

SUN 03.22.20 4th Sunday of Lent

A Commentary on the Gospel of John by St. Ambrose [1](#)

You have heard that story in the gospel where we are told that the Lord Jesus, as he was passing by, caught sight of a man who had been blind from birth. Since the Lord did not overlook him, neither ought we to overlook the story of a man whom the Lord considered worthy of his attention. In particular we should notice the fact that he had been blind from birth. This is an important point.

There is, indeed, a kind of blindness, usually brought on by serious illness, which obscures one's vision, but which can be cured, given time; and there is another sort of blindness, caused by cataract, that can be remedied by a surgeon; he can remove the cause and so the blindness is dispelled. Draw your own conclusion: this man, who was actually born blind, was not cured by surgical skill, but by the power of God.

When nature is defective the Creator, who is the author of nature, has the power to restore it. That is why Jesus also said: *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*, meaning: all who are blind are able to see, so long as I am the light they are looking for. Come, then, and receive the light, so that you may be able to see.

What is he trying to tell us, he who brought human beings back to life, who restored them to health by a word of command, who said to a corpse, *Come out!* And Lazarus came out from the tomb; who said to a paralytic, *Arise and pick up your stretcher*, and the sick man rose and picked up the very bed on which he used to be carried as a helpless cripple? Again, I ask you, what is he trying to convey to us by spitting on the ground, mixing his spittle with clay and putting it on the eyes of a blind man, saying: *Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam (a name that means "sent")*? What is the meaning of the Lord's action in this? Surely one of great significance, since the person whom Jesus touches receives more than just his sight.

In one instant we see both the power of his divinity and the strength of his holiness. As the divine light, he touched this man and enlightened him; as a priest, by an action symbolizing baptism he wrought in him his work of redemption. The only reason for his mixing clay with the spittle and smearing it on the eyes of the blind man was to remind you that he who restored the man to health by anointing his eyes with clay is the very one who fashioned the first man out of clay, and that this clay that is our flesh can receive the light of eternal life through the sacrament of baptism.

You, too, should come to Siloam, that is, to him who was sent by the Father (as he says in the gospel, *My teaching is not my own, it comes from him who sent me*). Let Christ wash you and you will then see. Come and be baptized, it is time; come quickly, and you too will be able to say, *I was blind, and now I can see*, and as the blind man said when his eyes began to receive the light, *The night is almost over and the day is at hand*.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – NY – 1992 – pg 42

MON 03/23/20

A Sermon of St.Ambrose ¹

Give thanks, brethren, to the Divine Mercy Which has brought you safely half-way through the season of Lent. For this favor they give praise to God, thankfully and with devotion, who in these days have striven to live in the manner in which they were instructed at the beginning of Lent: that is, those who, coming with eagerness to the church, have sought with sighs and tears, in daily fasting and alms deeds, to obtain the forgiveness of their sins.

They, however, who have neglected this duty, that is to say, those who have not fasted daily, or given alms, or those who were indifferent or unmoved in prayer, they have no reason to rejoice, but cause rather for mourning. Yet let them not mourn as if they had no hope; for He who could give back sight to the man blind from birth can likewise change those who now are lukewarm and indifferent into souls fervent and zealous in His service, if with their whole heart they desire to be converted unto Him.

Would that you might seek the medicine of the soul when you have sinned, as you seek that of the body when you are ill in the flesh. Who now in this so great assembly were he condemned, not to be put to death, but to be deprived of his sight only, would not give all he possessed to escape the danger? And if you so fear the death of the flesh, why do you not fear more the death of the spirit, especially since the pains of death, that is of the body, are but of an hour, while the death of the soul, that is, its punishment and its grieving, has no end? And if you love the eyes of your body, that you soon will lose in death, why do you not love those eyes of the soul, by which you may see your Lord and God for ever?

¹ The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers – vol. 2 – Henry Regnery Co – Chicago – 1958 – pg 82

Labor therefore, beloved children in the Lord, labor while it is yet day; for as Christ our Lord says, *The night comes, when no man can work*. Daytime is this present life; night is death and the time that follows death. If after this life there is no more freedom to work, as the Truth tells us, why then does every person not labor while yet there is time, that is, while he still; that is while he still lives in this world?

