

NT-JN36

05.17.20

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

If you love me, said Christ, keep my commandments. I have commanded you to love one another and to treat one another as I have treated you. To love me is to obey these commands, to submit to me, your beloved. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor. This promise shows once again Christ's consideration. Because his disciples did not yet know who he was, it was likely that they would greatly miss his companionship, his teaching, his actual physical presence, and be completely disconsolate when he had gone. Therefore he said: *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor*, meaning another like himself.

They received the Spirit after Christ had purified them by his sacrifice. The Spirit did not come down on them while Christ was still with them, because this sacrifice had not yet been offered. But when sin had been blotted out and the disciples, sent out to face danger, were preparing themselves for the battle, they needed the Holy Spirit's coming to encourage them. If you ask why the Spirit did not come immediately after the resurrection, this was in order to increase their gratitude for receiving him by increasing their desire. They were troubled by nothing as long as Christ was with them, but when his departure had left them desolate and very much afraid, they would be most eager to receive the Spirit.

He will remain with you, Christ said, meaning his presence with you will not be ended by death. But since there was a danger that hearing of a Counselor might lead them to expect another incarnation and to think that they would be able to see the Holy Spirit, he corrected this idea by saying: *The world cannot receive him because it does not see him.* For he will not be with you in the same way as I am, but will dwell in your very souls, *He will be in you.*

Christ called him the Spirit of truth because the Spirit would help them to understand the types of the old Law. By *He will be with you* he meant, *He will be with you as I am with you*, but he also hinted at the difference

between them, namely, that the Spirit would not suffer as he had done, nor would he ever depart.

The world cannot receive him because it does not see him. Does this imply that the Spirit is visible? By no means; Christ is speaking here of knowledge, for he adds: *or know him*. Sight being the sense by which we perceive things most distinctly, he habitually used this sense to signify knowledge. By *the world* he means here the wicked, thus giving his disciples the consolation of receiving a special gift. He said that the Spirit was another like himself, that he would not leave them, that he would come to them just as he himself had come, and that he would remain in them. Yet even this did not drive away their sadness, for they still wanted Christ himself and his companionship. So to satisfy them he said: *I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you*. Do not be afraid, for when I promised to send you another counselor I did not mean that I was going to abandon you for ever, nor by saying he would remain with you did I mean that I would not see you again. Of course I also will come to you; *I will not leave you orphans*.

[1](#)Journey with the Fathers – Year A – New City Press – 1999 – pg 66

5/18/20

A Reading from an Easter Sermon of Pope St Leo the Great.¹

Though we once knew Christ according to the flesh, we now do so no longer. The resurrection of the Lord did not mean the end of his flesh, but its transformation, and his bodily substance was not consumed by its increase in power. The quality changed, but the nature did not pass away. What could die became immortal, what could be harmed became incorruptible. And so he says correctly that he no longer knows the body of Christ in its former state, because there remains nothing in it subject to suffering or to weakness. It remains essentially human, but surpasses itself through the glory of the resurrection. It is not surprising that Paul says this of the body of Christ, when he says about Christians who live according to the Spirit, *From now on, we know no one according to the flesh.* From now on, he says, resurrection in Christ has begun in us; from Christ who died for all comes the shape of all our hope. We do not hold back through diffidence, nor are we held in suspense through uncertainty: we have received the beginnings of what we are promised, and see already with the eyes of faith the things that will be ours. Rejoicing in the lifting up of our nature, we possess already all that we believe.

Therefore, let us not be taken up by the appearances of things that pass, nor let things which are merely of this earth turn our thoughts from the things of heaven. Let us take as passing those things which have even now scarcely any reality; and with our minds intent on those that endure, let us fix our desire there where what is offered is eternal. For though we are saved only in hope, and carry with us still our corruptible and mortal body, yet we rightly claim to be no longer in the flesh if carnal passions do not rule us: rightly do we disclaim allegiance to something which no longer holds us in its power. And so when the Apostle says: *"Make no provision for the flesh, to follow its desires,* we understand that he has not forbidden

¹*Sermo de Resurrectione Domini* I. --nn 4-5; SC, Vol 74, pp 125-126.

those things consistent with our bodily health, or those demanded by human weakness. But in that we are not to cater to all our desires, or fulfill all that the flesh covets, we recognize that he has warned us to observe a certain measure of temperance, that the flesh, which is created subject to the soul, is not given too much, nor is denied what is necessary.

