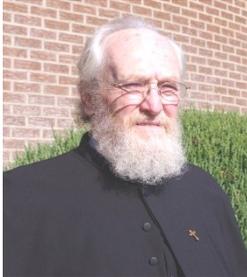


THE TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN NEWS

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Fr. Robert's Remarks



FR. ROBERT MANSFIELD, SSC
VICAR GENERAL

Greetings; the Lord be with you!

Very soon we shall be celebrating the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and I want to wish you all a blessed Advent and a wonder-filled and joyous Nativity Feast.

My words are very brief this month and simply commend the other columns in this letter.

From St. John Chrysostom's Nativity homily below, I take note of the words

For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him who works.

and I make it my Christmas prayer for you all that you may rest your faith in the power of Him who works.

Until next month. God Bless!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>Bonnie's Reflections</i>	4
<i>Frances Ridley Havergal: Kept For The Master's Use</i>	5
<i>Fr. Arthur Stanton: An Epiphanytide Sermon</i>	11
<i>The Church Mouse</i>	14

Merry Christmas!!!

St. John Chrysostom: A Homily for the Nativity of Our Lord.



ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Behold a new and wondrous mystery.

My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on

St. John Chrysostom: A Homily for the Nativity of Our Lord.

every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominations, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Since this heavenly birth cannot be described, neither does His coming amongst us in these days permit of too curious scrutiny. Though I know that a Virgin this day gave birth, and I believe that God was begotten before all time, yet the manner of this generation I have learned to venerate in silence and I accept that this is not to be probed too curiously with wordy speech.

For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him who works.

What shall I say to you; what shall I tell you? I behold a Mother who has brought forth; I see a Child come to this light by birth. The manner of His conception I cannot comprehend.

Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt.

Christ, finding the holy body and soul of the Virgin, builds for Himself a living temple, and as He had willed, formed there a man from the Virgin; and, putting Him on, this day came forth; unashamed of the lowliness of our nature.

For it was to Him no lowering to put on what He Himself had made. Let that handiwork be forever glorified, which became the cloak of its own Creator.

FOR WITH GOD
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St. John Chrysostom: A Homily for the Nativity of Our Lord.

For as in the first creation of flesh, man could not be made before the clay had come into His hand, so neither could this corruptible body be glorified, until it had first become the garment of its Maker.

What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of days has become an infant. He Who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, Who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infants bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.

For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit that He may save me.

Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been in planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infants food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever. Amen.



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Bonnie's Reflections: The Bleak Midwinter



BONNIE IVEY (& LAD)

It is the Church's Advent Season. Those of us in the Northern hemisphere are entering the darkest season that nature brings. This year, the Covid 19 pandemic adds its own chill to winter's long nights. We are in The Bleak Midwinter.

Bleak: barren; not hopeful; lacking in life, warmth or kindness

If we have accepted a world view that sees security and stability as the norm, we may have been expecting our personal plans to roll on as usual. Now we see unimaginable things happening. We feel vulnerable.

Vulnerable: open to attack or harm; exposed to the possibility of loss.

*In the bleak midwinter, frosty winds made moan
 Earth lay hard as iron, water like a stone
 Snow had fallen, snow on snow; snow on snow
 In the bleak midwinter, long ago*

These lines were written by Christina Rossetti in 1872 and set to music by Gustav Holst. Her Christmas Carol has none of the brightness of so many other favourites. But it has depth. It expresses both aspects of Advent: Christ's first coming, and his future advent at the end of earthly time.

The carol describes the infant Saviour placed on a makeshift bed, inside a shelter made for animals. Jesus was born vulnerable, as we all are. He experienced hunger, thirst, weariness and pain. Temptation and grief were part of his life. When he finished a day of teaching and healing large crowds, he had no home of his own in which to rest. Then came rejection, betrayal, and crucifixion.

While hanging on the cross, Jesus deals with the needs of others. He prays that his heavenly Father would forgive the men who had nailed him there. He commits his Mother and his closest friend into each other's care: "Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother." He tells the repentant thief hanging beside him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Then he dies. But Jesus is stronger than death.

