

LAY CISTERCIANS OF GETHSEMANI ABBEY
VIGILS READINGS
Fifth Week in Ordinary Time
February 9-15, 2020

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2020

A Commentary on the Gospel by St John Chrysostom [1](#)

We who have once for all clothed ourselves in Christ, and been made worthy to have him dwelling within us, may show everyone, if we choose, simply by the strict discipline of our life and without saying a word, the power of him who dwells in us. Therefore Christ said: *Let your light so shine before all, that people may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.* This is a light that reaches not only the bodily senses, but illumines also the beholder's mind and soul. It disperses the darkness of evil, and invites those who encounter it to let their own light shine forth, and to follow the example of virtue.

Let your light shine before all, Christ said; and he used the words *before all* advisedly. He meant, "Let your light be so bright that it illumines not only yourself, but shines also before those needing its help." As the light our senses perceive puts darkness to flight, and enables those travelling along a road perceptible to the senses to follow a straight course, so also the spiritual light which shines from blameless conduct illumines those who cannot see clearly how to live a virtuous life, because their spiritual eyesight has been blurred by the darkness of error. It purifies their inward vision, leads them to live upright lives, and makes them walk henceforth in the path of virtue.

That people may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven. Christ means: Let your virtue, the perfection of your life, and the performance of good works inspire those who see you to praise the common Master of us all. And so I beg each of you to strive to live so perfectly that the Lord may be praised by all who see you. By the perfection of your lives attract to yourselves the grace of the Spirit, so that the Lord of all creation may be glorified, and so that we may all be found worthy of the kingdom of heaven by the grace, mercy, and goodness of God's only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy

Spirit be glory, might, and honor now and for ever and for endless ages.
Amen.

1Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – N.Y. - 1999 – pg 86

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2020

The Life of St Scholastica from Butler's Lives of Saints¹

St Scholastica, who was St Benedict's sister, traditionally his twin, consecrated herself to God from her earliest years, as we learn from St Gregory. It is not known where she lived, whether at home or in a community, but after her brother had moved to Monte Cassino, she settled at Plombariola in that same neighborhood, probably founding and ruling a nunnery about five miles to the south of St Benedict's monastery. St. Gregory tells us that St. Benedict governed the nuns as well as the monks, and it seems clear that St Scholastica must have been their Abbess, under his direction. She used to visit her brother once a year and, since she was not allowed to enter his monastery, he used to go with some monks to meet her at a house a little way off. They spent these visits in praising God and in conferring together on spiritual matters.

St. Gregory gives a remarkable description of the last of these visits. After they had passed the day as usual they sat down in the evening to have supper. When it was finished, Scholastica, possibly foreseeing that it would be their last visit in this world, begged her brother to delay his return till the next day that they might spend the time discoursing of the joys of Heaven. Benedict, who was unwilling to transgress his rule, told her that he could not pass a night away from the monastery. When Scholastica found that she could not move him, she laid her head upon her hands which were clasped together on the table and besought God to interpose on her behalf. Her prayer was scarcely ended when there arose such a violent storm of rain that St. Benedict and his companions were unable to set foot outside the door. He exclaimed, "God forgive you sister; what have you done?" Whereupon she answered, "I asked a favor of you and you refused it. I

¹ Butler's Lives of the Saints , pg 42, edited by Michael Walsh - revised version , Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1991

asked it of God, and He has granted it.” Benedict was therefore forced to comply with her request, and they spent the night talking about holy things. The next morning they parted, and three days later St. Benedict saw the soul of his sister rising to heaven like a dove.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020

From a Letter by St Marie Bernadette Soubirous¹

I had gone down one day with two other girls to the bank of the river Gave when suddenly I heard a kind of rustling sound. I turned my head toward the field by the side of the river but the trees seemed quite still and the noise was evidently not from them. Then I looked up and caught sight of the cave where I saw a lady wearing a lovely white dress with a bright belt. On top of each of her feet was a pale yellow rose, the same color as her rosary beads.