Be fearful, brethren, of this death. All those who now work evil are without fear of this death, and because of this when they depart from this life they shall encounter everlasting death. Labor while you yet live, and particularly in these days; fasting from dainty fare, withholding yourselves at all times from evil works. For those who abstain from food, but do not withhold themselves from wickedness, are like the devil, who while he eats not, never ceases from evildoing.

TUE 03/24/20

A sermon from St. Leo the Great ²

Apostolic teaching, Beloved, exhorts us that we *put off the old man with his deeds*, and renew ourselves from day to day by a holy manner of life. For if we are the temple of God, and if the Holy Spirit is a Dweller in our souls, as the Apostle says: *You are the temple of the living God*; we must strive with all our vigilance that the dwelling of our heart be not unworthy of so great a Guest. And just as in houses made with hands, we see to it with praiseworthy diligence that whatever may be damaged, either through the rain coming in, or by the wind in storms, or by age itself, is promptly and carefully repaired, so must we with unceasing concern take care that nothing disordered be found in our souls, that nothing unclean be found there. For though this dwelling of ours does not endure without the support of its Maker, nor would the structure be safe without the watchful care of the Builder, nevertheless, since we are rational stones, and living material, the Hand of our Maker has so fashioned us, that even he who is being repaired may cooperate with his Maker.

Let human obedience then not withdraw itself from the grace of God, nor turn away from that Good without which it cannot be good. And should it find in the fulfillment of His commands something that is difficult to accomplish or beyond its powers, let it not remain apart, but rather turn to Him who commands us, and Who has laid on us this precept that He may both help us and awaken in us the desire of Him, as the Prophet tells us: *Cast your care upon the*

² The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers – vol. 2 – Henry Regnery Co – Chicago – 1958 – pg 125

Lord, and He will sustain you. Or perhaps there is someone who prides himself beyond due measure, and who imagines himself to be so untouched, so unblemished, that he has now no need to renew himself such a belief is wholly deceiving, and he will grow old in folly. All things are filled with dangers, filled with snares. Desires inflame us, allurements lie in wait for us, the love of gain beguiles us, losses frighten us.

But in holding fast to virtue, so faltering is our control, so uncertain our discernment, that though a person may observe with the utmost fidelity the lines between what is good and what is bad, it is difficult for the person of upright conscience to escape the wounding tongue of the slanderer, or for one who loves justice to avoid the reproaches of the wicked.

When, dearly beloved, should we more fittingly have recourse to the divine remedies than when, by the very law of time, we are once again reminded of the mysteries of our redemption? And that we may the more worthily commemorate them, let us earnestly prepare ourselves by these days of Lent. For as the apostle says: *Whoever thinks that he stands, let him take heed lest he fall*, no one is sustained by such strength of mind that he can be certain of his own constancy in virtue.

WED 03.25.20 Annunciation of Mary

From a Sermon by Blessed Gueric of Igny ³

The solemnity of the Lord's annunciation providentially interrupts the days of our Lenten observance, so that we are able to refresh ourselves with spiritual joy in the midst of the physical austerities which weigh so heavily on us. Having been humbled by penitential sorrow, we are now encouraged by the announcement of the one who takes away the sins of the world. This is just what Scripture says: *Grief makes the heart heavy, but a kind word makes it glad.*

It is indeed a kind word, *a reliable word in which you can believe*, this gospel of our salvation which the angel sent by God announced to Mary on this day. It is a joyful word which day utters unto day, the angel to the virgin, concerning the incarnation of the Word. It promises a son to the Virgin, and at the same time pardon to sinners, redemption to captives, release to the imprisoned, ;ofe to those in the grave. In foretelling the Son's kingdom and announcing the glory of the righteous ot makes hell fearful and gives joy to heaven. By the revelation of these mysteries and by the new joys it brings them, it seems to have increased the perfection of the angels.

