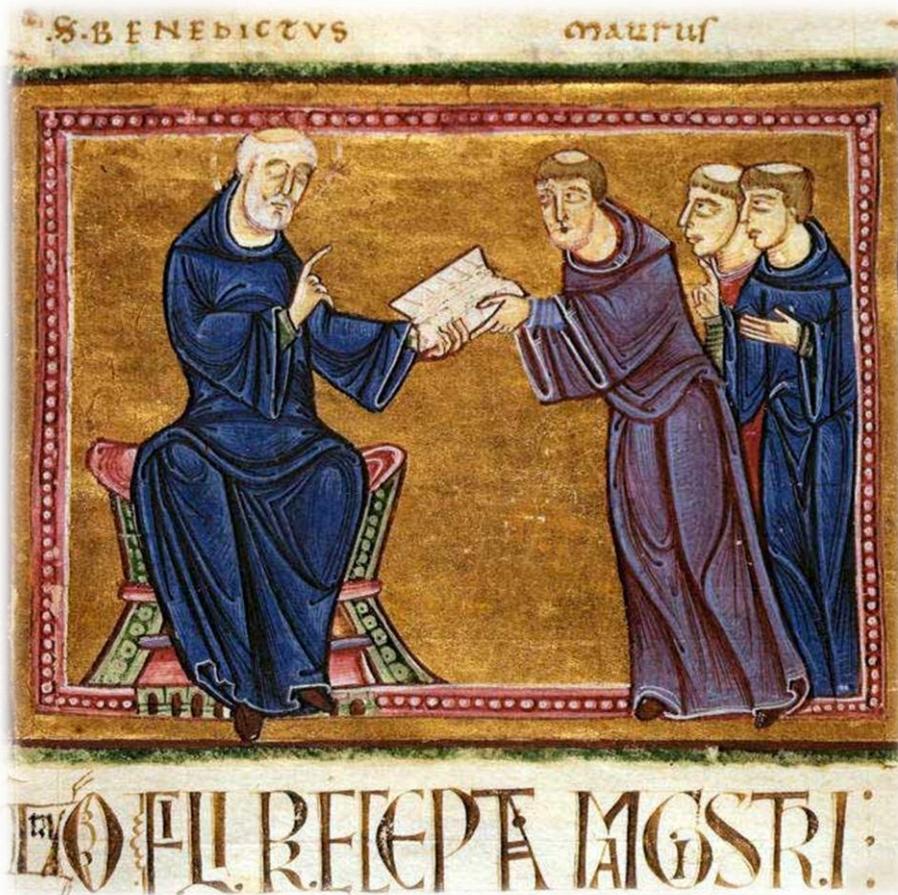


'ORA ET LABORA'

The Meditation

The Fourth Sunday after Easter - A.D. 2016



St. Benedict giving the holy Rule to St. Maurus and the Brothers
Illuminated manuscript – Monastery of St. Giles; Nîmes, France 1129

The Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Easter

O *ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise ; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

LET US BE SLOW TO SPEAK

Among the *Propers* for this Sunday's Mass is a reading from the Epistle of St. James, "*the brother the Lord*", the mystic and man of action. His contemplation echoes in our daily lives; purely and practically. His doctrine is indeed a form of union with God. He is a master of the Scriptures, for him, word and deed are one in the same, and his actions are a part of his contemplation.

His lessons center chiefly on faith and brotherly charity, the two great subjects of Christ's own teaching. He insists especially on the virtue of *silence*, when He speaks of brotherly love, and is in every respect, an example of what he preaches. St. James is known for his words, which are so short, but are so full of truth and sense.

There is not one of our religious observances in the contemplative life, which we can practice more effectively and which keeps our minds more fixed on God, than *silence*, which both demands and increases the act of recollection. The person seeking to sanctify themselves in small things would do well to try it.

We know only too well that we don't always speak deliberately. We're all, more or less, (for lack of better description) . . . babblers! The fact is that we are, as a species, not sufficiently intelligent enough to keep silence. We often fall victim to our nerves and emotions. Our wills are more often than not too weak, and too untrained, to enable us to always maintain control of our tongues. One only has to take a drive in heavy traffic, to realize the truth in this! The motive must come before the will with us, and the motive for silence is the very same as that which animates the whole of our practice of the Christian Religion. The one who knows why they keep silence . . . will keep it more easily. We must discipline ourselves not to yield to our weaknesses, and it's useless to deny that we don't have them BUT, we can overcome these weaknesses by the grace of Almighty God.

