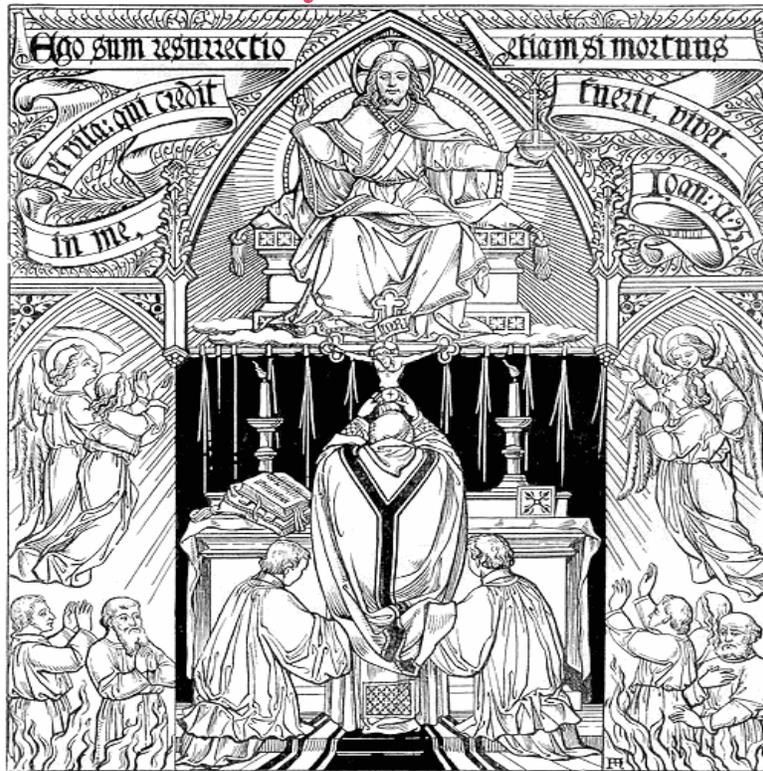


“ Thus says the Lord: Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is: and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.” - Jeremiah; Chap. 6, Vs. 16

THE MEDITATION

December 14th, A.D. 2014

The Third Sunday In Advent - “Gaudete”



The Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians Chapter 4, Verses 1 - 5

The 1928 Book of Common Prayer, Page 94

The People's Anglican Missal, Page A 6

St. Joseph Continuous Sunday Missal (1958 edition); Page 42

STEWARDS OF THE 'MYSTERIES'

It's quite likely, that today's Epistle was chosen for the Third Sunday in Advent by Holy Mother Church, because of the coming *Ember Days*. These were days which were the time for ordinations, when priests and other sacred ministers, were ordained to carry out public worship and to administer the “*mysteries of God*” as St. Paul writes in the beginning of today's Epistle. It is a tradition that is part of our early Church history and continues to the present.

St. Paul, in this Epistle, desires that he and his companions be regarded solely as humble servants of Christ and stewards of *God's “mysteries”*. St. Paul wanted to emphasize the position he and his fellow presbyters held, as a position of lowliness, much like a responsible slave to a household. They had been appointed by Christ, as heralds of His Gospel. They didn't speak or act in their own names : for they had no personal ambitions or agendas, as they spoke *for* Jesus Christ.

It's unreasonable and it would be wrong therefore, to regard them with any suspicion or jealousy. The “*Mysteries of God*” of which they are the stewards, are the divine decrees and ordinances concerning mankind's salvation; a salvation based on God's decrees which are revealed in the Gospel. St. Paul and his associates have been entrusted with the publication of those Divine Decrees, and he tells us that they should be judged by their loyalty in carrying out this task that has been assigned to them.

Today's Epistle, although rather short in content, supplies a great deal of precious material for instruction on the relationship between priests and people. Here are set forth, in principle, the position and duties of the priest, and from these, the attitude of the people towards their priests can be easily inferred.

The priest is a servant of God that has been entrusted with the guardianship and the dispensing of God's treasures of Salvation; namely the *preaching of the Gospel* and the *administration of the Seven Sacraments*. The priest has received his office from Almighty God, and it is to Almighty God that he will have to give an account of what manner he fulfills his mission one day.

The great 4th century writer St. John Chrysostom writes about the Priesthood:

“For those (i.e., priests) who dwell upon the earth and make their abode therein, have been commissioned to dispense things which are in heaven, and have received an authority such as God has not given either to angels or to archangels. For it has not been said to the angels and archangels: 'All that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Matt. Ch. 18, Vs. 18).