³ A Word in Season – vol/ IV – Augustinian Press p 1991 – pg 52

Is there an afflicted person who would not be cheered by this kind word, or anyone whose lowliness it would not console? *Remember your word to your servant by which you gave me hope*, sang David. *It was this which consoled me when I was brought low*. He received only a promise, a word which did not show any sign of coming true. The delay in the fulfillment of his desire distressed him, but he took comfort by hoping firmly in the good faith of the one who had made the promise. If David could sustain his spirit with just the hope of the salvation which was being kept for us, with what joy and delight ought we not to greet its realization? - over -

Blessed are the mourners because they will be comforted, blessed those whose hearts are afflicted by a holy grief because they shall be gladdened by a kind word. Clearly the kind word which consoles is your all-[powerful Word, O Lord, which came today from the heavenly throne into the womb of a virgin. There, too, he made a royal throne, and from there he consoles those who mourn on earth even while he sits as king surrounded by the hosts of angels in heaven.

Thursday 03.26.20

A reading about the Christian Mystery, from a book by Louis Bouyer.

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To say that the Easter observances are the center of the ecclesiastical year leaves much untold: they are the center where the entire liturgy converges and the spring whence it all flows. All Christian worship is but a continuous celebration of Easter: the sun, rising and setting daily, leaves in its wake an uninterrupted series of Eucharists; every Mass that is celebrated prolongs the pasch. Each day of the liturgical year and, within each day, every instant of the sleepless life of the Church, continues and renews the pasch that Our Lord had desired with such great desire to eat with His disciples while awaiting the pasch He should eat in His kingdom, the pasch to be prolonged for all eternity. The annual pasch, which we are constantly recalling or anticipating, preserves us ever in the sentiment of the early Christians, who exclaims, looking to the past, The Lord is risen indeed, and, turning towards the future, Come, Lord Jesus! Come! Make no delay.

The Christian religion is not simply a doctrine: it is a fact, an action, and an action, not of the past, but of the present, where the past is recovered and the

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future draws near. Thus it embodies a mystery of faith, for it declares to us that each day makes our own the action that Another accomplished long ago, the fruits of which we shall see only later in ourselves.

St. Paul has persistently set forth this mystery in all his epistles. Writing to the Ephesians, he states simply that the mystery that unites Christ to the Church is great, as if nothing adequate could ever be said of it. A few lines earlier he revealed to us the substance of this mystery: it is that *Christ so loved the Church and handed Himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish* (Eph 5.25-27). To this end the glorifying action which He has accomplished in flesh like ours and by which this flesh has found life in death must become our own.

The action accomplished of old by Him is the pasch of two thousand years ago; becoming ours today, that action is the pasch we celebrate. The glory that will result therefore is for us as it has resulted for Him is the eternal pasch celebrated by the elect in heaven: the feast of the Lamb, immolated and glorious. For Christ died for us, not in order to dispense us from dying, but rather to make us capable of dying efficaciously, of dying to the lie of the old man, in order to live again as the new man who will die no more.

Here is the meaning of the pasch; it points out to us that the Christian in the Church must die with Christ in order to rise with Him. And not only does it point out, as one might indicate with the forefinger something beyond one's reach (that is what the pasch of the Old Testament did), but it accomplishes the very thing it points out. The Pasch is Christ, who once died and rose from the dead, making us die in His death and raising us to His life. Thus the pasch is not a mere commemoration: it is the cross and the empty tomb rendered actual. But it is no longer the Head who must stretch Himself upon the cross in order to rise from the tomb: it is His Body, the Church, and of this body we are the members.

FRI 03.27.20

**Continuing the reading about the Paschal Mystery of Christianity,
by Louis Bouyer. ¹**

Our death with Christ and this resurrection with Him, giving us the life hidden with Christ in God, who will appear when Christ Himself will appear, is the whole mystery that St. Paul tells us God had reserved for these later times our own. Writers have often stressed the extraordinary frequency of grammatical compounds containing the word “with” in the writings of St. Paul, and have rightly observed that it is a characteristic feature of his whole conception of the Christian life. Indeed, for him, the Christian life, the life of the Church or that of each Christian, is a life with Christ. It is important to grasp all that that implies.

Jesus of Nazareth, who died and rose under Pontius Pilate and is now seated at the right hand of the Father until the day He will come to judge the living and the dead, has never been for St. Paul, nor for any Catholic theologian, a hero whose epic must leave the impression that His achievements are too wonderful ever to be duplicated in ourselves. Surely no poet has dreamed of a hero more sublime than the One of whom the Apostle wrote: Despoiling the principalities and the powers, he made a public spectacle of them, leading them away in triumph (Col 2.15). But it is for us that He triumphed thus, and we must know that by Him and with Him, dead as we were, God has raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus (Eph 2.6).