*Heaven cannot hold him, not earth sustain
 Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign
 But in the bleak midwinter a stable-place sufficed
 The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ*

Centuries before Jesus was born, King Solomon built the First Temple at Jerusalem. At the dedication of the Temple, he prayed, "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you." (1 Kings 8:27)

In the Christmas gospel, St. John writes about the mystery of Jesus, being the creator, entering his own creation. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made... He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him." (John 1:3,10)

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But Jesus is not confined inside his creation. Like an artist, he can erase his work and make it anew. Both Old and New Testaments contain references to the destruction of the heavens and the earth, and their renewal; for example, Isaiah 65:17. "For behold I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind." Jesus states, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Matt.24:35) In the Book of Revelation the author John relates a series of visions. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away... (Rev. 20:11)

When Peter wrote his epistles, he was addressing believers who were in danger of persecution and martyrdom. He himself was later crucified. In 2 Peter, chapter 3, he wrote, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth *and everything done in it* will be laid bare. If everything will be destroyed this way, what kind of people ought you to be?...make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him." (2 Peter 3:10 ff.)

We are all hard-pressed and feeling vulnerable during these pandemic days. We need to cut each other some slack. We can't be at peace with God if we are not making every effort to be at peace with each other.

In Revelation 21 John writes, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away." He hears a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people... and he will wipe every tear from their eyes."



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Chapter VI.

Our Lips kept for Jesus

'Keep my lips, that they may be
Filled with messages from Thee.'

The days are past for ever when we said, 'Our lips are our own.' Now we know that they are not our own.

And yet how many of my readers often have the miserable consciousness that they have 'spoken unadvisedly with their lips'! How many pray, 'Keep the door of my lips,' when the very last thing they think of expecting is that they will be kept! They deliberately make up their minds that hasty words, or foolish words, or exaggerated words, according to their respective temptations, must and will slip out of that door, and that it can't be helped. The extent of the real meaning of their prayer was merely that not quite so many might slip out. As their faith went no farther, the answer went no farther, and so the door was not kept.

Do let us look the matter straight in the face. Either we have committed our lips

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to our Lord, or we have not. This question must be settled first. If not, oh, do not let another hour pass! Take them to Jesus, and ask Him to take them.

But when you have committed them to Him, it comes to this,—is He able or is He not able to keep that which you have committed to Him? If He is not able, of course you may as well give up at once, for your own experience has abundantly proved that you are not able, so there is no help for you. But if He is able—nay, thank God there is no ‘if’ on this side!—say, rather, as He is able, where was this inevitable necessity of perpetual failure? You have been fancying yourself virtually doomed and fated to it, and therefore you have gone on in it, while all the time His arm was not shortened that it could not save, but you have been limiting the Holy One of Israel. Honestly, now, have you trusted Him to keep your lips this day? Trust necessarily implies expectation that what we have entrusted will be kept. If you have not expected Him to keep, you have not trusted. You may have tried, and tried very hard, but you have not trusted, and therefore you have not been kept, and your lips have been the snare of your soul (Prov. xviii. 7).

LORD, TAKE
MY LIPS, AND SPEAK
THROUGH THEM;
TAKE MY MIND, AND
THINK THROUGH IT;
TAKE MY HEART, AND
SET IT ON FIRE.’

Once I heard a beautiful prayer which I can never forget; it was this: ‘Lord, take my lips, and speak through them; take my mind, and think through it; take my heart, and set it on fire.’ And this is the way the Master keeps the lips of His servants, by so filling their hearts with His love that the outflow cannot be unloving, by so filling their thoughts that the utterance cannot be un-Christ-like. There must be filling before there can be pouring out; and if there is filling, there must be pouring out, for He hath said, ‘Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.’

But I think we should look for something more direct and definite than this. We are not all called to be the King’s ambassadors, but all who have heard the messages of salvation for themselves are called to be ‘the Lord’s messengers,’ and day by day, as He gives us opportunity, we are to deliver ‘the Lord’s message unto the people.’ That message, as committed to Haggai, was, ‘I am with you, saith the Lord.’ Is there not work enough for any lifetime in unfolding and distributing that one message to His own people? Then, for those who are still far off, we have that equally full message from our Lord to give out, which He has condensed for us into the one word, ‘Come!’

