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Fr. Robert's Remarks



FR. ROBERT MANSFIELD, SSC
VICAR GENERAL

Greetings; the Lord be with you!

In a letter sent out in December, it was mentioned that the District Council and I had reduced our scheduled meetings to four per year. They are scheduled for the second Wednesday of the first month of each quarter. Other meetings may be summoned as necessary.

We have met regularly by teleconference since our inaugural synod in October 2012. By reducing the number of meetings, we have freed up the time slot and the cost of the calls for other purposes.

In February, we took advantage of this and arranged a meeting of the District *Clericus* by teleconference. The District *Clericus* met with our Episcopal Visitor, Bishop Rocco Florenza of the Diocese of the Resurrection, Bishop Stephen Scarlett of the Diocese of the Holy Trinity, and two priests of the Diocese of the Resurrection—Archdeacon Bruce Bellmore and Fr. David Mulligan. The overall topic was parish growth. The teleconference went well and we were, I think, helped by and grateful for the insights of our brethren. While a date has not yet been set, a follow up conference is in the planning.

Suggestions for future conferences, studies, or whatever, either for the clergy or the laity would be appreciated. Thank you Fathers—Rt. Rev. & Rev.—for your participation.

(Continued on page 6)

Fr. Byron Woolcock, TDC "The Way Of A Pilgrim":



FR. BYRON WOOLCOCK,
TDC

Recently Bishop Robert Barron was re-reading this book, familiar to many, which is the title also of this article. He centered on a portion of the story where two Russian army deserters accosted the Pilgrim, beat him unconscious and stole his only two treasures, his Holy Bible and a tattered copy of the Philokalia. Although he was totally devastated, the Pilgrim eventually recovered his treasures, "and, when he had them once again, he hugged them to his chest, gripping them so hard that his fingers practically locked in place around them." After reminding himself, and his readers, of what objects we might thus cling to (he mentions his iphone!) Bp. Barron closes by saying: "What I particularly love about the Pilgrim is that he was preoccupied, not about any of the passing evanescent goods of the world, but rather about prayer, about a sustained contact with the eternal God...the only possessions that concerned him were these simple books that fed his relationship with God. Or to turn it around, he wasn't frightened by the loss of any finite good; but he was frightened to death at the prospect of losing contact with the Living God." Those of us blessed with a daily contact with the Book of Common Prayer may well recall the familiar words of the

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Fr. Byron Woolcock, TDC "The Way Of A Pilgrim":

Collect for Easter 4 (that our hearts may be fixed "where true joys are to be found.") and Trinity 4 ("...that we finally lose not the things eternal") as we consider Bp. Barron's piercing final question: "So what would you cling to like a desperate animal. What loss do you fear. What do you ultimately love.?" (At this point my children may, no doubt, opine: "Dad would answer for a lifetime supply of vitamin C!") But, hopefully, more like the Pilgrim, and like Father Roland Palmer, commenting on desert island necessities, we may well answer; "Prayer Book, Bible and Hymnal, and minimum essential supplies for the Eucharist!"

"Mary, Mary Quite Necessary"

For five years we lived in an apartment in the Synod Office in Prince Albert. As Dad was then Archdeacon of Saskatchewan, my Mother, of course, looked after sorting and selling the lovely Moose hide beadwork from the many "Indian Missions" we served. With help she also sorted the "bales", mainly of blankets and clothing, sent from the "richer church" in Eastern Canada. On one such occasion, much to my teenage delight, I discovered two large black bead rosaries. Certainly great "props" to "really bug" some of the younger Reverend Clergy, and others of my friends in our "low church" diocese! Now, more than fifty years on, I have a treasured rosary under my pillow, in the car, and in every coat pocket. No longer "props"!



Someday, D.V., I may write an article "Why we can never honour Mary more than God has". Until then I just borrow, and make my own, a quote from Fr. Henri Nouwen, a writer Susan and I value each morning. "I am discovering in my own life as a priest that without Mary I cannot enter fully into the mystery of Jesus' compassionate love. It is hard to explain why this is so, but I see now, mostly retrospectively, how I used to speak more about Jesus than to him. Most of all I see now how Jesus had become more an argument for the moral life than the door to the mystical life which is life in communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Mary calls me back to where I most want to be: to the heart of God which, as you know, is also the heart of the world. She calls me to let the passion of Jesus become my passion and his glory become my glory. She calls me to move beyond the do's and don'ts of the morally correct life into an intimacy with God where I can live the sadness, pain and anguish of this world while already tasting the gladness, joy and peace of the glorified Lord." (Mornings With Henri J.M. Nouwen)

Although the rosary is not the only "devotional aid" (I also love Icons') it has become for me a time-worn and ageless prayer that has passed through the "fingers of faith" of countless Saints and Sinners. I have several "second hand" rosaries, gifts from friends and family, obviously "well-worn and well prayed" previously! I treasure these and pray for those good souls whose fingers of faith these passed through so often years ago.

