



The Meditation

Third Sunday in Lent -A.D. 2016



Jesus casting out a devil from the dumb man
(from the Gospel for the Day)

Illuminated page from a 12th cent. Evangelarium (Gospel-Book)

The Collect for the Third Sunday in Lent

A *lmighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Lord pity me; I have no strength left

This up-coming week is the third week of Lent and the Gradual prayer for Wednesday echoes the collect for today in a very personal way. The words of the Psalmist could be our own words. *“Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me.” - Psalm 6.*

Those people who know themselves and know their own weaknesses; know by experience that, their good resolutions notwithstanding, they will still commit the same faults. This is a fact that shouldn't surprise nor trouble us...not less discourage us. Rather, it should *humble us* before God and make us put our trust in Him more and more. It is He, after all, who sanctifies us. We don't sanctify ourselves, by ourselves (despite some contemporary 'theologians' who think otherwise!). We must learn the art of profiting from our faults. It is then that we shall make rapid strides towards perfection.

Self-knowledge is as difficult as it is necessary. It's so easy for us to see the little speck that's in our neighbor's eye, and yet so difficult to see that large rough-cut beam that is in our own! (see. Matthew; Ch. 7, Vss. 1-5.) Unless one admits that they are sick and needs God's healing, they will never attain the higher degrees of perfection and closer union with God. It can be said that *pride* stands in the way of having self-knowledge, and often its *pride* that serves as that large beam which prevents us from even seeing that we are sick and helpless. It is little wonder that it is included among the Seven Deadly Sins!

Self-knowledge lies at the base of all virtue, because it is the source of humility, without which no one can approach God, nor receive His grace. It is slowly born within us by the contemplation of God's greatness and our own nothingness. Those for whom God is as He was for St. Benedict, the most Holy, the All-good, from Whom that which is good comes and without whom nothing good exists, will be able to pray with him as humble St. Francis did: *“Who art thou, Lord, and who am I? Thou art my God and my All. I am a poor sinner, an earthworm, your servant.”*

There are many, says St. Bernard of Clairveaux, who have a great knowledge of many things but do not know themselves; they look at others, but never look at themselves. He wrote in a letter warning Pope Eugenius: *“Look first at yourself; do not neglect yourself or your care for others will be of no use. He who considers himself, his conduct towards God and his neighbor, his innermost feelings and desires, his yearning for pleasure and his horror of sacrifice and effort, the attraction that evil has for him and his sluggishness in all that is good, even if his given word obliges him to strive after what is best, realizes his spiritual misery and sees that of himself he can do nothing good... strong yet inspired words directed to a pontiff, but words of admonishment for every Christian: clergy or lay-folk, to be inwardly digested.*

3.

Perhaps St. Bernard was inspired by St. Paul when he wrote to the Romans: *“The law as we know, is something spiritual: I am a thing of flesh and blood, sold into the slavery of sin. My own actions bewilder me; what I do is not what I wish to do, but something which I hate. Why then, if what I do is something I have no wish to do, I thereby admit that the law is worthy of all honor; meanwhile, my action does not come from me, but from the sinful principle that dwells in me, that is, in my natural self; praiseworthy intentions are always ready at hand, but I cannot find my way to the performance of them; it is not the good my will prefers, but the evil my will disapproves, that I find myself doing. - Romans; Chap. 7, Vss. 14-19. - (excerpted from the Latin Vulgate translation for clarity.)*

Is it not in this struggle between good and evil, that lack of success, despite the good will intended, that makes our lives a tragedy? We are all sick and broken in one degree or another. We are all in need of God’s mercy. Shouldn’t we join with the great Apostle and say: *“O pitiable creature that I am, who is to set me free from the nature thus doomed to death? Nothing else than the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom.; Ch. 7, Vss 24 & 25) - again, from the Vulgate translation for clarity.*