It is a specially sweet part of His dealings with His messengers that He always gives us the message for ourselves first. It is what He has first told us in darkness—that is, in the secrecy of our own rooms, or at least of our own hearts—that He bids us speak in light. And so the more we sit at His feet and watch to see what He has to say to ourselves, the more we shall have to tell to others. He does not send us out with sealed despatches, which we know nothing about, and with which we have no concern.

There seems a seven-fold sequence in His filling the lips of His messengers. First, they must be purified. The live coal from off the altar must be laid upon them, and He must say, ‘Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.’ Then He will create the fruit of them, and this seems to be the great message of peace, ‘Peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him’ (see Isa. lvii. 19). Then comes the prayer, ‘O Lord, open Thou my lips,’

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and its sure fulfilment. For then come in the promises, 'Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth,' and, 'They shall withal be fitted in thy lips.' Then, of course, 'the lips of the righteous feed many,' for the food is the Lord's own giving. Everything leads up to praise, and so we come next to 'My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips, when I remember Thee.' And lest we should fancy that 'when' rather implies that it is not, or cannot be, exactly always, we find that the meditation of Jesus throws this added light upon it, 'By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to' (margin, confessing) 'His name.'

Does it seem a coming down from the mount to glance at one of our King's commandments, which is specially needful and applicable to this matter of our lips being kept for Him? 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' None of His commands clash with or supersede one another. Trusting does not supersede watching; it does but complete and effectuate it. Unwatchful trust is a delusion, and untrustful watching is in vain. Therefore let us not either wilfully or carelessly enter into temptation, whether of place, or person, or topic, which has any tendency to endanger the keeping of our lips for Jesus. Let us pray that grace may be more and more poured into our lips as it was into His, so that our speech may be always with grace. May they be pure, and sweet, and lovely, even as 'His lips, like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.'

We can hardly consider the keeping of our lips without recollecting that upon them, more than all else (though not exclusively of all else), depends that greatest of our responsibilities, our influence. We have no choice in the matter; we cannot evade or avoid it; and there is no more possibility of our limiting it, or even tracing its limits, than there is of setting a bound to the far-vibrating sound-waves, or watching their flow through the invisible air. Not one sentence that passes these lips of ours but must be an invisibly prolonged influence, not dying away into silence, but living away into the words and deeds of others. The thought would not be quite so oppressive if we could know what we have done and shall be continuing to do by what we have said. But we never can, as a matter of fact. We may trace it a little way, and get a glimpse of some results for good or evil; but we never can see any more of it than we can see of a shooting star flashing through the night with a momentary revelation of one step of its strange path. Even if the next instant plunges it into apparent annihilation as it strikes the atmosphere of the earth, we know that it is not really so, but that its mysterious material and force must be added to the complicated materials and forces with which it has come in contact, with a modifying power none the less real because it is beyond our ken. And this is not comparing a great thing with a small, but a small thing with a great. For what is material force compared with moral force? what are gases, and vapours, and elements, compared with souls and the eternity for which they are preparing?

We all know that there is influence exerted by a person's mere presence, without the utterance of a single word. We are conscious of this every day. People seem to carry an atmosphere with them, which must be breathed by those whom they approach. Some carry an atmosphere in which all unkind thoughts shrivel up and cannot grow into expression. Others carry one in which 'thoughts of Christ and things divine' never seem able to flourish. Have you not felt how a happy conversation about the things we love

"MY MOUTH SHALL
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REMEMBER THEE.'

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best is checked, or even strangled, by the entrance of one who is not in sympathy? Outsiders have not a chance of ever really knowing what delightful intercourse we have one with another about these things, because their very presence chills and changes it. On the other hand, how another person's incoming freshens and develops it and warms us all up, and seems to give us, without the least conscious effort, a sort of lift!

If even unconscious and involuntary influence is such a power, how much greater must it be when the recognised power of words is added!