At this I rubbed my eyes, thinking I was seeing things, and I put my hands into the fold of my dress where my rosary was. I wanted to make the sign of the cross but for the life of me I couldn't manage it and my hand just fell down. Then the lady made the sign of the cross herself and at the second attempt I managed to do the same, though my hands were trembling. Then I began to say the rosary while the lady let her beads slip through her fingers, without moving her lips. When I stopped saying the Hail Mary, she immediately vanished.

I asked my two companions if they had noticed anything, but they said no. Of course they wanted to know what I was doing and I told them that I had seen a lady wearing a nice white dress, though I didn't know who she was. I told them not to say anything about it, and they said I was silly to have anything to do with it. I said they were wrong and I came back the next Sunday, feeling myself drawn to the place.

The third time I went the lady spoke to me and asked me to come every day for fifteen days. I said I would and then she said she wanted me to tell the priests to build a chapel there. She also told me to drink from the stream. I went to the Gave, the only stream I could see. Then she made me realize she was not speaking of the Gave and she indicated a little trickle of

water close-by. When I got to it I could only find a few drops, mostly mud. I cupped my hands to catch some liquid without success and then I started to scrape the ground. I managed to find a few drops of water but only at the fourth attempt was there sufficient for any kind of drink. The lady then vanished and I went back home.

I went back each day for fifteen days and each time, except one Monday and one Friday, the lady appeared and told me to look for a stream and wash in it and to see that the priests build a chapel there. I must also pray, she said, for the conversion of sinners. I asked her many times what she meant by that, but she only smiled. Finally with outstretched hands and eyes looking up to heaven she told me she was the Immaculate Conception. During the fifteen days she told me three secrets but I was not to speak about them to anyone and so far I have not.

1The Liturgy of the Hours – vol. II – Catholic Book Publishing Co – New York – 1976 – p 1673

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2020

St. Benedict of Aniane, from Butler's Lives of Saints.²

Benedict was the son of Aigulf of Maguelone and served King Pepin and his son, Charlemagne, as cupbearer. At the age of twenty he made a resolution to seek the kingdom of God with his whole heart. He took part in the campaign in Lombardy, but, after having been nearly drowned in the Tesino, near Pavia, in endeavouring to save his brother, he made a vow to quit the world entirely. Upon his return to Languedoc he was confirmed in his determination by the advice of a hermit called Widmar, and he went to the abbey of Saint-Seine, fifteen miles from Dijon, where he was admitted as a monk. He spent two and a half years here learning the monastic life and bringing himself under control by severe austerities. Not satisfied with observing the Rule of St. Benedict, he practised those other points of perfection which he found prescribed in the Rules of St. Pachomius and St. Basil. When the abbot died, the brethren were disposed to elect him to fill

²Lives of Saints. Butler. Harper, 1991. pp. 43-44.

the post, but he was unwilling to accept the charge because he knew that the monks were opposed to anything in the shape of systematic reform.

Benedict accordingly quitted Saint-Seine and, returning to Languedoc, built a small hermitage beside the brook Aniane upon his own estate. Here he lived for some years in self-imposed destitution, praying continually that God would teach him to do His will. Some solitaries, of whom the holy man Widmar was one, placed themselves under his direction, and they earned their livelihood by manual labor, living on bread and water except on Sundays and great festivals when they added a little wine or milk if it was given them in alms. The superior worked with them in the fields and sometimes spent his time in copying books. When the number of his disciples increased, Benedict left to build a monastery in a more spacious place.

In a short time he had many religious under his direction, and at the same time exercised a general inspection over all the monasteries of Provence, Languedoc and Gascony, becoming eventually the director and overseer of all the monasteries in the empire; he reformed many with little or no opposition.