Yes, Christ accomplished all that in us, for, if the sense of our own weakness is what faith, in cutting at the very root of our pride, first thrusts upon us, it does so only to make clear to us that strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12.9), and that we can do all things in Him who strengthens us (Phil 4.13) C that is, Jesus Christ.

That the Church celebrates Easter, that today she suffers and weeps with her Head, then rises and exults with Him, is the sign that the relation between Christ and the Church, between Christ and us, is quite different from that existing between any historic personages of different epochs, even between a master and his disciples. For the authors of the New Testament, even for the evangelists whose immediate end is to recount the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth, this Christ can never be considered simply as a man whose life and

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death might inspire sentiments analogous to those awakened by, say, the life and death of a Socrates, even though those sentiments were incomparably deepened and purified. He is truly the Son of God made flesh for our sake.

SAT 03/28/20

Continuing the reading about the Paschal Mystery of Christianity, by Louis Bouyer. 1

If the apostles set out across the world to evangelize it, they did so primarily because the Holy Spirit had given them after the Resurrection, the certitude expressed in these simple words: Jesus is the Lord. The word Lord has become so commonplace in our writing and speech that we find it difficult to realize all that this statement expressed. The Lord was *Adonai*, the reverent paraphrase by which the Jews replaced the awesome name of *Yahweh*; the *Kyrios* by which the Seventy, so styled traditionally, had religiously translated this same name in their Greek version of the Bible called the Septuagint. To say Jesus is the Lord was to declare that He who had been known in the flesh was now known in the spirit; that this man, this Holy child of God, was the corporal dwelling place of divinity; and that divinity, unimpeded, inundated his risen humanity, forever setting at defiance death and the devil.

But all this still falls short of the whole truth. Paradoxically, it misses the important point, the point in the gospel, which concerns us so directly that the apostles, as soon as they recognized it, set out to disseminate it. The good tidings, in their opinion, were that this Man-God was also the Second Adam; just as humanity had borne the likeness of the terrestrial Adam, so they were now called to resemble the heavenly Adam. Baptized in Him, they would put him on and would know that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. *I live, yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2.20) this was the cry of the Church on the days following the Resurrection and Pentecost; such it has remained through the centuries.

In other words, Christ is not for the Church the individual Jesus that profane historians attempt to deduce from the sum total of the dogma she teaches: He is rather the divine Head of the Body that is the Church, the Head from which she receives all life and light. He is the Bridegroom and she is the Bride, two in

one flesh, for the Bride is only *the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way* (Eph 1.23).

Christ is not a part of the Church; rather, the Church might be called a part of Christ, grafted upon Him, living by Him and for Him, suffering with Him in order to rule with Him. The ultimate end of the Incarnation, according to St. Augustine, is the total Christ: Christ Jesus the Head and we the members constituting henceforth but one in the ineffable interchange of grace between the One who gives all and those who receive all; for this giving of oneself to Him who has given everything to us is but the supreme fruit of His grace.

Rightly understood, the imitation of Jesus Christ is the very essence of the Christian life. We must have in us the mind that Christ had; we must be crucified and buried and rise with Him. This, of course, does not mean that we fallen human beings are to copy clumsily the God-Man. The whole matter is a mystery signifying that we are to be grafted upon Him so that the same life

which was in Him and which He has come to give us may develop in us as in Him and produce in us the same fruits of sanctity and love that it produced in Him.

The whole life of the Church is indeed the imitation of the life of Jesus Christ, but it is not a copy of that life. For the life of the Church is the life of Jesus Christ propagated, reproducing itself in people of all the ages, watered by that river of living water that flows forever over this earth, from the throne where the immolated Lamb is seated in the glory of His immolation.

Just as Jesus Christ, in that pasch for which He had come, expressed through His crucifixion the love that animated his whole existence an obedient love for His Father and a compassionate love of His brethren so, at each recurring paschal season, the Church externalizes this same love that flowed as water and blood from the heart of Christ to pour itself, through the sacraments, into the hearts of all people, becoming for them eternal life. At this time, together with its changeless Head, the Mystical Body, ever renewed, partakes of the Last Supper, is stretched upon the cross, and descends into the tomb to rise again on the third day. This is the paschal mystery.