The Other Mysteries

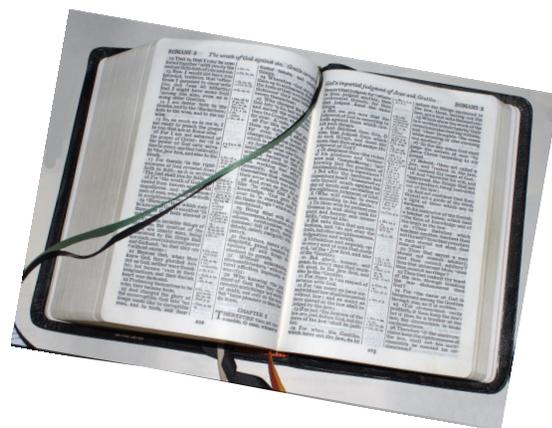
Like Bp. Barron, and you, I often return to old books as old friends. One such, by Eugene Peterson, is entitled "Eat This Book" based on that command in Rev. 10:9 and

Fr. Byron Woolcock, TDC “The Way Of A Pilgrim”:

repeated also to Jeremiah and Ezekial. It also recalls our Collect for Advent 2. The Rosary has helped me “Eat This Book” and, in the spirit of that Collect, helped “inwardly digest” the Essential Message. As you know, St. John Paul added “The Luminous Mysteries” as a welcome “bridge” between the traditional Gospel Mysteries from the Annunciation to the Passion, Resurrection and Pentecost. Yet another book, “Mary Today” by Fr. Basil Pennington expands the Mysteries even more suggesting such as The Healing Mysteries, the “I Am’s” of John’s Gospel, The Resurrection Appearances, Jesus Ministry To (and From) Women, etc. Thus I have finally come to the point where the Rosary has become one of my “desert island essentials” which (somewhat) like the Pilgrim, I cling to as a contact with the Living God, and timely weapon in the spirit of Ephesians 6 and so much more.

“Lectio Divina”

The essential Gospel Mysteries, together with those added, furnish us with a way of Intercession, Petition, Praise, Penance and Meditation. The latter aspect is somewhat like the purpose of Lectio Divina in which “we seek not to master or grasp the sacred text, but rather through it, prayerfully and silently, to come into the presence of God. We seek to be humbly attentive to God’s Holy Word, to savour it and let it enter into our heart as much as our heads so that it may transform us”. Certainly, in that definition, our warm familiarity with the Sacred Text through the daily and weekly psalms and readings of our B.C.P. can indeed enable a slow, rich and meditative use of the Rosary.



“In Conclusion” (!)

In the previous quote from Fr. Nouwen, his final invitation to us dovetails with these thoughts on The Gospel Rosary. “Mary didn’t just call me to that life. She also invites you to that same life. That is why, with great urgency, I ask you to go to Mary and learn from her how to live in this anguishing world as peace-bringing witnesses of her Son.”

I pray that, with Mary, you may keep these things and ponder them in your heart. As she followed Jesus through the Gospel Mysteries so her Holy Rosary enables us to walk with her, in Joy, Sorrow and Glory, in the Way of Jesus in our own Mission and Pilgrimage.