Those who rule upon earth, indeed have authority to bind, but in bodies only ; whereas this bond takes hold of the soul itself, and reaches heaven ; what priests execute below, God ratifies above, and the Master confirms the judgments of His servants.”

*(from: **On the Priesthood**; Ch 3)*

Should this knowledge scare a priest ? . . . you bet it should . . . if he is to be a good priest!

The praises of humankind should be of no account to a priest, unless it facilitates and makes more fruitful his work. It's quite okay to tell your friends: “ *We have the most wonderful and caring priest in our parish, you should come and meet him!*” but, please, please, please however, don't say that we walk on water, as that is a gift reserved only for the One Whom in we serve! All kidding aside, the priest is, or ought to be, indifferent to the world's judgment on his office. He does not seek to flatter himself by favorably judging his own achievements or gifts, let alone broadcast this to the world. He leaves all this to the judgment of God. He asks neither the approval of other men or of himself.

3.

He should seek only the praises of God, and to God's estimate of his work he should resign himself completely.

LOVE YOUR PRIESTS

The faithful on their part, should see in the priest the representative of Christ to whom had been entrusted the care of God's mysteries. They should reverence him for his position; they should thank God when his difficult work is well and faithfully performed, and they should constantly be praying for him that he will always be a loyal steward of the mysteries of God.

They must not subject a priest to any carping and narrow minded criticism, for they will never know the secrets of the souls that have been entrusted into his safe keeping. Such things can be a great burden upon the shoulders of the priest. Instead, they should honor his silence, when he keeps it, regarding any matters that do not involve them personally. St. John Chrysostom also writes of this: “ *The priesthood requires a great soul; for the priest has many harassing troubles of his own, and has need of innumerable eyes on all sides.* ” (*from Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 3*). Support for your priest by way of constant prayer and charity of heart will help him carry his many burdens in ways we cannot know.

The faithful must always remember that God chooses His own instruments, and that God's ways are not the ways of mankind. What may seem then, as perhaps a human flaw in the priest, should not be overlooked, for it may be the very instrument God uses to bring certain souls into His keeping.

Again, dear friends, it is to God and not the faithful that the priest must give a reckoning, and it is to the judgment of Almighty God that the faithful should, in all reverence and kindness, leave their priest, or for that matter, *any priest*.

Our very own and dear Cardinal John Henry Newman leaves us with his thoughts on the Priestly Office as he paraphrased it from *St. Gregory Nazianzus*, an early Father of the Church:

*In service o'er the mystic feast I stand ;
I cleanse Thy victim-flock and bring them near
In holiest-wise, and by a bloodless rite.*

*O fire of love!
O gushing font of light!
(As best I know, who need Thy cleansing hand)*

*Dread office this, bemired souls to clear
Of their defilement, and again make bright.*

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Show thyself O Lord. - (*Psalm 80*)

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK in Embertide:

*God has given each of us our own work to do.
It is for us to pursue our road, that is to say, our vocation.
When God gives such and such a vocation,
He bestows upon us at the same time His grace to fulfill it.*

-St. John Marie Vianney (The Cure of Ars)
- (*On Vocation* - 18th cent.)

PRO CLERICIS – FOR THE CLERGY **an Advent Ember Sermon**

“ Dearly beloved brethren:

With the anxious solicitude proper to us as the shepherd of your souls, we urge upon you the rigid observance of this December fast. The month of December has come round again, and with it this devout custom of the Church. The fruits of the year now drawing to a close have all been gathered in, and therefore meetly do we offer our abstinence to God as a sacrifice in thanksgiving. What can be more useful than fasting? By that exercise we draw near to God, we make strong stand against the devil, and overcome the sweet enticements of sin. Fasting has ever been the bread of strength. From fasting proceed *pure thoughts, reasonable desires, and healthy counsels*. Through voluntary mortification the flesh dies to lust, and the soul renews the practice of virtue.

But since fasting is not the only means in which to secure health for our souls, let us adorn our fasting with works of mercy. Spend in good deeds what you withdraw from superfluity. Our fast must be turned into a banquet for the poor. Let us devote time and effort to the underprivileged, the widow, and the orphan; let us show sympathy to the afflicted, and reconcile the estranged; providing lodging for the wanderer and relieve the oppressed; give clothing to the naked and cherish the sick. Thus every one who offers to the God of all goodness this *Advent sacrifice of fasting and alms* will become worthy to receive Him the eternal reward of His heavenly kingdom! *We fast on Wednesday and Friday*; and there is likewise a vigil on Saturday at the Church of St. Peter, that by his good prayers we may the more effectually obtain what we ask for, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, forever. Amen.”

