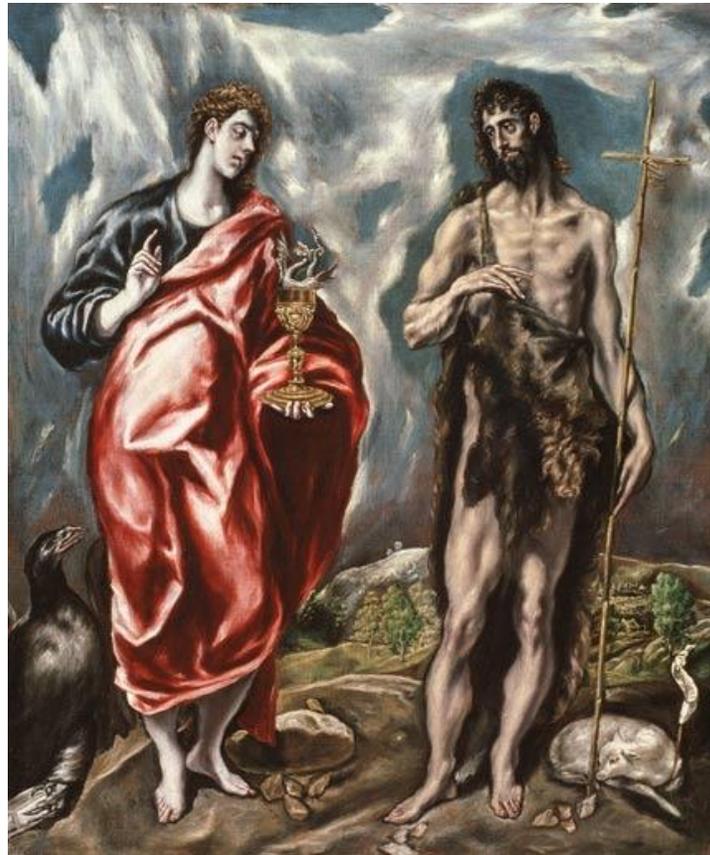


The Meditation

The Fourth Sunday in Advent A.D. 2015



St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist - 1606/7
Painting by el Greco (1541-1614)

Messengers of God

Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

O Lord, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, and with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

The Collect for today clearly speaks about our own sinfulness: “Raise up, we pray, O Lord, and come among us, and with great might, strengthen us; that through our sins and wickedness, we are impeded in running the race that is set before us, that by thy grace and merciful forgiveness we may be hastened to thy glory.” The fifth century Christian writer and disciple of St. Augustine of Hippo, Prosper of Aquitaine wrote: “*When human nature had lost those good gifts by which it might have come to an indestructible and unfading mortality, there remained to it nothing but what is at the service of our temporal life, a life entirely doomed to damnation and punishment.*” Rather strong words to include on this Sunday before Christmas, but they serve as a serious reality check that we ought to ponder.

What we lost in Adam’s fall, we gain back a thousand-fold in Christ. *Original Sin*, though it is an impediment, it is at the same time, a grace, since it is a source of humiliation, (we see an honest and true picture of ourselves as a species) , and therefore a great stimulus to prayer. God’s power is shown in our very weakness, for He consoled us by His assurance: “*My grace is sufficient for thee.*” (*II Corinthians; Ch. 12, Vs 9*).

An impediment * – in which we are all but dust in the wind: “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*” (*I St. John; Chap. 1, Vs. 8*) Whether we will admit it or not, it remains that there is in every one of us, a bottomless pit filled with evil inclinations . It is from this pit that can rise both the *mortal sin* which kills divine life in the soul, and the lesser, or *venial sin* that is a slackening of love. Love is a real part of life and, like all that is alive, it dies if its development should cease, or is checked. St. Paul wrote: “*Of this I am certain, that no principle of good dwells in me, that is, in my natural self.*” (*Romans; Ch. 7, Vs. 18 – as taken from the Vulgate translation for clarity*) St. Paul, at the same time, tells us that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us and enables us to strive after life and peace.

When we return to our Savior, even if it’s seventy times seven...Christ will fill us with His Spirit for such is the incomprehensible and invulnerable love that is Almighty God, the God who gave us His only Son, Whose birth we will soon celebrate.

The question begs; do we believe that the Lord has Himself put a longing in our hearts for Him? That Christ is really the norm, in which we can compare our guilt to His Truth?