Some Thoughts From Three “Integral Portions”

1. “The Rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and then enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known: it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadows of this world, and open on the substance of the next. The power of the rosary is beyond description”. (Archbishop Fulton Sheen)

Fr. Byron Woolcock, TDC “The Way Of A Pilgrim”:

2. “From Apostolic times and to our days all who truly love Christ, give veneration to Her who gave birth to Him and protected Him all the days of His youth. If God the Father chose Her, God the Holy Spirit descended upon Her, and God the Son submitted to Her in the days of His youth, was concerned for Her when hanging on the Cross then should not everyone who confesses the Holy Trinity venerate Her?” (St. John Maximovitch of Shanghai and San Francisco)
3. “(The Rosary) is like playing the piano. With the left hand you make harmonious chords. With the right hand you play the melody. It is the melody which is the more important. So the common form you say on each bead...forms the harmony to accompany the meditation for the mystery (Consider, Love and Resolve)” (Fr. Roland Palmer, S.S.J.E.). (See also hymn 807, Sing of Mary)

Notes:

1. A recent useful book, “The New Rosary in Scripture”, offers Biblical contexts for the Gospel Mysteries (This book by Edward Sri also includes St. John Paul’s “Rosarium Virginis Mariae” as an appendix.)
2. A usually excellent author, Fr. Romano Guardini, wrote “The Rosary of Our Lady”, a book commended by St. Mother Teresa.
3. Another group of Biblical Mysteries by Fr. Baring-Gould is available for free download at [Traditional Anglican Resources.org](http://TraditionalAnglicanResources.org). (With thanks to our good Father V.G. for that website.)



Bonnie's Reflections: PREPARING TO REPENT



MRS. BONNIE IVEY

Advent tells us Christ is near;
Christmas tells us Christ is here;
In Epiphany we trace
All the glory of his grace.

Those three Sundays before Lent
Will prepare us to repent,
That in Lent we may begin
Earnestly to mourn for sin.

From Hymn 701, Canadian Hymn Book, tune Pilgrimage

When Katherine Hankey wrote this hymn for children, she refrained from naming those three hard to pronounce Sundays: Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima. Their meaning is not very original. They are a countdown to Easter; “about seventy”, “about sixty”, and “about fifty” days to go. They are to “prepare us to repent”, a lost skill in our secular world.

To a Christian, repentance means a change in direction, a change of mind; turning away from following one’s selfish desires, or the lures of the world and the devil. Instead the repentant person decides to follow God, or maybe, to start following God AGAIN. It may or may not involve emotion. It is a decision.

If we are examined by a doctor to determine our physical health, clinical signs and test results can reveal any disease process that might be happening. In the same way, we can use the time before Lent to look for signs of spiritual ill health. We are sometimes blind to our sins, though those close to us might have a clearer view. Rarely, a person might have a very unbalanced idea of his own sins, believing that he has done something absolutely unforgiveable. This might happen if the person has not been properly taught about repentance and forgiveness. It also might be the result of a mental illness. The opposite error is believing oneself to be sinless. Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee and a publican going to worship God. (Luke 18: 9-14) The Pharisee congratulates himself for his perfection, while the publican asks God for mercy.

Do we “mourn” for our sin? To mourn is to express sadness or regret. It is especially connected with a loss of some kind. What do we lose through our sins? Our connection with God, our fellowship with other people, and the opportunity to make something good happen in this fallen world. Very often, we have lost an opportunity to deal with someone in a loving way.

Failure to love is the root of many sins. I do not speak of love as a warm feeling, but love as an action that does good for another, regardless of the cost to oneself. Jesus commanded us to love one another “as I have loved you”.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes to a church that was dysfunctional. Some members regarded themselves as spiritually more favored than others. Some argued and took each other to court. Many had turned a blind eye to sexual disorder: a man cohabiting with his stepmother went unrebuked. They strove to gain position and influence rather than serving one another in love. Paul warns, in chapter 13, that charismatic gifts and grand ges-

A NEW COMMAND
I GIVE YOU: LOVE
ONE ANOTHER. AS
I HAVE LOVED
YOU, SO YOU
MUST LOVE ONE
ANOTHER. BY THIS
EVERYONE WILL
KNOW YOU ARE
MY DISCIPLES, IF
YOU LOVE ONE
ANOTHER.
JOHN 13: 34-35

Bonnie's Reflections: PREPARING TO REPENT

tures are meaningless apart from love. In verses 4 to 7, he tells us what love does and does not do. "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous..."

There is an exercise called "The Love Test". To take this test, read verses 4 to 7, **inserting your own name** instead of the word "love." Ask the Lord to show you the truth about each statement. "Lord, am I patient? Am I kind? Was I kind to that person today? How did I fail to love her?" Go over your day, with the Lord, and let him show you where you may have stumbled in following him.

This is only one of the ways we can choose to prepare ourselves for Lent. We should think of Lent as more than "What shall I give up this year? Chocolate?" Rather, it is a time when we should be finding our way back to the right road, to follow in the steps of Jesus.