In order to have him close at hand, the Emperor Louis the Pious obliged Benedict to dwell first at the abbey of Maurmuenster in Alsace and then, as he wanted him yet nearer, he built a monastery upon the Inde, later known as Cornelimuenster, near Aachen, the residence of the emperor and court. Benedict lived in the monastery yet continued to help in the restoration of monastic observance throughout France and Germany. He was the chief instrument in drawing up the canons for the reformation of monks at the council of Aachen in 817, and presided in the same year over the assembly of abbots to enforce the restoration of discipline. His statutes, the *Capitula of Aachen*, were annexed to the rule of St. Benedict and imposed on all monks throughout the empire. Benedict also wrote the *Codex Regularum* (Code of Rules), a collection of all the monastic regulations which he found extant; he likewise compiled a book of homilies for the use of monks, collected from the works of the Fathers; but his most important work was the *Concordia Regularum*, the Concord of Rules, in which he gives those of St. Benedict of Nursia in combination with those of other patriarchs of monastic observances to show their similarity.

This great restorer of monasticism in the West, worn out by mortifications and fatigues, suffered much from continual sickness in the latter part of his days. He died at Inde with great tranquility in 821, being then seventy-one years of age.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020

A Commentary on Genesis by St. John Chrysostom 3

Since God was conducting everything in the wake of the patriarch's prayers, The maiden's father and brother said to him: "This thing has come from the Lord," Your account shows the whole thing has happened by God's arrangement. So don't think we oppose the decisions of God.

Do you see how much care they took in olden times to obtain wives for their sons? How they looked for nobility ahead of money? None of the agreements, none of the contracts or other ridiculous things that happen in these days. Instead, among people of those times, only the most secure contract: the maid's behavior – no pomp and no circumstance. See how in everything that happened, the servant gave thanks to the Lord of all. You see, it was He who prepared everything in advance of him and in response to the patriarch's prayer sent his angel ahead of him – he it was who conducted the whole business for him/

Learning then that he had the desired end in view, "he brought out presents of silver and gold and clothing, and gave them to Rebecca. Then he waited on her with confidence, as though she were already betrothed to Isaac. See how even these men in their ignorance suggest to the maid what is going to happen, with God directing their minds to it. Do you see God's providence emerging clearly in every situation and how the Lord of all arranges for the future to be foretold even by non-believers?

The text goes on: "Rebecca rose up with her maids and mounted the camels. Do you see the kind of bride the patriarch procured? No mention of mules with necks bedecked with silver and gold, nor the awful extravagance shown today; instead the fortitude of the women of old was such that they rode camels and travelled that way.

Consider at this point, I ask you, dearly beloved, how there was no sign of superfluities and inanities, instead complete dignity, complete wisdom, complete restraint. The text goes on: “Now Isaac went into his house and took Rebecca, and she became his wife.

Let wives imitate her; let husbands follow this example. Let them be anxious to conduct their nuptials in this fashion. Why do you make a mockery of the dignified rites of marriage? All this ought to be anathema, and the girl instructed from the beginning in respect, and priests summoned to strengthen the harmony of the union by prayers and blessings so that the love for her spouse may be increased and the maid’s continence may be heightened. Thus by every means the practice of virtue will enter that home and all the devil’s wiles may be kept away and they will enjoy their life together by God’s grace.

May it be the good fortune of all of us to attain this, thanks to the grace and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, power and honor, now and forever for ages of ages. Amen

1. St John Chrysostom : Homilies on Genesis – vol. 3 – Catholic University Press – Washongton DC – 1992 – pg 30=40

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2020

Saints Cyril and Methodius: a reading from *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*. 1

In 862 there arrived in Constantinople an ambassador charged by Rostislav, prince of Moravia, to ask if the emperor would send him missionaries capable of teaching his people in their own language. Photius, now patriarch of Constantinople, decided that Cyril and Methodius were most suitable for the work; they were learned men, who knew SlavonicY.