There are no sins which are too great or too numerous for God’s paternal love; no frailty of ours is in itself mortal, if we truly seek Him. Come Lord Jesus! Take away the sins of thy people...*miserere nobis!*...have mercy upon us.

O Blessed Mary, Mother of God, refuge of sinners . . . *ora pro nobis!* . . . pray for us.

3.

Our inherent sinfulness. A thing that is ponderous and so dark; that a mystery of evil finds its answer in the great mystery of God's love for us. Yet, both remain mysteries. Logic and intellect attempt to explain and solve, but fail. When we look to Jesus Christ, we hear Him say: "*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*" (St. Matt. Ch. 9, Vs. 13). Then, from the depths of our misery rises a radiant certainty: Christ comes for me...Christ loves me! This radiant certainty is indeed for me, and also for you...and for all mankind! When the Christ-child reached up to his parents from the crib, He was reaching for them...and for us all...to pull us with His tiny arms into the Light.

Therefore, the grace which more than all others makes us like Christ, is that grace which empties us of all self; self-complacency, self-reliance, and self-interest. This grace shows us the abyss of our spiritual poverty, our absolute lack of all that is good; but worse still, the limitless possibilities of evil in each of us. We would be filled with despair and hopelessness, which would lead us all to death and darkness if not for the promise that is in Christ.

When we hear the voice coming from that very dust from which we were drawn, the voice of the earth cursed because of our fallen humanity, we can see how closely our being is bound up with evil and sin. The general condition of the human race today bears such clear evidence should we need any. We'd certainly have to agree with the psalmist when he wrote: "*If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark our iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*" And here is the answer "*But there is forgiveness with thee.*" (Psalm 130, Vss 3 & 4.)

"I wait for the Lord. My soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for morning: I say, more than they that watch for morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (Psalm 130; Vss.6 -8).

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say rejoice. The Lord is at hand." (Phil.: Ch. 4, Vs.4)

"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Rom.: Ch. 8, Vs. 11)

O Divine consolation! **O** Divine deliverance! Save us from the pain which is the price of our deliverance, that it may be taken from us and replaced with Your glory!



*The Latin word for baggage is *impedimenta* ... interesting, for if we carry too much baggage, we are hindered or impeded. That holds true in both the physical and spiritual life.

Priory Kalendar

For the week of December 20th to December 27th A.D. 2015
In Advent & Christmas Seasons

Sunday, December 20th Fourth Sunday in Advent... “O clavis David” (O key of David)

Monday, December 21st **St. Thomas; Ap.**, “O Oriens” (O Radiant Dawn)

Tuesday, December 22nd *feria in Advent* “O Rex Gentium” (O King of nations)

Wednesday December 23rd *feria in Advent* “O Emmanuel” (O Emmanuel)

Thursday, December 24th **Vigil of the Nativity** “O Virgo Virginum” (O Virgin of virgins)

Friday, December 25th **Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Saturday, December 26th **St. Stephen; Dcn & protomartyr; 1st cent. Palestine** *In the oct. of Nativ.*

Sunday, December 27th **St. John; Ap. & Ev. 1st cent.** **Comm. 1st Sunday after Christmas.**

NOTE: **A Blessed Christmas to All!**



ALEDÐAR KEÇ

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), O.S.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.

5.

Br. Chip is off this week !



He's supposed to be helping Santa, we think he's looking for goodies & tricks to fill the stockings!

Animal News from the Priory



All things come of thee O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee – I Chron. Ch. 29, Vs. 14.

O Christmas tree !



6.

With a house full of dogs, an independent cat lodging on the back porch, a woodstove that removes the moisture inside the house faster than it can be replenished (and, oh yes, raccoons taking their nightly supper on the back porch)... where could we have a Christmas tree that won't be disturbed this year?! After a little thought, we decided that OUTSIDE on our front lawn was the best answer for this year! And so, here it is! Our little tree stands for all the world to see and enjoy. The new storm door and restored wooden front door make a nice backdrop...and in the evening when we want to enjoy our tree, we just open the doors, look outside, and *voila* there it is! The dogs like to come to the door and look out at the lights, and all is safe. All that's needed is a little snow to dress things up for the season, but that's not our department, so we'll go with whatever happens, and enjoy each day's blessings as they unfold. We hope that you will too.



The night brings its own special beauty and magic
View of our tree from inside.