Fr. Robert's Remarks

On January 29, 2017, at the age of 93 (1923/10/6—2017/01/29, Matushka Juliana Schmemann fell asleep in the Lord. I never met her; however, I did hear her a couple of times on podcasts and I have read her book *My Journey With Fr. Alexander*. She was a delight to listen to and a powerhouse all on her own.

I note that Mat. Juliana and her husband Fr. Alexander were friends of the deCatanzaro family. Bishop deCatanzaro did translations for St. Vladimir's Seminary Press and the Schmemanns had a summer destination at Lac La Belle—a couple of hours drive from Ottawa. De Cat died in June of 1983 aged 67; Schmemann in December of the same year aged 62. (When deCat was consecrated Bishop for the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada, Fr. Schmemann offered him his own pectoral cross. This was later passed on to Bishop Robert Crawley at his consecration by Mrs. Joan de Cat. Those who visited the Annunciation in Ottawa will remember the paintings by Mishka German van Eck of Fr. Roland F. Palmer, SSJE and Bp de Catanzaro on the gospel side wall of the parish Hall. DeCat's portrait showed him wearing the Orthodox pectoral cross.)

About 5 years ago John Maddex of Ancient Faith Radio interviewed her. In the course of the interview he asked, "from your perspective, if you could identify *one thing* that you feel was his [Fr. Alexander's] most significant legacy to the Orthodox Church. What do you think it would be?" Without any hesitation she replied "*The Eucharist*."—referring to his book. She then qualified that by making the point that the Eucharist *qua* Sacrament was more important than any book about the Eucharist. (It was published posthumously in 1984, a work of a lifetime.) She also commented that it would be "for him" the most significant; if she, personally, had to recommend one of his books it would be *Great Lent*. "I think," she said, "in *Great Lent*—which has the pre-Lenten, the Lenten, and ends with Pascha—that is the concrete way that expresses his focusing on the Eucharist." She spoke of his encouragement of participation in the Eucharist in a day when reception was much rarer or at least less frequent among Orthodox Christians.

The period of the late sixties through the early eighties was as a time that defined the joke about the distinction between the terrorist and the liturgist—the terrorist being



2017-02-14—A GIFT.

IT WAS JUST A BALD EAGLE OR
JUST A BIRD TO SOMEONE ELSE,
PERHAPS; REGARDLESS, JUST TO
SEE IT WAS, TO ME, A WONDERFUL
GIFT IN THAT MOMENT!

Fr. Robert's Remarks

one with whom one could negotiate. It was a time when “liturgical renewal” was in an experimental stage. The draft edition of the US 1979 book was being used at the SSJE monastery in Bracebridge, ON; the CALS (Canadian Alternative Liturgical Series) precursors to the Book of Alternative Services was being developed.

I became aware of Fr. Schmemmann as a voice of sanity in the discussions as some of his papers on Baptism were published in collections developed by the Anglican Church of Canada. I think that it was perhaps because of this that for me as a young adult—*Great Lent* along with *Water and Spirit*, and *For the Life of the World*, were formative. For me as an Anglican trying to understand the BCP as something more than an antiquarian piece to be preserved they were critical.

I shall forever be grateful to him for the teaching which, *mutatis mutandi*, I was able to see paralleled in our liturgies.

Fr. Schmemmann's chapter of Introduction is entitled *Lent: The Journey to Pascha* and he begins writing, “When a man leaves on a journey, he must know where he is going. Thus with Lent. Above all, Lent is a spiritual journey and its destination is Easter, “the Feast of Feasts.” It is the preparation for the fulfilment of Pascha, the true Revelation. We must begin, therefore, by trying to understand this connection between Lent and Easter, for it reveals something very essential, very crucial about our Orthodox faith and life.”

Love is a key part of that journey.

Last month I quoted Fr. David Fontes who wrote, “When we say we love someone, in one sense, we are trying to convey that the person is of extraordinary value and importance to us.”