It has often struck me as a matter of observation, that open profession adds force to this influence, on whichever side it weighs; and also that it has the effect of making many a word and act, which might in other hands have been as nearly neutral as anything can be, tell with by no means neutral tendency on the wrong side. The question of Eliphaz comes with great force when applied to one who desires or professes to be consecrated altogether, life and lips: 'Should he reason with unprofitable talk, and with speeches wherewith one can do no good?' There is our standard! Idle words, which might have fallen comparatively harmlessly from one who had never named the Name of Christ, may be a stumbling-block to inquirers, a sanction to thoughtless juniors, and a grief to thoughtful seniors, when they come from lips which are professing to feed many. Even intelligent talk on general subjects by such a one may be a chilling disappointment to some craving heart, which had indulged the hope of getting help, comfort, or instruction in the things of God by listening to the conversation. It may be a lost opportunity of giving and gaining no one knows how much!

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How well I recollect this disappointment to myself, again and again, when a mere child! In those early seeking days I never could understand why, sometimes, a good man whom I heard preach or speak as if he loved Christ very much, talked about all sorts of other things when he came back from church or missionary meeting. I did so wish he would have talked about the Saviour, whom I wanted, but had not found. It would have been so much more interesting even to the apparently thoughtless and merry little girl. How could he help it, I wondered, if he cared for that Pearl of Great Price as I was sure I should care for it if I could only find it! And oh, why didn't they ever talk to me about it, instead of about my lessons or their little girls at home? They did not know how their conversation was observed and compared with their sermon or speech, and how a hungry little soul went empty away from the supper table.

The lips of younger Christians may cause, in their turn, no less disappointment. One sorrowful lesson I can never forget; and I will tell the story in hope that it may save others from causes of similar regret. During a summer visit just after I had left school, a class of girls about my own age came to me a few times for an hour's singing. It was very pleasant indeed, and the girls were delighted with the hymns. They listened to all I had to say about time and expression, and not with less attention to the more shyly-ventured remarks about the words. Sometimes I accompanied them afterwards down the avenue; and whenever I met any of them I had smiles and plenty of kindly words for each, which they seemed to appreciate immensely. A few years afterwards I sat by the bedside of one of these girls—the most gifted of them all with both heart and head. She

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had been led by a wonderful way, and through long and deep suffering, into far clearer light than I enjoyed, and had witnessed for Christ in more ways than one, and far more brightly than I had ever done. She told me how sorrowfully and eagerly she was seeking Jesus at the time of those singing classes. And I never knew it, because I never asked, and she was too shy to speak first! But she told me more, and every word was a pang to me,—how she used to linger in the avenue on those summer evenings, longing that I would speak to her about the Saviour; how she hoped, week after week, that I would just stretch out a hand to help her, just say one little word that might be God's message of peace to her, instead of the pleasant, general remarks about the nice hymns and tunes. And I never did! And she went on for months, I think for years, after, without the light and gladness which it might have been my privilege to bring to her life. God chose other means, for the souls that He has given to Christ cannot be lost because of the unfaithfulness of a human instrument. But she said, and the words often ring in my ears when I am tempted to let an opportunity slip, 'Ah, Miss F., I ought to have been yours!'

Yes, it is true enough that we should show forth His praise not only with our lips, but in our lives; but with very many Christians the other side of the prayer wants praying—they want rousing up even to wish to show it forth not only in their lives but with their lips. I wonder how many, even of those who read this, really pray, 'O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.'

And when opened, oh, how much one does want to have them so kept for Jesus that He may be free to make the most of them, not letting them render second-rate and indirect service when they might be doing direct and first-rate service to His cause and kingdom! It is terrible how much less is done for Him than might be done, in consequence of the specious notion that if what we are doing or saying is not bad, we are doing good in a certain way, and therefore may be quite easy about it. We should think a man rather foolish if he went on doing work which earned five shillings a week, when he might just as well do work in the same establishment and under the same master which would bring him in five pounds a week. But we should pronounce him shamefully dishonest and dishonourable if he accepted such handsome wages as the five pounds, and yet chose to do work worth only five shillings, excusing himself by saying that it was work all the same, and somebody had better do it. Do we not act something like this when we take the lower standard, and spend our strength in just making ourselves agreeable and pleasant, creating a general good impression in favour of religion, showing that we can be all things to all men, and that one who is supposed to be a citizen of the other world can be very well up in all that concerns this world? This may be good, but is there nothing better? What does it profit if we do make this favourable impression on an outsider, if we go no farther and do not use the influence gained to bring him right inside the fold, inside the only ark of safety? People are not converted by this sort of work; at any rate, I never met or heard of any one. 'He thinks it better for his quiet influence to tell!' said an affectionately excusing relative of one who had plenty of special opportunities of soul-winning, if he had only used his lips as well as his life for his Master. 'And how many souls have been converted to God by his "quiet influence" all these years?' was my reply. And to that there was no answer! For the silent shining was all very beautiful in theory, but not one of the many souls placed specially un-