5/19/20

TM-EST08

THE UNBOUNDED LOVE OF GOD LAVISHED UPON US THROUGH CHRIST'S VICTORY, from the book Seasons of Celebration by Thomas Merton²

If we look carefully at the famous contrast made by St Paul between the "law of God in his mind" and "the law of sin in his body" we will see a little more in it than just these two. It is true, St Paul says he is "delighted with God's law according to the inner man," with his "mind he serves the law of God but with his lower nature the law which allures him to sin"(Rom 7:22ff). Ordinarily this text is not interpreted fully. Very often for instance, we take it to mean that there is nothing else for us but to accept this inevitable conflict, to try to keep the law of God in spite of the bias of concupiscence that draws us toward sin. To accept the conflict in a spirit of Christian resignation is all that is required of us as Christians.

Do we not see that this leaves us purely and simply captives of the Law? If this is all there is to it, then Christ's victory is not complete in our lives. There is a third possibility, and this is the right one. It is the grace of God in Christ our Lord or, to be more succinct, *it is Christ himself in us*. It is our new life in Christ. By our life of love and hope in Christ we rise above the dilemma and thus resolve it. The Christian solution is not merely to continue struggling against temptation in order to live according to the Law. This is nothing new. It is exactly what had to be done before the coming of Christ. The Christian is no longer bound by the law of the flesh, and he is no longer obliged in a spirit of fear to keep the Law of God considered as a formal code imposed on him from without.

He may still be tempted by the flesh. He resists temptation and is saved not by various practices and stratagems but *by the spiritual force of love itself, and of the new life that is in him*. He lives by the "Spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead," and by that Spirit he "puts to death the deeds prompted by the animal instincts, and so lives. (Rom 8:11,13) In other words, it is not dutiful observance that keeps us from sin, but

²SEASONS OF CELEBRATION, Thomas Merton (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, NY 1965) pp. 155-157.

something far greater: it is love. And this love is not something which we develop by our own powers alone. It is a sublime gift of the divine mercy, and the fact that we live in realization of this mercy and this gift is the greatest source of growth for our love and for our holiness.

This gift, this mercy, this unbounded love of God for us has been lavished upon us as a result of Christ's victory. To taste this love is to share in his victory. To realize our freedom, to exult in our liberation from death, from sin and from the Law, is to sing the *Alleluia* which truly glorifies God in this world and in the world to come.

1. Seasons of Celebration –Thomas Merton – Farrar, Straus,= NY – pg 155-

TM-EST11

05.20.20

A Reading about our Redemption in Christ, from *The Eternal Year* by Karl Rahner.³

We children of the earth may love the earth; we must love her, even when she terrifies us and makes us tremble with her misery and her destiny of death. For ever since Christ, through his death and resurrection, penetrated the earth for all time, her misery has become provisional and a mere test of our faith in her innermost mystery, which is the risen One himself. Our experience does not tell us that he is the mysterious meaning of her misery; by no means! It is our faith that tells us this. The faith that offers blessed consolation to all that we experience in life, the faith that can love the earth because she is, or is in the process of becoming, the "body" of the risen One. We do not need to leave her, for the life of God dwells in her. When we want both the God of infinity (how can we help wanting him?) and the familiar earth, as it is and as it shall become, when we want both for our eternally free homeland, there is *one* path to *both!* For in the resurrection of the Lord, God has shown that he has accepted the earth for all time. *Caro cardo salutis*, said one of the Fathers of the Church in an untranslatable play on words: the flesh is the hinge of salvation.