This month from Fr. Alexander Schmemmann:

“If God loves every man it is because He alone knows the priceless and absolutely unique treasure, the “soul” or “person” He gave every man. Christian love then is the participation in that divine knowledge and the gift of that divine love. There is no “impersonal” love because love *is* the wonderful discovery of the “person” in “man,” of the personal and unique in the common and general. It is the discovery in each man of that which is “lovable” in him, of that which is from God. (*Great Lent*, p. 25)

We hear the words of the Exhortation in the Prayer Book Penitential Office (p. 611) the invitation to the observance of a holy Lent; offered gently like Jesus' words, “Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...” (Matthew 11. 28 —the first of the Comfortable Words in the Eucharist and one of the three sentences beginning the Penitential Office)

Lent can be a wonderful time of discovery as each learns once again of “that which is ‘lovable’ in him, of that which is from God.”

May you have a wonder-filled Lent.

Til next month, God Bless!



LENT IS A
SPIRITUAL
JOURNEY AND
ITS
DESTINATION IS
EASTER, “THE
FEAST OF
FEASTS.”

The Rev. Vernon Staley: The Christian Way—Serialized



THE REV. VERNON STALEY

Devotions before Communion.

I will go unto the altar of God.

To be said daily the week before you receive the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and Thy servant shall be healed.

WE do not presume to come to this Thy Holy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. *We* are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table. But Thou art the same Lord, Whose property is always to have mercy : grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the Flesh of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His most sacred Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us. Amen.

Or this,

O BLESSED Jesus, Who dost come to us Thy unworthy servants, in the Blessed Sacrament of Thy Body and Blood, prepare us to receive Thee. Give us true repentance for our past sins, true faith in Thee Who didst die on the cross to save us from our guilt, firm purpose to keep from all that displeases Thee, and grace to forgive any who have offended us.

Lord, come to us to cleanse, to heal, to strengthen us.

And grant that, having received Thee, we may not forget Thee, or drive Thee from our souls by carelessness of living or any evil deed, but may remain faithful to Thee for ever. Amen.

SELF-EXAMINATION BEFORE COMMUNION

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.

Each time before receiving the Holy Sacrament, kneel down and examine your conscience carefully and seriously. First say :

O LORD God, enlighten my mind with the light of Thy truth, that I may fully know my sins and shortcomings ; and give me grace to confess them with true sorrow, and firm purpose of amendment. Amen.

Form of Self-examination.

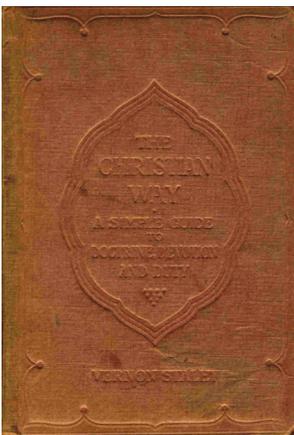
Have I had any other fear than that of God?

Have I said my prayers daily, morning and evening, with seriousness ?

Have I worshipped God in church on Sundays?

Have I tried to walk humbly in God's presence, ever depending upon His help?

Have I in everything striven to act, to the best of my knowledge, according to God's will?



The Rev. Vernon Staley: The Christian Way

Have I been obedient to those set over me?

Have I done my part towards those of my own family ?

Have I been kind and loving to others?

Have I been envious or jealous of others

Have I been unforgiving?

Have I been true and just in all my dealings with others?

Have I given place to sinful thoughts of any kind?

Have I spoken any words contrary to truth, charity, or purity?

Have I *been* impatient or *angry*?

Have I been selfish or proud?

Have I been intemperate in my habits?

Have I been immodest?

Have I done my best at my lessons or work?

After examining your conscience, say—

I CONFESS to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that I have sinned by own great fault—

in thought

in word

in deed

} *Name your sins.*

And I pray unto God to make me truly sorry, and to forgive me, and to help me to forsake my sins, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

HE SHALL

CONVERT MY

SOUL: AND

BRING ME FORTH

IN THE PATHS OF

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Preparation for Communion.

TO BE SAID BEFORE EVERY COMMUNION.

PSALM XXIII.

THE Lord is my Shepherd : therefore can I lack nothing.

He shall feed me in a green pasture : and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

He shall convert my soul: and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for His Name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.

Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me: Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.

But Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Glory be to the Father . . .

The Rev. Vernon Staley: The Christian Way

PSALM CXXX.

OUT of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord : Lord, hear my voice.

O let Thine ears consider well: the voice of my complaint.

If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss: O Lord, who may abide it ?

For there is mercy with Thee: therefore shalt Thou be feared.

I look for the Lord ; my soul doth wait for Him: in His word is my trust.