It is on Christ that all our hope is based. We know through faith that we shall triumph eventually by the power of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It will free us from the body of this death, and from *all* our sinful desires, and make us heirs of God, co-heirs of Christ, free to share in *“The glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. Ch. 8, Vs. 21).* We will never be discouraged by our faults and daily imperfections if we trust, *not to our own strength, but to God’s mercy and His compassion for our weakness.*

The Christian faith is unlike any other, in that it is a faith anchored in *Hope*. We are saved by hope; *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why yet doeth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Romans; Ch. 8, Vss. 24 & 25).* We will fall into the abyss of despair if we lose hope, and say along with Cain: *“Guilt like mine is too great to find forgiveness.” (Gen.: Ch. 4, Vs. 13) - from the Vulgate trans.* Discouragement comes either from exaggeration of our own weaknesses or a lack of trust in God’s mercy or both. The struggle will continue, but no defeat is irrevocable. *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” – (Phil.; Ch. 4, Vs. 13).* Here indeed is a statement of hope!

Let us never fail to give praise to the Lord; because his mercy is eternal; because He has said to us no matter how great our sins, they are forgiven to those who love completely. It would be better for us to die than to offend Jesus deliberately, but if we do fall, may we lose everything rather than our hope and trust in Him. Let us in our Lenten prayers (and always) as our Blessed Lord tries to teach us, to hate sin, and like all true penitents, strive all the more to hope and trust, and to always show our love for Him!

“My beloved Jesus, I embrace all the tribulations You have destined for me to undergo until death. I beg You by the merits of the pain You suffered in carrying Your Cross, to give me the necessary help to carry mine with perfect patience and resignation. I love You Jesus my love, I repent of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to separate myself from Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always; and then do with me as Thou wilt.”

-St. Alphonsus Ligouri; from The Way of the Cross

From the Fathers of the Church
St. John Chrysostom

Envy: An evil without consolation; “There is no evil which can be compared to the state of *envy*. Those who are impure at least find some pleasure in their sin and it lasts a short while; the envious man torments himself rather than the person he envies and lives perpetually in his guilt. As pigs roll in the mire and as the devil rejoices in our evil, so does the envious man, only resting when he sees evil overcome those he envies with sadness, finding his pleasure in the harm suffered by others and his evil in their good.

Envy : How to avoid it: Is there anyone who does not know that envy is an evil thing? Yes, all know it, but the majority thinks that it cannot be compared with fornication, for example, or adultery... Who accuses himself of envy? Who pleads with God to have mercy on him for this fault? No one. . . Consider that you do no harm to the person you envy; you merely turn the sword against yourself. Did Cain harm Abel? No. He merely sent him straight to heaven, while he heaped evils upon himself.”

- ex. fr P.G. : Patrologia Graeca Vols . 47-64

The Meditation is an on-line apostolate of **Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory** in Raymond, Maine. We are Anglo-Catholic Benedictine contemplative community that follows the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, the Father of Western monasticism. We are affiliated within the Diocese of the Northeast of the Anglican Church in America (ACA), a member of the worldwide Traditional Anglican Communion.

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In respect to our contemplative vocation and the animals in our rescue and rehab center, we do not have guest facilities and do not receive visitors during the winter months.

Fr. Prior Kevin is always available to hear Lenten confessions by appointment.

Visit our Webpage at: www.ourladyofsevensorrows.org



“Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.” Ps. 123

Priory Kalendar

For the week of February 28th to - March 6th A.D. 2016

In Lent

Sunday, February 28th **Third Sunday in Lent – Great Litany sung at Mass today.**
Monday, February 29th *feria in Lent*fast
Tuesday, March 1st *feria in Lent*..... *comm St. David; B. & C.*.....fast
Wednesday, March 2nd *feria in Lent*..... *comm St. Chad; B. & C.*fast & Abstinence
Thursday, March 3rd *feria in Lent*..... *comm St. Aelred; Ab*.....fast
Friday, March 4th **St. Casmir; C.**.....fast & Abstinence
Saturday, March 5th *feria in Lent*.....fast
Sunday, March 6th **Fourth Sunday in Lent: Laetare/Rose/Refreshment Sunday** **note 1**

Note 1: **Sunday March 6th is Latare Sunday**; also called *Rose, Refreshment, & Mothering Sunday*.
We are half-way through Lent, and today Holy Mother Church allows us to take a break from our fasting and mortifications. We can eat “refreshingly” ...enjoy those little things that will according to our consciences allow us to resume our Lenten Fast and Abstinenes with renewed ardor the following day and set our sights on joining the great Celebration that comes on Easter Day!