Clearly, it's not possible for our Apostle to maintain continual silence, for it was his God-given vocation to carry God's Message to the world. Speaking for sufficient and above all, supernatural reasons however, is a much different thing from chattering on in order to satisfy the itch to speak, or, worse yet, be noticed, and considered to be 'someone'!

A contemplative religious can be pleasant and friendly with outsiders, and yet not lose his or her interior silence which, passing through the spoken word, puts the conversationalist into contact with the religious to whom they are talking. The person who talks merely because they want to talk can be very amusing and make themselves liked, but will lose that which should characterize that person. They forget their consecration, and therefore cease to be for others, an honest sign of God's presence.

3.

There is a wonderful passage in Holy Scripture that speaks of the virtuous woman: “*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.*” (Proverbs; Ch. 31, Vs. 26) and also, “*The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.*” (Prov.; Ch. 16, Vss. 23 & 24).

“*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*” (St. James; Ch. 1, Vs. 19). This is James the mystic who is speaking here, and is bidding us to listen to God, and be receptive to His word, rather than to speak ourselves. **The person who speaks cannot listen**, and the person who does not listen receives **nothing**. We must be “ready to listen” to whatever God says to us or in us, but we must be slow to speak, lest by our inattention, our frivolity, our self-complacency, our perceived self-importance . . . we fail to hear God’s voice.

Perhaps no one better understood the value of silence than the French Carmelite nun, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity (1880 – 1906), whose one ascetic practice was an immersion in silence. Her biographer wrote: “*The love of silence leads to the silence of love.*” Sister Elizabeth herself wrote: “*I keep silence, that I may listen to Him. It is so good to hear nothing but Him.*” So through exterior silence she reaches the interior, the silence of the faculties: sight, understanding, imagination, and will.

She wrote I one of her final retreats, “*I will keep my strength to thee*” (Psalm 58, Vs. 10 - from the Douai version) “*and my rule tells me that to keep it is to keep strength for the Lord, making unity in my whole being, gathering all my faculties together in one single act of love.*” And elsewhere she writes, “*When the Creator sees silence reigning in his creature, when he sees her interior solitude, he is enchanted with her beauty. He gives her entry to the infinite solitude, the wide place of which the Prophet sang, and which is nothing less than Himself.*”

Our Lord Jesus was conceived in silence in the blessed womb of Mother Mary, and in silence she bore Him in her pregnancy. Jesus is the Father’s one word which contains all things. He is in us . . . let us humbly ask Blessed Mary to teach us to bear Him just as she did! Let us fix our hearts upon Jesus Christ, in Whom true joys will be found!



“*It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.*” - Lamentations; Ch 3, Vs. 26

From the Fathers of the Church

The Regula Magistri - The Rule of the Master anonymous author - 6th cent.

Chap. VIII. What Should Be the Mode and Measure of the Disciples' Silence

“The Lord has replied through the master:

The structure of the human race is our poor little body. Although it is small in stature and in some of the taller men reaches a height of scarcely five feet from the ground – oh, the emptiness of boasting, every man living! Despite its littleness, it thinks that by its wisdom it can measure the height of the sky and the breath of the earth. So, knowing we are weak vessels made of the earth's slime and, so to speak, clods of dirt thrown up from the earth for a short time only to fall back again into their furrow, let us as dust of the earth be made humble and admit what we are.

Therefore the flesh of our poor little body is a sort of lodging for the soul, assigned to the service of life as a sheath serves for the sword. We hold that the soul has its seat fixed in the root of the heart. This root has two main branches in the body, and these are very susceptible to sin. The one we may think of as a physical wall with windows through which the soul, with the eyes as the apertures, looks out, and we know that it is always inviting from within what it desires.

In the other branch the soul echoes in us what the heart has conceived and produced, bringing it by means of the tongue to the birth of speech, so that, issuing through the door of the mouth, it demands to be heard by the others. And whatever stirs and moves in us is the soul acting in the body.