- *Ember Sermon of Pope St. Leo I c. 450 A.D.*

The Second Nocturn reading of Vigils (Matins) for the 3rd Sunday in Advent.

5.

The Meditation is produced by the Benedictine Community of
Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory
4 Shaw Road
Raymond, Maine 04071

This is a free on-line ministry of our community to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please feel free to copy and pass on this meditation to anyone you feel might benefit from it. To be placed on our weekly mailing list, please contact Father Prior Kevin at : klamarre@ourladyofsevensorrows.org

* Visit our Website to view past editions of **The Meditation** at: www.ourladyofsevensorrows.org and go to '*Meditation*' section. *

PRIORY KALENDAR

A.D. 2014

Week of December 14th to December 21st : Season of Advent

Sunday, December 14th . . . 3rd Sunday in Advent ("Gaudete" Sunday)

Monday, December 15th

Tuesday, December 16th St. Eusebius: *B & Myr.* "O Sapientia", 1st of the great "O" Antiphons

Wednesday, December 17th . Ember Day in Advent. "O Adonai"

Thursday, December 18th . No Preces in choir 'till Christmas "O Radix Jesse"

Friday, December 19th Ember Day in Advent. "O Clavis David"

Saturday, December 20th . . Ember Day in Advent. "O Oriens"

Sunday, December 21st . . . Fourth Sunday in Advent. "O Rex Gentium" - Winter Solstice.

KALENDAR KEY: Ab. = Abbot, Abs. = Abbess, Abp. = Archbishop, Ap = Apostle, Bp. = Bishop, C. or Conf. = Confessor, Comm. = Commemorate. C.S.J. = Jesuit Order, Dcn. = Deacon, Doct. = Doctor of the Church, Ev. = Evangelist, H = Hermit, K = King, M. = Monk, **M.M. = Month's Mind (remembrance of the departed)**, Myr. = Martyr, N. = Nun, P = Priest Po. = Pope, R. = Recluse, Q. = Queen, Vir. = Virgin, W. = Widow, O.Car. = Carmelite Order, O. Cart. = Carthusian Order, O.F.M. = Order of Friars Minor – Franciscans, O.S.B. = Order of St. Benedict – Benedictines, O.C.O. = Order of the Cistercian Observance (Trappists), **FASTING GUIDE:** A = Abstinence, F = Fast, F & A = Fast and Abstinence

KALENDAR NOTES

Benedictine Saints and worthies for the week:

December 15th : Bl. Candius Furlong, Irish monk educated in Spain. Returned to Ireland where he is credited with many healings and conversions. Met English King James I. Died of old age in 1616.

December 19th : Bl. Urban V; O.S.B. Monk, Doctor, & Pope. Peace-maker & educator. d. 1370.



Feasts, Fasts and Other Things

The Ember Days (of December)

The observance of the **Ember Days**, a most venerable feature of the liturgical calendar, dates back to early Roman antiquity (did you know that they are older than Advent ?). Pope Leo I, around 450 left us a beautiful series of sermons for these days. The Ember days, originally, were an occasion for thanksgiving for the three great harvests of *wheat, grapes, and olives*; all very meaningful nature symbols employed in the liturgy, not to mention important for human sustenance! The faithful, in the Offertory procession, brought tithes of the harvest to be used for the offering then and there for the support of the Church and for assistance to the poor.

These days also stress the great need for spiritual renewal. We too easily forget our future status as citizens of Heaven, in the hustle and bustle of daily living and work. Therefore, during these four times of the year we should also concentrate on God and *scrutinize our spiritual condition*. Lent is our annual retreat, while the **Ember Days** can serve as our “*quarterly check-ups*.” A grave and earnest mood comes over the Holy Church, but there are no tears or mourning, as in the great Lenten season. Fasting is not so much an expression of penitence and sorrow, as it is a joyous tithe to Almighty God, and an incentive to alms-giving. The Ember days in Advent are one of the two times in the year that Christians are encouraged to make their confession to a priest and receive the *Most Holy Absolution* that Christ gives to His children who may, in their preparation for His coming, find themselves in a spiritually unworthy condition to receive their *Christmas Communion*, an obligation the Church makes upon all its faithful.

The **Ember Days** have the special honor of being ordination days (*Saturday*). *Ember Saturday in December*, in the old Roman Church, was the principal occasion for conferring Holy Orders. Please pray for good priests on this week. This year, in the Diocese of the Northeast, there will actually be an ordination taking place on *Ember Saturday in December*. (*December 20th*). The Rev. Mr. Merrill Perkins, of St. Matthias Church in Mystic, Conn. will be ordained to the Sacred Priesthood on that day. We wish 'soon-to-be' Father Merrill; “*ad Multos Annos*” (*many years*) in service to God's Holy Catholic Church!