'O LORD, OPEN
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Frances Ridley Havergal: Kept For The Master's Use

der his influence had been known to be brought out of darkness into marvellous light. If they had, they must have been known, for such light can't help being seen.

When one has even a glimmer of the tremendous difference between having Christ and being without Christ; when one gets but one shuddering glimpse of what eternity is, and of what it must mean, as well as what it may mean, without Christ; when one gets but a flash of realization of the tremendous fact that all these neighbours of ours, rich and poor alike, will have to spend that eternity either with Him or without Him,—it is hard, very hard indeed, to understand how a man or woman can believe these things at all, and make no effort for anything beyond the temporal elevation of those around, sometimes not even beyond their amusements! 'People must have entertainment,' they urge. I do not find that must in the Bible, but I do find, 'We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.' And if you have any sort of belief in that, how can you care to use those lips of yours, which might be a fountain of life to the dying souls before you, merely to 'entertain' them at your penny reading or other entertainment? As you sow, so you reap. The amusing paper is read, or the lively ballad recited, or the popular song sung, and you reap your harvest of laughter or applause, and of complacency at your success in 'entertaining' the people. And there it ends, when you might have sown words from which you and they should reap fruit unto life eternal. Is this worthy work for one who has been bought with such a price that he must say,

'LOVE SO AMAZING,
SO DIVINE,

DEMANDS MY
SOUL, MY LIFE, MY
ALL'?

'Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all'?

So far from yielding 'all' to that rightful demand of amazing love, he does not even yield the fruit of his lips to it, much less the lips themselves. I cannot refrain from adding, that even this lower aim of 'entertaining' is by no means so appreciated as is supposed. As a cottager of no more than average sense and intelligence remarked, 'It was all so trifling at the reading; I wish gentlefolks would believe that poor people like something better than what's just to make them laugh.' After all, nothing really pays like direct, straightforward, uncompromising words about God and His works and word. Nothing else ever made a man say, as a poor Irishman did when he heard the Good News for the first time, 'Thank ye, sir; you've taken the hunger off us to-day!'

Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord; what about ours? Well, they are all uttered before the Lord in one sense, whether we will or no; for there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether! How solemn is this thought, but how sweet does it become when our words are uttered consciously before the Lord as we walk in the light of His perpetual presence! Oh that we may so walk, that we may so speak, with kept feet and kept lips, trustfully praying, 'Let the meditation of my heart and the words of my mouth be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer!'

Bearing in mind that it is not only the words which pass their lightly-hinged portal, but our literal lips which are to be kept for Jesus, it cannot be out of place, before closing this chapter, to suggest that they open both ways. What passes in should surely be considered as well as what passes out. And very many of us are beginning to see that

Frances Ridley Havergal: Kept For The Master's Use

the command, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,' is not fully obeyed when we drink, merely because we like it, what is the very greatest obstacle to that glory in this realm of England. What matter that we prefer taking it in a more refined form, if the thing itself is daily and actively and mightily working misery, and crime, and death, and destruction to thousands, till the cry thereof seems as if it must pierce the very heavens! And so it does—sooner, a great deal, than it pierces the walls of our comfortable dining-room! I only say here, you who have said, 'Take my lips,' stop and repeat that prayer next time you put that to your lips which is binding men and women hand and foot, and delivering them over, helpless, to Satan! Let those words pass once more from your heart out through your lips, and I do not think you will feel comfortable in letting the means of such infernal work pass in through them



Fr. Arthur Stanton: "Up To The Brim"

One of Fr. Arthur Stanton's last sermons preached on Epiphany II, January 14, 1912 at St. Alban's Holborn

"Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim." S. John ii. 7.

