Mary, the Mother of the Lord, from the Book by Fr. Karl Rahner.<sup>4</sup>**

---

All that the faith says about the realization of redemption, about salvation and grace and the fullness of grace, is realized in Mary. This human person whom we call Mary is as it were the very point in the whole history of our redemption at which the saving grace of the living God descends from him into this history, and from which it is diffused over the whole of humankind. For her Son, whom she accepted in the strength of her heart, whom she conceived in faith and love, is the Redeemer of the world. And since, as Scripture testifies, the consent she gave in faith and obedience belongs not only to her private life-story, but to the public history of redemption, it must correspond, in harmony of person and function, to the purpose for which it was given; in short it must be perfect.

It follows too that Mary is one of us. We honor her, praise her, love and revere her unique dignity. But if, in view of the mystery of her son, we ask, where does Mary stand? We must reply, she belongs entirely with us. She must receive God's mercy just as we must, for she lives and typifies to perfection what we ourselves are to be in Christ's sight. We too are to become what she is. She comes before God with us - like us and as one of our company - in the innumerable host of humanity. In our midst, within the history of humankind as a whole, as a part of it, she accomplishes her own life-story, which takes on a unique importance for our salvation, and which, once lived through with this significance, endures eternally in God's sight. Precisely because Mary, in this position as intermediary, is entirely one of us, and only occupies that position because she belongs with us, as a mere creature, to the one human family, is she so near and dear to us. That is why we love her. And have an almost too merely human trust in her. And feel her intercession, protection and love to be so near and human, although, or rather because this dear and familiar humanity has been taken up, unimpaired and transfigured, into the eternal life of God himself.

---

<sup>4</sup>Mary, the Mother of the Lord, Herder & Herder NY 1963, pp.38-40.