The Ember Days were assigned specific dates four times in the Church's calendar, as time passed, giving each of the Ember weeks a distinctive seasonal color and character. The December Ember Days, highly oriented toward Christmas, manifest a pronounced Advent character, more so than the ordinary weekdays. These Ember Days, along with the recitation of the **O – antiphons** constitute our last major efforts in the work of preparing for our Savior's coming.

7.



- where's the snow?

- Br. Chip, O.S.B.



Feasts, Fasts, and Other Things; from The Chipmunk's Nutshell Library

Presented by *Br. A. Chip Monk, O.S.B.* A monk of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory in Raymond, Maine



Out On A Limb

By. Brother Raymond, O.S.B.

The “O” Antiphons

The final step in our preparations for Christmas comes when the so called “*O-antiphons*”, a series of eight anthems, are sung at the *Magnificat*, the great Song of Mary that is chanted or recited at *Evening Prayer* in the Book of Common Prayer, or in the monastic office of *Vespers*. Each antiphon is sung on a different day in the eight days that precede the vigil of Christmas (*December 16th to December 23rd*). Nothing similar proceeds any other feast in the Church Year. These are so called because of the exclamatory “O” with which they begin.

8.

These antiphons originated in the sixth and seventh centuries, and therefore are of great antiquity. They were originally used with the *Benedictus* at the morning office of *Lauds*, which they may actually be better suited for, as *Lauds* is always the hour of jubilation in the day. All have the same melody and structure, resembling a *Collect*: They (a.) have an invocation to the coming Lord expressed by the opening phrase or symbol, e.g. “*O Wisdom, O Root of Jesse, O Day-spring*”; (b.) a brief clarification or explanation of the invocation; (c.) the petition, introduced by an emphatic *veni* (come), upon which follows the plea for redemption. These sublime little songs neatly embody all that the prophets of old said about the Messiah. The melody with which they are chanted are marvelously expressive of intense desire.

These antiphons enjoy the special distinction of being sung in full both before and after the *Magnificat*, an honor otherwise reserved to feasts, and not in keeping with the penitential aspect of Advent. The *O-antiphons*, in the larger monasteries, are chanted solemnly in choir, sometimes with added ceremony. The abbot, standing in pontifical vesture at his throne, intones the first antiphon, while the abbey bells are rung. They continue to peal throughout the singing of the *Magnificat*. The monk next in rank, on each following day, properly vested, intones the antiphon from the great lectern in the middle of the choir. Here, at the Priory, we keep things simple out of necessity and practicality. We are just too small a community to attempt something that grand! So, we do our bit by having the antiphonal chant be a bit more festive and dare I say it, a little louder in honor of the spirit of its liturgical priority of place. *Br. Sylvester* really gets into the loud part as a good ole squirrel from the South is wont to do!

A DAILY APPLICATION OF THE O-ANTIPHONS : You, our dear friends, can use these lovely antiphons in your daily prayer life as well. Please allow me to offer you two ways:

Include the antiphon in your Evening Prayer Office. This is easy. Sing or say the assigned *O-antiphon* for that day in full before reciting or chanting the *Magnificat* (**1928 Book of Common Prayer**, Page 26) then sing or say the *Magnificat* and close by repeating the antiphon in full. Easy ...see?

Use the Antiphon as part of a daily Meditation : Again, easy. Simply read the *O-antiphon* for the day a time or two, at whatever time you pray or do your meditations, and follow the accompanying petition that is included. Spend time on that petition and perhaps remember and pray it throughout your day.

THE O-ANTIPHONS :

December 16th : *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom)

O WISDOM, which camest out of the mouth of the Most High, and reachest from one end to another, mightily and sweetly ordering all things : Come and teach us the ways of prudence.

Petition: *O Mary, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.*

December 17th : *O Adonai* (O Adonai)

O ADONAI, and Leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst in the Bush to Moses in a flame of fire, and gavest him the Law in Sinai : Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

9.

Petition: O Lord, that I may follow Thee more closely.

December 18th : O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse)

O ROOT of Jesse, which standest for an ensign of the people, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, to whom the Gentiles shall seek : Come and deliver us, and tarry not.

Petition: May I give Thee, O Lord more loyal service.