IT is a characteristic of the crystal that every fragment of it takes the shape and character—the brilliancy—of the original piece, when detached. Now, this miracle of our Lord, or rather, as we should say perhaps better, this first "sign" which our Lord did to manifest forth His glory, is like a crystal: we take just a fragment, but you will find it is quite perfect in its character. It scintillates with the same beautiful light as the whole Gospel.

I am this morning only going to talk to you about what the servants did. And the very first thing I want you to notice is this, that whenever our Blessed Lord is going to bless, He generally gives a command. When He put clay on the eyes of the blind man, He said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (S. John ix. 7). And the man went. He got his sight. When He said to the poor man in the Synagogue whose hand was withered, "Stretch forth thine hand" (S. Matt. xii. 19), he did it, and his hand was made whole. When He came to the maid who lay just dead upon her bed, He said, "Arise" (S. Matt. v. 41), "get up," and she got up and lived. When on the shores of the lake, He said to the disciples, "Launch out into the deep" (S. Luke v. 4), and they said, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word we will let down the net," they caught a multitude. When our Lord is going to give a blessing, generally He gives a command first. When He says to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31), so you shall. And when He says, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (S. Luke vi. 37), so you shall—men and women, boys and girls, all of you. When He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," so He will. That is the lesson. So He will, so He will.

And the next point I want you to think of this morning is this: His commands are to be

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Fr. Arthur Stanton: "Up To The Brim"

obeyed, and not questioned. He said to these servants—I do not know whether they were the hired servants, or from the house; probably they were hired for the occasion—but He said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water,” which was a very strange thing to do. It was so very extraordinary. It was not a feast of purification—then there would have been some reason for filling these great, huge waterpots with water—but it was a wedding feast, and they did not want water; what they wanted was wine. But they did not question it. They had got a hint. And who gave them the hint? Our Blessed Lady gave them the hint. She said to them, “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” “*Whatsoever*”—“don’t you question it. Do as He tells you.” So they did; they did not question it—they filled them up to the brim.

And so, dear brethren, if our Lord gives us a command, we are not to question the extraordinary character of the command; for instance, a drop of water to convey the Spirit! How could a drop of water convey the Holy Ghost? He tells us we must be Baptized with water and the Spirit (S. John iii. 5): “Go ye into all the world and Baptize.” But fancy a drop of water poured upon an infant! What good can it do to the infant? Or take the other great Sacrament. How can matter convey spirit? How can a little bit of bread and a drop of wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, and be held up to God as the Sacrifice on Calvary? But He said, “This do”; and when He gives the command we do not question it. Never question what the Master orders. Did the Master order it? He did. It must be done. It is quite enough--

“Their’s not to reason why,
Their’s but to do and die.”

And another point I want you to notice is this: neither must we say, “What good can it possibly do?” The servants might have thought—most certainly if our Blessed Lady had not told them what to do—What good can it do to fill these water-jars with water? Would it not be very much better, in order to save the embarrassment of not having enough wine at a marriage feast, to go out and borrow a skin or two of wine from somebody and bring it in? That is common sense. But to fill these huge jars with water! What good can it do?

And so it always is the question, dear brethren—it is the question of to-day. People are always asking the same question: “Now what good on earth can it do?” “What good will your religion do us at all?” “What good can taking the Sacrament do anybody? “Do let us use common sense. Be practical—we are practical men and women. In the life we have to live what good can it possibly do for people to go and take the Sacrament? “Have you never heard that? It is always the same! It is a practical age. “It would be very much better if you people,” they tell us clergy, “were to drop all this Sacramentalism, which is folly. What we want is better wages, better sanitation, better living—that is the question. We want what is practical; not your telling us to take the Sacrament. What good will it do anybody? “The Master says it: it is enough. Do you think for one moment that better wages, better sanitation, better circumstances can make a man happy? The unhappiest man I ever knew had £150,000 a year. (*ed. £1 in 1912 equals approximately £115 in 2020*) “Only Jesus, only Jesus, can do dying sinners good.” To take the Sacrament is to obey the Master. To touch Him, to have communion with Him, is the joy of Heaven on earth.