On the other hand, it follows that when the soul leaves its dwelling, everything that was done in the living man by the now-departed soul ceases in the dead man. Soon its dead clod is returned to the earth, man's dust reverts to the nature of dust. Man is buried in a grave, the grave is filled in again, his dust takes on again the quality of a dirt road. It is thus evident that this is the same dust that was in the man when he was alive, that it was held up by the firmness of the soul, and that it was temporarily transformed for transitory life. Therefore when the soul's firmness in us departs, the dust of our body cannot remain erect; falling back into its proper nature, the earth buries in its bosom the creature which it had engendered.

So, if this soul in us activates the seeing of the eyes, the speaking of the mouth, the hearing of the ears, and, because it will someday be called to account by its maker, desires to obey the will of God and while in this life to serve under his command, it must close the windows of the eyes and its cravings and lower its gaze, fixing it on the ground. It must do this so that it does not see evil; when our eyes are cast down, the soul will not yearn for whatever it sees.

Thus, our soul has in place its door the mouth, and its lock, the teeth, which it closes to depraved speech so the soul may not offer the excuse that its maker did not in any way provide it with defenses for its protection. In other words, when some sin arises from the root of the heart it perishes there as a miscarriage and is dashed upon the rock while yet young instead of being born of the tongue and growing up to be punished.

5.

As to the other branches of our body which are subject to the rule of the heart, they are easily restrained from sin, that is, touching with the hands, and walking with the feet, because shackling in chains holds the thief in check, and fear of judgement the murderer, and hobbling restrains the fugitive.

Therefore, the three faculties we referred to above, that is, *thought, speech, and sight*, must be very carefully kept under guard so that as soon as an evil thought takes hold of the mind, the brethren should immediately sign themselves on the forehead, and the breast too, and not delay in recalling the precepts of Christ. And let the brother say to himself with the prophet: *“I remembered God and was consoled.”* (Ps.77:3 & Ps. 119:52). And again he says: *“By you I shall be delivered from temptation, and by the help of my God /I shall leap over the wall.”*(Ps. 18: 29).

But if negligence has put angry or depraved or vain speech into the mouth, the brother, immediately closing his mouth and sealing it with the sign of the Cross, will say to himself in his heart, speaking with the prophet: *I said, “I will watch my ways, so as not my sin with my tongue; I will set a curb on my mouth.” “I remained silent and was profoundly humbled, and I refrained from saying even good things.”* (Ps. 39:1 & 39:3).

In other words, the prophet shows that if at times one should refrain from good speech for the sake of silence, much more should one avoid evil words because of punishment for sin. Therefore, although permission to engage in good and holy and edifying conversation may be granted to perfect disciple, though rarely because of the dignity of silence, brothers who have not been asked anything should suppress in silence talk of any other kind until the curb on their muted mouth has been removed by a question from the abbot.

To repeat, silence must be most carefully kept by the brothers because; *“Where words are many, sin is not wanting.”* (Prov.; 10:19). Therefore *‘death and life are in the power of the tongue.’* (Prov. 19:21).

It befits the master to speak and to teach; the disciple should be silent and listen.” *

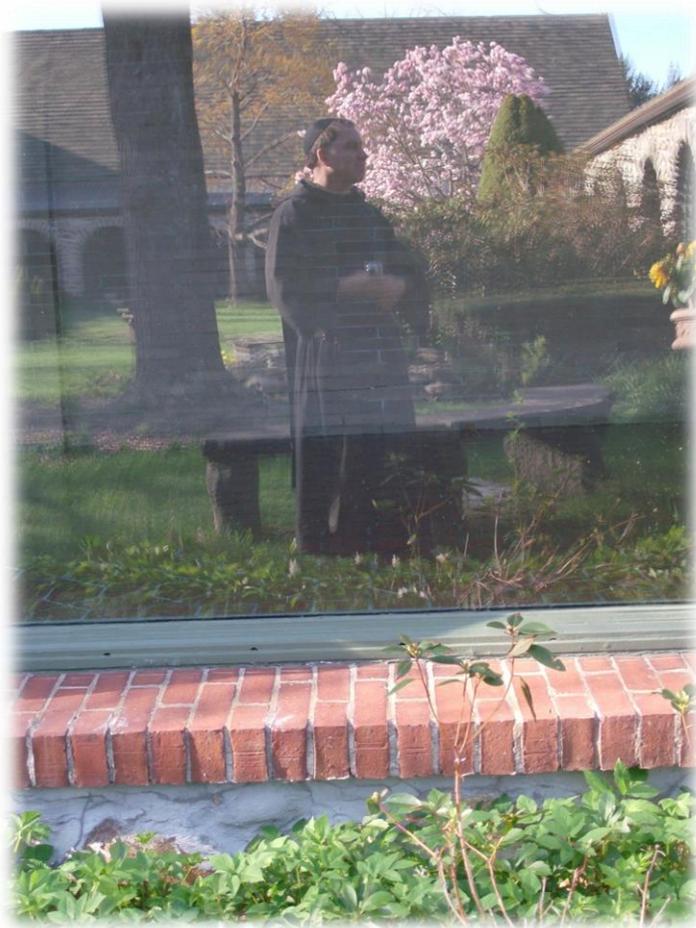
Blending Eschatology with Asceticism, this passage is very strong medicine, and a serious ‘reality check’ for the Contemplative Monastic . . . as well as the practicing Christian of the gravity of guarding their thoughts as well as their tongues, in their journey to eternal perfection. – fr. k.l.l. +