In 863 the two brothers set out with a number of assistants and came to the court of Rostislav. The new missionaries made free use of the

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Butler=s Lives of the Saints, edited by M. Walsh, New York: HarperCollins, 1991, pp. 46-47.

vernacular in their preaching and ministrations, and this made immediate appeal to the local people. To the German clergy this was objectionable, and their opposition was strengthened when the Emperor Louis forced Rostislav to take an oath of fealty to him. The Byzantine missionaries, armed with their pericopes from the Scriptures and liturgical hymns in Slavonic, pursued their way with much success, but were soon handicapped by their lack of a bishop to ordain more priests. The German prelate, the bishop of Passau, would not do it, and Cyril therefore determined to seek help elsewhere, presumably from Constantinople whence he came.

On their way the brothers arrived in Venice. It was at a bad moment. Photius at Constantinople had incurred excommunication; the *protégés* of the Eastern emperor and their liturgical use of a new tongue were vehemently criticized. They came to Rome bringing with them alleged relics of Pope St Clement, which St Cyril had recovered when in the Crimea on his way back from the Khazars. Adrian II warmly welcomed the bearers of so great a gift. He examined their cause, and he gave judgment: Cyril and Methodius were to receive episcopal consecration, their neophytes were to be ordained, and the use of the liturgy in Slavonic was approved.

While still in Rome Cyril died, on February 14, 869. He was buried with great pomp in the church of San Clemente on the Coelian, where the relics of St Clement had been enshrined. St Methodius now took up his brother's leadership. Having been consecrated bishop he returned, bearing a letter from the Holy See recommending him as a man of exact understanding and orthodoxy. Kosel, prince of Pannonia, asked that the ancient archdiocese of Sirmium (now Mitrovitsa) be revived. Methodius was made metropolitan and the boundaries of his charge extended to the borders of Bulgaria.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2020

A spiritual interpretation of the birth of Esau and Jacob by Origen. 1

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Homily XV, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (FC71), translated by Ronald E. Heine; Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982; pp. 178-181.

The Lord said to Sarah: *Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be divided out of your womb. And one people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger* (Gen 25.23).

How “one people has risen above the other,” is well known and very commonplace to everyone. Let us add this, if it is agreeable, which can edify and instruct each of us who hear these words.

I think that this can be said also of us as individuals, that “two nations and two peoples are within you.” For there is both a people of virtues within us and there is no less a people of vices within us. *For from our heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, thefts, false testimonies* (Mt 15.19), but also *deceits, contentions, heresies, jealousies, revelings and such like* (Gal 5.20-21). Do you see how great a people of evils is within us? But if we should deserve to utter that word of the saints: *From fear of you, Lord, we have conceived in the womb and have brought forth; we have wrought the spirit of your salvation on the earth* (Is 26.18), then also another people, begotten in the spirit, is found within us. For *the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, temperance, purity* and such like (Gal 5.22-23). You see another people which is also itself within us. But this one is less, that one greater. For there are always more evil than good people and vices are more numerous than virtues. But if we should be such as Rebecca and should deserve to conceive from Isaac, that is, from the word of God, *one people shall overcome the other and the elder shall serve the younger* even in us, for the flesh shall serve the spirit and vices shall yield to virtues.

And her days were fulfilled, the text says, *that she should give birth, and there were twins in her womb*. This statement, that is, *her days were fulfilled that she should give birth*, is almost never written except of holy women. For this is said of this Rebecca and of Elizabeth the mother of John [the Baptist] and of Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whence a birth of this kind seems to me so show something extraordinary and beyond other human beings. The fulfillment of the days seems to indicate the birth of perfect offspring.

“But what those prerogatives of birth are, why either the one *supplanted his brother* and was born smooth and simple, although certainly both sons were conceived from the one father, Isaac, or why the other was born *hairy all over* and shaggy and, so to speak, enwrapped in the squalor of sin and vileness is not mine to discuss. For if I shall wish to dig deeply and open the hidden veins *of living water* [in the Scripture], immediately the Philistines will be present and will strive with me. They will stir up disputes and malicious charges against me and will begin to refill my wells with their earth and mud. “And for this reason, leaving this well and calling it enmity,” let us dig another.

END OF READINGS