The hereafter to every exigency of sin and death is not somewhere in the life hereafter; it has come down to us and lives in the innermost reality of our flesh. The most sublime religiosity of seclusion from the world would not fetch the God of our life and the salvation of this earth from the distance of his eternity; and it would not even reach him in his world. But he himself has come to us. And he has transformed what we are and what

³The Eternal Year, Helicon Press: Baltimore MD 1964. pp.93-95.

we still want to consider as the gloomy, earthly dwelling place of our "spiritual nature": he has transformed *the flesh*. Ever since that event, mother earth bears nothing but transformed children. For his resurrection is the beginning of the resurrection of all flesh.

One thing, of course, is necessary for this event - which we can never undo - to become the blessedness of our existence: he must burst forth from the grave of our hearts. He must rise from the core of our being, where he is as power and promise. He is there, and yet something remains to be done. He is there, yet it is still Holy Saturday, and it will continue to be Holy Saturday until the last day, until that day that will be the cosmic Easter. And this rising takes place beneath the freedom of our faith. It is taking place as an event of living faith that draws us into the colossal eruption of all earthly reality into its own glorification, the splendid transfiguration that has already begun with the resurrection of Christ.

1. The Eternal Year by Karl Rahner – Helicon Press – Baltimore, MD – 1965 – pg 93-95

A reading about the joy of Easter, from a sermon by Blessed Gueric of Igny.⁴

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. 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 may clearly know 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 all our affections that, unmindful and forgetful of ourselves, we have no feeling for anything but Jesus Christ and what pertains to him, then, I say, love has been made perfect in us. To one who so loves, poverty is no burden, no hurt is felt, insults are to be laughed at, misfortune disdained, and death considered as gain. In fact one does not think in terms of death knowing that death is a passage to life. And one can confidently assert: I will go and see him before I die.

⁴ *Liturgical Sermons* (CS 32), vol. 2, Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971, pp. 84-85.

Although, my brethren, we have not been endowed with such a great purity of conscience, let us, nevertheless, go to see Jesus journeying to the mountain of 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 Christ you will take your rest. A 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.@ May he who calls you lead you to where he lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, through endless ages. Amen.

TM-EST35
05/22/20

Witnesses of the Resurrection. From a Sermon by John Henry Newman⁵

It might have been expected that, on our Savior's rising again from the dead, He would have shown Himself to very great numbers of people, and especially to those who crucified Him; whereas we know from history that, far from this being the case, He showed Himself only to chosen witnesses, chiefly His immediate followers; and St. Peter states this in Acts. This seems at first sight strange. We are apt to fancy the resurrection of Christ as some striking visible display of His glory, such as God showed from time to time to the Israelites in Moses' day; and considering it in the light of a public triumph, we are led to imagine the confusion and terror which would have overwhelmed His murderers had He presented Himself alive before **them**. Now, to reason in this way is to conceive Christ's kingdom of **this** world, which it is not; and to suppose that then Christ came to judge the world, whereas that judgment will not be till the last day, when in very deed those wicked men **shall** "look on Him whom they have pierced".

After His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples, "Go, convert all nations". This was His special charge. If, then, there are grounds for thinking that, by showing Himself to a few rather than to many, He was more surely advancing this great object, the propagation of the Gospel, this is sufficient reason for our Lord's having so ordained.

Now consider what would have been the probable effect of a public exhibition of His resurrection. Let us suppose that our Savior had shown Himself as openly as before He suffered: preaching in the Temple and in the streets of the city; traversing the land with His Apostles, and with multitudes following to see the miracles which He did. What would have been the effect of this? Of course, what it had already been. His former miracles had not effectively moved the body of the people; and, doubtless, this miracle too would have left them as it found them, or worse than before. They might have been more startled at the time; but why should this amazement last? When the man taken with a palsy was suddenly