Well, then, the second part of my discourse is this: Let us be servants: let us be servants of the

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Fr. Arthur Stanton: "Up To The Brim"

Lord Jesus Christ. Are you not—at least when you read the Epistles—are you not surprised to find Paul, Peter, James and John—do you know what they call themselves? They are so proud of it—they all call themselves “Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.” I know they were Apostles, and Martyrs, and Saints; but what they like to call themselves, when they speak of themselves, is “*Servants* of the Lord Jesus Christ.” It would be so nice at Mass this morning if you could look right up to the Saviour and say, “Behold, O Lord, how that I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid; Thou hast broken my bonds in sunder” (Ps. cxvi. 14). Filling waterpots with water is not what you would call intellectual, is it? It is not intellectual business. Anybody could fill a waterpot with water. It is not intellectual at all. It is what we should call menial—menial service. But menial service done for the Master becomes the service of the Chosen Himself in Heaven. No service that you can do is menial if it is done for the Lord of lords, the King of kings, Who is over all things from the beginning.

And another point is this: they did it so well. They filled them up to the brim. It was not half done. You know perfectly well whether the servants that wait upon you love you by the way they do you service. It is not so much what is done as the way in which it is done. That is just the point: it is the *way* it is done. “They filled them up to the brim”—they did it right zealously.

I know this year (I am talking to those who love the Catholic Faith) we shall have what we call our Feasts of Obligation. And you will say, “Well, of course a Catholic must hear Mass on the Feasts of Obligation.” Obligation! Is that the way to serve the Master? You are quite right—it is the rule of the Church—you are quite right; but it is the *way* in which you do it. You shuffle into church late, and file in with the congregation, and then file out again! I do not call that “up to the brim,” do you? Or you say, “Well, look here, I have to go to Mass to-day, because it is a Feast of Obligation—I must go, I must go.” I do not call that “up to the brim.” It is the *way* it is done. A young fellow said to me, “I suppose I must go to Confession at Easter?” “Yes,” I said, “I think you must.” But if he goes like that it is not “up to the brim,” is it? How much better it would be for him to love to go, to like to go that he may lay down his sins at the Feet of the Lord Who bought him: “Up to the brim!”

Well, I must not delay here. Then the Lord blessed the water—of course, simply; He did not do anything, but He blessed the water into wine. Waterpots are not made for wine. Stone jars were not made for wine—skins are made for wine—stone jars are made for water; but those stone jars contained the very best from our Lord, just as the bread in the wilderness was the best ever eaten. And you say, “How do you know that?” Because “they did all eat, and were filled” (S. Matt. xv. 37). People never eat bread to the full unless it is very good! So out of the stone jars came the best wine. “I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor. iii. 6). Paul may preach, Apollos may preach; but God gives the increase. And that is an encouragement to myself, for my words may be weak as water, but if God blesses them they may be turned into the wine of the consolation of the Gospel.

And then, last of all, dear brethren, these servants of the Lord, they knew more (except our Lord and our Blessed Lady) than anybody else at the Feast. They did not know where the wine came from, but the servants who drew the water—they who did the menial work—they knew; they knew more than the rest. And don't you see how that Gospel applies to us? They

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The Church Mouse: No Fishing

Well! This was a wonderful day! One of the church ladies left a plate of fruitcake for the Children's Bible Class. Why do people only have this amazingly tasty stuff at Christmas time? One of the children (I think it was Mona) put half a slice down on the floor for me. Mmm, sweetened fruit and nuts...It was a very big meal for a small mouse but somehow, I managed it.

Up above me everyone sat around the big table with Fr. Palmer. They had been talking about sin. Some youngsters did not understand quite what that word means. Was it one thing or many different things? Was there a list? Fr. Palmer opened his large Prayer Book. "Here is a good way to think of it, in the service of Morning Prayer." He read out these words.

"We have left undone the things we ought to have done, and we have done those things we ought not to have done."

Sylvie said, "Oh! I forgot to feed my fish this morning! Is that a sin?"