My soul fleeth unto the Lord: before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch.

O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him is plenteous redemption.

And He shall redeem Israel: from all his sins.

Glory be to the Father . . .

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

OUR Father Which art in heaven . . .

I said, Lord, be merciful unto me!

Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.

Turn Thee again, O Lord, at the last;

And be gracious unto Thy servants.

Let Thy merciful kindness, O Lord, be upon us ;

As we do put our trust in Thee.

Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness;

And Thy saints sing with joyfulness.

Cleanse Thou me from my secret faults;

Keep Thy servant also from presumptuous sins.

Lord, hear my prayer ;

And let my crying come unto Thee.

MOST gracious God, incline Thy merciful ears to our prayers, and enlighten our hearts with the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may worthily approach Thy Holy Mysteries, and love Thee with an everlasting love.

Cleanse our consciences, we beseech Thee, O Lord, by Thy visitation, that Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when He cometh, may find in us a mansion prepared for Himself ;

Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord ; Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.



The Communion Service.

Make a point of always being in your place in church at least a few minutes before Service: kneel down and pray, till the Service begins.

The Rev. Vernon Staley: The Christian Way

BEFORE THE SERVICE.

✠ IN the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

O ALMIGHTY Lord of heaven and earth, I, an unworthy sinner, desire to offer to Thee, in the name of Thy whole Church, the Commemorative Sacrifice of Thy Son Jesus Christ.

I desire to offer this great memorial of the life and death of my Saviour, *first*, for Thine own honour, adoration, and glory : *secondly*, in thanksgiving for all Thy mercies bestowed upon the whole Church, and upon me most unworthy : *thirdly*, for pardon of my sins, and those of all others for whom I ought to pray : and, *lastly*, for obtaining all graces and blessings for myself and Thy whole Church, that such as are yet alive may finish their course with joy, and that such as are dead in the Lord may rest in peace and hope, and rise in glory : for the Lord's sake, Whose life and death we are now about to commemorate.

When the priest comes in, say Psalm xliii.

GIVE sentence with me, O God, and defend my cause against the ungodly people: O deliver me from the deceitful and wicked man.

For Thou art the God of my strength, why hast Thou put me from Thee: and why go I so heavily, while the enemy oppresseth me ?

O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me: and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling.

And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness: and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God.

Why art thou so heavy, O my soul : and why art thou so disquieted within me?

O put thy trust in God: for I will yet give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

Glory be to the Father . . .

Take away from us our iniquities, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that we may be worthy to enter with pure minds into the holy of holies; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Continued next month

THOU ART THE
GOD OF MY
STRENGTH, . . .



A PAIR OF OTTER SWIMMING AROUND THE FLOATING ICE

St. Bernard of Clairvaux: On Loving God—Serialized



**ST. BERNARD OF
CLAIRVAUX**
1090–20/08/1153

Chapter VIII. Of the first degree of love: wherein man loves God for self's sake

Love is one of the four natural affections, which it is needless to name since everyone knows them. And because love is natural, it is only right to love the Author of nature first of all. Hence comes the first and great commandment, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' But nature is so frail and weak that necessity compels her to love herself first; and this is carnal love, wherewith man loves himself first and selfishly, as it is written, 'That was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual' (I Cor. 15:46). This is not as the precept ordains but as nature directs: 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh' (Eph. 5:29). But if, as is likely, this same love should grow excessive and, refusing to be contained within the restraining banks of necessity, should overflow into the fields of voluptuousness, then a command checks the flood, as if by a dike: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'. And this is right: for he who shares our nature should share our love, itself the fruit of nature. Wherefore if a man find it a burden, I will not say only to relieve his brother's needs, but to minister to his brother's pleasures, let him mortify those same affections in himself, lest he become a transgressor. He may cherish himself as tenderly as he chooses, if only he remembers to show the same indulgence to his neighbor. This is the curb of temperance imposed on thee, O man, by the law of life and conscience, lest thou shouldest follow thine own lusts to destruction, or become enslaved by those passions which are the enemies of thy true welfare. Far better divide thine enjoyments with thy neighbor than with these enemies. And if, after the counsel of the son of Sirach, thou goest not after thy desires but refrainest thyself from thine appetites (Ecclus. 18:30); if according to the apostolic precept having food and raiment thou art therewith content (I Tim. 6:8), then thou wilt find it easy to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, and to divide with thy neighbors what thou hast refused to thine own desires. That is a temperate and righteous love which practices self-denial in order to minister to a brother's necessity. So our selfish love grows truly social, when it includes our neighbors in its circle.