CALENDAR KEY

Ab. = Abbot, Abs. = Abbess, Abp. = Archbishop, Anc. = Anchorite, Ancs. = anchoress, Ap. = Apostle, Bl. = Blessed, Br. = Brother, Bp. = Bishop, Card. = Cardinal, C. or Conf. = Confessor, Comm. = Commemoration, Dcn. = Deacon, Doct. = Doctor of the Church, Ev. = Evangelist, H. = Hermit, LBr. = Laybrother, LSr. = Laysister, K. = King, Mat. = Matron, M. = Monk, **M.M. = Month's Mind (30 day requiem for the recently departed)**, Myr. = Martyr, N. – Nun, Obl. = Oblate, P. = Priest, P. or Po. = Pope, Pr. = Prior, Prs. = Prioress, R. = Recluse, **RM = Requiem Mortorum, (monthly requiem of the departed)**, Q. = Queen, Ven. = Venerable, Vir. = Virgin, W. = Widow.

FASTING Key: **A = Abstinence, F = Fast, F & A = Fast and Abstinence**

RELIGIOUS ORDERS: C.O. = Congregation of the Oratory –Oratorians, C.P = Congregation of the Passion – Passionists, C.S.J. = Congregation of the Society of Jesus – Jesuits, Er. Cam. = Camaldolese Hermits, F.P.O. = Franciscans of the Primitive Observance, O. Car. = Carmelite Order, O. Cart. = Carthusian Order, O.C.D. = Order of Discalced Friars = Carmelites, O.F.A. = Augustinian Order, O.F.M. = Order of Friars Minor – Franciscans, O.F.M. Cap. = Capuchins, O.P. = Order of Preachers = Dominicans (Blackfriars), O. Praem. = Order of Canons Regular – Norbertines (White Monks), OS.B. = Order of St. Benedict – Benedictines, O.S.U = Ursulines, O.C.O. = Order of the Cistercian Observance – Trappists, O.C.S.O. = Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance = Trappists.

Animal News from the Priory

What a Difference a Year Makes!



Left: February 2015: One of the first times that Jack let Sr. Mary Francis get close to him as he took his supper on the back porch.



Right: February 2016: “The king basking on his throne!” Jack warming himself up on the front enclosed porch, coming and going as he pleases. His heated dorm room, where he now spends winter nights, is just below.

A Lesson in Gratitude

One of the things that we see over and over with the animals that come to us is ultimately how grateful they each are. We all know that perfect puppies and kittens from breeders and pet stores are adorable, but we also see that when these animals are raised in a home, especially one of extravagance, they become entitled like many of our children these days. They have never missed a meal or been cold or known any misfortune. They expect to be fed on time and when done eating they burp and walk away. An animal that has been abused or neglected never assumes that the next meal will be there, that where they are sleeping now will be their bed forever. The “least of these” when, and if you can regain their trust, are ALWAYS grateful and demonstrate that at every opportunity in whichever mode they are able to let you know. There are trusting eyes, wagging tails, lapping kisses, rubs and head bumps. The large animals have their ways to express their thanks as well and are so grateful for even the smallest kindness and morsel of food. I think this is a great Lenten lesson for us all. We all have so much to be grateful for even in our darkest moments and yet we all take so much for granted. We are grateful for these exceptional animals that we care for, inspired by them as they have all overcome substantial odds and thank God for the lessons that they continue to teach us each day.

Sr. Mary Francis, O.S.B.