"No," replied Fr. Palmer. "That's just a mistake. I'm sure you take good care of your pets. God is asking us to live the way he wants us to, and sin has to do with the things he has especially told us about. For example, he tells us not to steal, or tell lies about people, or harm one another."

"When I was little, I took a chocolate bar from the store. Like, real little," said Kevin. "Would God be upset with me for that? I didn't know it had to be paid for!"

"That was just a mistake too," said Fr. Palmer. "But now you know it's wrong to steal. So if you took the chocolate bar now, that would be sin. Then you might do one of two things. You could eat it anyway, and God would be disappointed that you had done that. Or, you could go back to the store, tell the store clerk you have something that must be paid for, and give her the money. That would be the right thing to do. And you could ask God to forgive you for taking it in the first place. That would be a VERY good thing to do. If you never went back, even though you knew you should, that would be an example of 'We have left undone those things we ought to have done.'"

"Here is a good way to say what sin is," he added. "DOING WHAT'S WRONG WHEN I KNOW WHAT'S RIGHT."



The Church Mouse: No Fishing

“Fr. Palmer,” asked Kevin, “Remember the time when you helped me understand I needed to tell my brother I was sorry for ripping up his homework? Well, I did that, and then I asked God to forgive me, but I still feel bad about it. Would God be still upset with me? Is that why I feel bad?”

“I think you feel bad,” replied Fr. Palmer, “because you are beginning to understand how important it is to treat other people the way you would like them to treat you. Maybe you can imagine now how you would feel if your own homework was destroyed. But there might be another reason, and that is you do not believe God’s promise to forgive us when we ask him to.”

“Let me tell you a little story about when I was a young man. It might seem to have nothing to do with this conversation, but listen patiently.”

“When I was a young fellow I was working with two other young men to start up little churches in a very poor part of the country. There were farmers there, but they were struggling. Nobody had much money to buy food, so we all ate what we could grow in our gardens, and kept chickens for eggs and meat. We also went fishing often. “

“One day I was trying a stream I had never fished in before. Oh, how I hoped I could catch a few fish for supper! I baited my hook and cast it into the water. There seemed to be a little tug on the line so I quickly reeled it in. But there on the hook was a rusty tin can. I made another cast and hauled up a broken basket. My third cast brought up a soggy old hat!”

“Just then an old farmer came walking by, whistling a tune. He saw the things I had fished up and he laughed!

“You’ll never catch anything good in Junk Man’s Creek!” he told me. “There was a sloppy old man used to live here and he threw all his garbage in the creek. Too lazy to cart it off to the dump. Try another place to fish, young fella!” And away he went.”

“The Bible tells us in many places that God wants to forgive us when we say we are sorry. There are word pictures to describe what he does with our sins. He stomps them under his foot. He throws them away over his shoulder. And here is my favourite. He takes our sins and flings them far away into the deepest part of the sea, never to be seen again. So there is no use fishing around for our old junky sins. They are gone. No fishing.”



NO FISHING



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Fr. Arthur Stanton: "Up To The Brim"

(Continued from page 13)

who do most work for our Saviour know most about Him. You say to me, "I should like to know and serve my Master better." And I say to you, "You do some good work for Him, and you will know Him. Simply for His dear sake, because He made you and died for you, you go and do some good work. And I will tell you what will happen : you will feel the glow of the love of God suffusing your whole being, and you may look up to Heaven and see a smile on His Face. Or you may come to church, and put out your hand and feel the wounded Hand put into yours. You try active service for the Master, Who gave Himself for you. And that is the way to know Him and to love Him." "If any man will do His Will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (S. John vii. 17). "The servants which drew the water knew."

And I ask you, this little fragment of the Gospel broken off, isn't it full of the sweet Gospel teaching? Doesn't it scintillate the light of the glorious Gospel of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

"Teach me to live, no idler let me be,
But in Thy service hand and heart employ;
Prepared to do Thy bidding cheerfully,
Be this my highest and my holiest joy.

"Teach me to live with kindly word to all,
Wearing no cold repulsive brow of gloom;
Waiting with cheerful patience till Thy call
Summons my spirit to her Heavenly Home."

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