**The Rule of the Master was a collection of monastic precepts written in the 6th century by an unknown author. Written only a decade or two before the Holy Rule of St. Benedict, this work was originally found in the Concordia Regularum, a collection of works by St. Benedict of Anaine (747 – 821), a Benedictine monk who served in clerical duties in the Court of Charlemagne, Emperor of the Franks. He was an influential figure in the monastic organization within the Frankish Empire.*

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

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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.



Silent Reflections

Fr. Kevin at St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer MA.

Priory Kalendar

For the week of
April 24th to May 1st - A.D. 2016
Easter - tide

Sunday, April 24th Fourth Sunday after Easter

Monday, April 25th St. Mark; *Ev. Ap. & Myr. 1st cent.*

Tuesday, April 26th *feria in Easter tide*

Wednesday, April 27th . . St. Peter Canisius; *C. & Doct. 16th cent. Holland & Germany*

Thursday, April 28th . St. Paul of the Cross; *Conf. & Founder – Passionist Order 18th cent.*

Friday, April 29th St. Peter Martyr, O.P. : *13th cent. Italy*

Saturday, April 30th . . . St. Catherine of Sienna; *O.P. & mystic – 14th cent. Italy*

Sunday, May 1st 5th Sunday after Easter – Rogation Sunday

Animal News from the Priory

It is officially “mud season” here in Maine and the horses are helping in the shedding of their winter coats with extensive splashing in puddles and rolling in the mud. They come into their stalls at the end of each day with a fresh layer of the lovely muck caked on their coats. They are brushed nearly every day but seem to treasure their spa treatments in the mud bath most of all! Happy Spring!



8.

Oliver's Birthday is on Saturday. He will be 19 and loves to lay in the sun. He was brought to us when he was about 5 or so after having been abused by young boys who liked to throw rocks at him and hit him with sticks which would scare him. Oliver has string halt which is a condition where an animal's hock freeze up when they move suddenly making the leg stick out to the side until it lets go and returns to a normal position. It is especially dangerous for the horse going through doorways as they can get stuck and panic breaking bones or when they are backing up as there is no leg to stand on at that moment. The abusers thought that this was funny. Oliver has lived here in a stress free environment ever since and is now good for the farrier (hoof trimmer) and the vet too.



Jack, our 'greeter', 'watch-cat', and 'varment control officer' is now back out living in his 'summer pad' in the hay-storage area. He's already surveyed his domain and has begun his duties catching moles and mice that wander too near. He enjoys meeting our few visitors and likes a pat on the head. We've discerned that he must have been abused at some point in his life, as he does not like being patted on the back or near his tail. We think he may have been kicked around, as sometimes his walking gait is a little sideways...a sign that perhaps the bones in his rear end are dis-jointed and causing him pain. However, he has grown to trust Sr. Mary-Francis and Fr. Kevin and likes to sit in their laps on a sunny day and fall asleep. A clear sign that broken trust can still be re-built with lots of love. Jack has become such an integral and welcome part of our family, that we can't imagine life without him. Quite a radical change from the frightened, emaciated, scavenger that came to our back door two winters ago.

Love can do such things...love can overcome fear and broken-ness!