But if thou art reduced to want by such benevolence, what then? What indeed, except to pray with all confidence unto Him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not (James 1:5), who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness (Ps. 145:16). For doubtless He that giveth to most men more than they need will not fail thee as to the necessaries of life, even as He hath promised: 'Seek ye the Kingdom of God, and all those things shall be added unto you' (Luke 12:31). God freely promises all things needful to those who deny themselves for love of their neighbors; and to bear the yoke of modesty and sobriety, rather than to let sin reign in our mortal body (Rom. 6:12), that is indeed to seek the Kingdom of God and to implore His aid against the tyranny of sin. It is surely justice to share our natural gifts with those who share our nature.

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St. Bernard of Clairvaux: On Loving God

But if we are to love our neighbors as we ought, we must have regard to God also: for it is only in God that we can pay that debt of love aright. Now a man cannot love his neighbor in God, except he love God Himself; wherefore we must love God first, in order to love our neighbors in Him. This too, like all good things, is the Lord's doing, that we should love Him, for He hath endowed us with the possibility of love. He who created nature sustains it; nature is so constituted that its Maker is its protector for ever. Without Him nature could not have begun to be; without Him it could not subsist at all. That we might not be ignorant of this, or vainly attribute to ourselves the beneficence of our Creator, God has determined in the depths of His wise counsel that we should be subject to tribulations. So when man's strength fails and God comes to his aid, it is meet and right that man, rescued by God's hand, should glorify Him, as it is written, 'Call upon Me in the time of trouble; so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise Me' (Ps. 50:15). In such wise man, animal and carnal by nature, and loving only himself, begins to love God by reason of that very self-love; since he learns that in God he can accomplish all things that are good, and that without God he can do nothing.

Chapter IX. Of the second and third degrees of love

So then in the beginning man loves God, not for God's sake, but for his own. It is something for him to know how little he can do by himself and how much by God's help, and in that knowledge to order himself rightly towards God, his sure support. But when tribulations, recurring again and again, constrain him to turn to God for unfailing help, would not even a heart as hard as iron, as cold as marble, be softened by the goodness of such a Savior, so that he would love God not altogether selfishly, but because He is God? Let frequent troubles drive us to frequent supplications; and surely, tasting, we must see how gracious the Lord is (Ps. 34:8). Thereupon His goodness once realized draws us to love Him unselfishly, yet more than our own needs impel us to love Him selfishly: even as the Samaritans told the woman who announced that it was Christ who was at the well: 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the savior of the world' (John 4:42). We likewise bear the same witness to our own fleshly nature, saying, 'No longer do we love God because of our necessity, but because we have tasted and seen how gracious the Lord is'. Our temporal wants have a speech of their own, proclaiming the benefits they have received from God's favor. Once this is recognized it will not be hard to fulfill the commandment touching love to our neighbors; for whosoever loves God aright loves all God's creatures. Such love is pure, and finds no burden in the precept bidding us purify our souls, in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren (I Peter 1:22). Loving as he ought, he counts that command only just. Such love is thankworthy, since it is spontaneous; pure, since it is shown not in word nor tongue, but in deed and truth (I John 3:18); just, since it repays what it has received. Whoso loves in this fashion, loves even as he is loved, and seeks no more his own but the things which are Christ's, even as Jesus sought not His own welfare, but ours, or rather ourselves. Such was the psalmist's love when he sang: 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious' (Ps. 118:1). Whosoever praises

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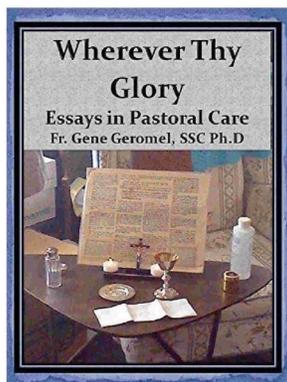
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St. Bernard of Clairvaux: On Loving God

God for His essential goodness, and not merely because of the benefits He has bestowed, does really love God for God's sake, and not selfishly. The psalmist was not speaking of such love when he said: 'So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee'(Ps. 49:18). The third degree of love, we have now seen, is to love God on His own account, solely because He is God.



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