December 19th : O Clavis David (O Key of David)

O KEY of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel ; that openest and no man shutteth, and shuttest and no man openeth : Come and bring the prisoners out of the prison-house, and them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

Petition: Deliver me, O Lord, from the chain of my sins, I who often sits in the darkness and shadow of death!

December 20th : O Oriens (O Dayspring)

O DAYSPRING, Brightness of Light Everlasting, and Sun of Righteousness : Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

Petition: O Lord, dispel me of all my doubts in order that I become a great witness for the Faith to help my faith.

December 21st : O Rex Gentium (O King of Nations)

O KING of the Nations, and their Desire ; the Cornerstone who maketh both one : Come and save mankind, whom thou formedst of clay.

Petition: I ask Thee, O Lord for the grace to establish thy Kingdom more firmly in my heart and in the hearts of those whom You send to me.

December 22nd : O Emmanuel (O Emmanuel)

O EMMANUEL, our King and Lawgiver, the desire of all nations and their salvation : Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Petition: O Lord, hear our prayers, and by the grace of Your coming enlighten our darkness.

December 23rd : O Virgo virginum (O Virgin of virgins)

O VIRGIN of virgins, how shall this be? For neither before thee was seen any like thee, nor shall there be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery.

Petition : O Blessed Virgin, intercede for us, on our journey of faith, that your Son born at this time, may lead us on the road to salvation.

10.

It is interesting to note that the Roman Church only uses the first seven antiphons in its liturgy. The eighth antiphon comes down to English Catholics from the *Sarum, Hereford, and York* Uses and honors the Blessed Virgin Mary, the *God-Bearer*; called the *Theotokos* in Orthodoxy.

Also, this period in which the O-antiphons are used, is called in the English Church, “*Sapientiatide*” so-named after the first of the O-antiphons; “*O Sapientia*” ... giving us a season within a season!

- *Br. Sylvester, O.S.B.*

OUT ON A LIMB, is an occasional offering by *Brother A. Raymond Crowe, O.S.B.* A monk of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory, in Raymond, Maine.

Could you or someone that you know, open your heart as the animals opened their hearts and home to the Christ child on that first Christmas? Our funds are low so, if you would like to help and are able, simply mark your check “for the animals”. It will be gratefully received and deeply appreciated.



Come, Lord Jesus !

“Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brothers, ye have done it unto me.” - (St. Matthew; Chap. 25 Verse, 40. KJV)

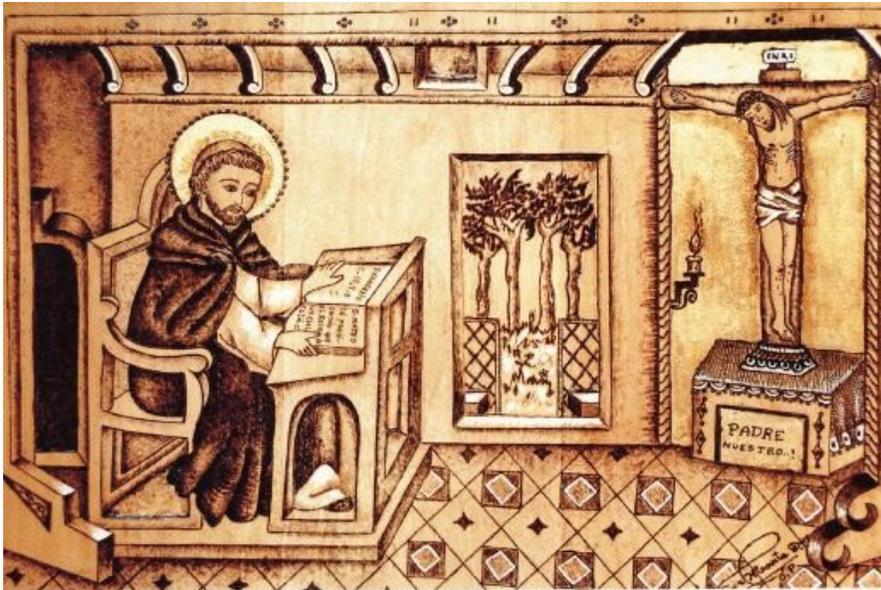
Please make all checks payable to: the Servants of the Holy Family, 4 Shaw Rd. Raymond, Maine.04071 and please indicate “for the animals” so the money will go to them. Thank you!

11.

Please consider including our Animal Outreach and Rescue in your Estate Planning. Contact Sr. Mary Francis, O.S.B. For detail

No animal news to report this week. All are doing well!

All of us at the priory wish you and yours a blessed and prayerful Advent.



PAZ