⁵Parochial and Plain Sermons. John Henry Newman. Ignatius Press. 1987. p. 179

restored at His word, the multitude were all amazed and glorified God, and were filled with fear saying, "We have seen strange things this day." What **could** they have said and felt more than this, when "one rose from the dead"? In truth, this is the way of most people in all ages, to be influenced by sudden fears, sudden contrition, sudden earnestness, sudden resolves, which disappear just as suddenly. Nothing is accomplished effectively through untrained human nature; and such is always the condition of the multitude. Unstable as water, it cannot excel. One day it cried Hosanna; the next, Crucify Him. And, had our Lord appeared to them **after** they had crucified Him, of course they would have shouted Hosanna once more; yet when He had ascended out of sight, then again they would have persecuted His followers. Even when He appeared on a mountain in Galilee to His disciples and others (perhaps the five hundred brethren mentioned by St. Paul), "**some doubted**" whether it were He. How could it be otherwise? these had no means of ascertaining that they really saw **Him** who had been crucified, dead and buried. Others, admitting it was Jesus, would have denied that He ever died. This would be sufficient excuse to those who **wished** not to believe. - over -

Surely so it would have been; the chief priests would not have been moved at all; and the populace, even though they had been moved at the time, would not have been moved in a lasting way, nor in a practical way, so as to proclaim to the world what they had heard and seen, as to preach the gospel. The very reason **why** Christ showed Himself at all was in order to raise up **witnesses** to His resurrection, ministers of His word, founders of His Church; and how in the nature of things could a populace ever become such?

TM-EST36
05/23/20

He is Risen II. From a Book by Thomas Merton.⁶

The risen life is not easy; it is also a dying life. The presence of the Resurrection in our lives means the presence of the Cross, for we do not rise with Christ unless we also first die with him. It is by the Cross that we enter the dynamism of creative transformation, the dynamism of resurrection and renewal, the dynamism of love. The teaching of St. Paul is centered entirely on the Resurrection. How many Christians really understand what St. Paul is talking about when he tells us that we have "died to the Law" in order to rise with Christ? How many Christians dare to believe that whoever is risen with Christ enjoys the liberty of the sons and daughters of God and is not bound by the restrictions and taboos of human prejudice?

To be risen with Christ means not only that one has **a choice** and that one **may** live by a higher law - the law of grace and love - but that one **must** do so. The first obligation of the Christian is to maintain their freedom from all superstitions, all blind taboos and religious formalities, indeed from all empty forms of legalism. Read the Epistle to the Galatians again sometime. Read it in the light of the Church's summons to complete renewal.

The Christian must have the courage to follow Christ. The Christian who is risen in Christ must dare to be like Christ: one must dare to follow conscience even in unpopular causes. One must, if necessary, be able to disagree with the majority and make decisions one knows to be according to the Gospel and teaching of Christ, even when others do not understand why the person is acting this way.

"The followers of Christ are called by God not according to their accomplishments, but according to God's own purpose and grace." This statement from the Constitution on the Church of Vatican II effectively disposes of a Christian inferiority complex which makes people think that because they never have amounted to anything in the eyes of others, they can never amount to anything in the eyes of God. Here again we see

⁶He is Risen. Thomas Merton. Argus Communications. 1975. p.18

another aspect of St. Paul's teaching on freedom. Too many Christians are not free because they submit to the domination of other people's ideas. They submit passively to the opinions of the crowd. For self-protection they hide in the crowd, and run along with the crowd - even when it turns into a lynch mob. They are afraid of the aloneness, the moral nakedness, which they feel apart from the crowd.

But the Christian in whom Christ is risen dares to think and act differently from the crowd. He has ideas of his own, not because he is arrogant, but because he has the humility to stand alone and pay attention to the purpose and the grace of God, which are often quite contrary to the purposes and the plans of an established human power structure. If we have risen with Christ then we must dare to stand by him in the loneliness of his Passion, when the entire establishment, both religious and civil, turned against him as a modern state would turn against a dangerous radical. In fact, there **were** "dangerous radicals" among the Apostles. If we study the trial and execution of Jesus we find that he was condemned on the charge that he was a revolutionary, a subversive radical, fighting for the overthrow of legitimate government. This was not true in the political sense. Jesus stood entirely outside of all Jewish politics, because his Kingdom was not of this world. And yet he was a "freedom fighter" in a different way. His death and resurrection were the culminating battle in his fight to liberate us from **all** forms of tyranny, **all** forms of domination by anything or anyone except the Spirit, the Law of Love, the "purpose and grace" of God.