

THIRTIETH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sun. The Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Oct. 28 **THE SIGHT WE NEED FROM THE LORD**
From Exhortation to the Greeks by Clement of Alexandria
- Mon. Monday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time
29 **ARE YOU BLIND?**
A reflection from A Spiritual Journey by Rev. Anthony Bloom
- Tues. Tuesday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time
30 **THE STRUGGLE TO OPEN OUR WINDOWS**
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- Wed. Wednesday of the 30th Week in Ordinary Time
31 **OPENING OUR EYES TO REAL HOPE**
Reflection developed on the basis of a text by Fr. Jean Danielou
- Thurs. **SOLEMNITY OF ALL THE SAINTS**
Nov.1 **THE SIGHT THAT REQUIRES PURITY OF HEART**
A reflection developed from a homily by St. Augustine
- Fri. **COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED**
2 **CAN YOU IMAGINE THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED?**
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A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard

THE SIGHT WE NEED FROM THE LORD

A reflection from Exhortation to the Greeks by Clement of Alexandria

“The commandment of the Lord shines clearly, enlightening the eyes”. That is what Scripture tells us, and it also shows us that we receive this light *from* Christ. It is by this light that we differentiate what is divine from what is only human. This is a knowledge ***“more delightful than gold and precious stones, more desirable than honey or than a honeycomb”***.

Despite the light of the stars, without the sun the world would be plunged in darkness. If we had not known Christ, the Word, we would have been no better off than the chickens that people raise in complete darkness so they will be more tender—i.e., we would have been reared only for death. We have to open ourselves to the light; we have to become disciples of the Lord. Christ promised to the Heavenly Father: ***“I will make known your name to my brothers and sisters and praise you where they are assembled”***. So we sing God’s praises. Christ’s words save us and instruct us. Once I wandered and got lost searching for God but with Christ’s light we find the right path. With you O Lord Jesus I have light, I find God, I receive the Heavenly Father, I become a coheir with you because you weren’t ashamed of me but made me your brother.

We have to shake off forgetfulness of these truths. We have to shake off that ignorance and darkness that dims our sight. We need to contemplate the true God and raise a song of praise. ***“All hail, O Light!”*** Upon us, buried in darkness, imprisoned in the shadow of death, a heavenly light has shown. It surpasses the sun in brightness and is sweeter than anything in this earthly life can be. This light is eternal life for all who receive it. Night is afraid of light, and gives place to the day in something like terror. Unfailing light has now penetrated everywhere. The Day of the Lord is come! Sunset has been turned into dawn.

This is what it means to say that there is a new creation. The Sun of righteousness has come to visit us, just like the Heavenly Father, ***“who makes the sun rise upon all, and bestows truth on every one”***. Christ has changed sunset into dawn and death into life and did it by his crucifixion. He has snatched the human race from perdition and exalted it to Heaven. He transplants what was merely mortal into the Kingdom of immortality. He is God’s gardener and points the way to prosperity. He prompts us all to good works and reminds us how to live according to truth. He bestows the truly great and divine heritage of the Heavenly Father, one that cannot be taken away from us. Christ deifies us by heavenly teaching, instills his laws into our minds, and writes them on our hearts.

What are the laws Christ prescribes? First, that all should know God. ***“I will be merciful to those who know me and I will remember their sins no more.”*** Let us accept these laws of life. Let us obey God’s promptings. Let us learn to know him so that God may be merciful to us. Although God stands in no need of it, praise God and pay God your debt of gratitude in willing obedience to his Law. Think of it as a kind of rent we owe God for our lodging here below. Watch Jesus and see how to love God. He also shows you how to love each of God’s children.

ARE YOU BLIND?

A reflection from A Spiritual Journey by Rev. Anthony Bloom

I believe that one of the things which prevents us from being truly ourselves is that we don't realize the extent to which we are blind! If we knew the truth we would eagerly seek healing from Jesus. It is a tragedy that we don't realize our blindness. Blinded by the world of ordinary things we forget that they are too shallow to lead us to the depths we are capable of by God's gift. We sometimes think of ourselves as grains of dust in immense and every expanding universe, but when we turn inward we discover that the universe's immensity isn't great enough to fill us. The holy Scriptures speaks of the depths of the human heart. It isn't a depth that can be measured in ordinary ways. It is rooted in the immensity of God, who alone can fill our hearts to the brim.

Do you know the difference between a presence that we have to seek because we sense it in our hearts and one that is simply present and asserting itself? If we do then we have understood this difference between the things that surround us and that inner depth which only God can fill. We have to face the fact that we are blinded by the visible and that it is preventing us from grasping the invisible. To be blind to the invisible, and to be aware only of the tangible world, is to be on the outside of the genuine fullness of knowledge, outside the experience of the total reality which is the world of God. God is at the heart of the world.

Blind Bartimaeus was painfully aware of all this because of his physical blindness. Even the visible world escaped him. He could only cry out to the Lord in a kind of despair at the hope he sensed when he realized that salvation was passing by and that he was cut off from it. He screamed out his hope and need. The reason why all too often we can't do this as he did is that we don't realize how much we are cut off by being blind to the total vision of the "real" world. It is a vision that could give us access to complete reality that includes the reality of the visible world.

If only we would learn to be blind to the visible, so that we might see beyond it, so that we might see into the genuine depth, the invisible world. It is in us and around us and penetrates us and all things. There is a presence that comes to us and calls us inwardly only waiting for us to abandon the rags that we use to protect ourselves from ordinary cold and hunger—and from coming to our God and savior to plead that he grant us the sight we need to really come alive. You can only do this if you are ready to confess: I am blind! But you won't do that until you grasp the alternative that is really right there in front of you—Jesus Christ offering salvation from blindness to all that which our God wants to give us, starting today.

THE STRUGGLE TO OPEN OUR WINDOWS

A reflection from St. Ambrose's commentary on Psalm 118

“You are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are true!” The Lord is near each of us because God is everywhere. We can't escape God, even if we sin, and we can't deceive God nor lose God, even if we worship wrongly. God watches everything and sees everyone and everything and is even closer to us than we are to ourselves. We read in Scripture that the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world! ***“I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord”***. Where could God fall to be if God fills all? This is an invitation is to share with God in this fullness.

We know, then, that God is everywhere and fills the sky, the earth and the sea. *If I go up to heaven you are there! If I go down into death you are there! If I flee to dwell at the sea's furthest end, even there your hand will lead me and your right hand will hold me fast!* Few words are needed to show that God is everywhere. Wherever the Spirit is there is God, and wherever God is there is the Spirit. The union of the indivisible Trinity is portrayed here, since it is the Son of God who pronounced these words through the mouth of his prophet and psalmist. God speaks through human nature because God descended to earth in the incarnation, ascended to heaven in the resurrection, and, through bodily death, entered into death to free its prisoners. Wherever God the Father and God's Holy Spirit are, Christ is near at hand.

Since we know that the sun shines everywhere in the course of a day, can we doubt that the splendor of God's glory and the image of God's being shines everywhere? What could the Word of God, the eternal splendor of God's being, not penetrate and fill? Christ illuminates even the hidden mind even though the sun can't penetrate there. Christ penetrates the soul and illuminates it as with the brightness of eternal light. Yet even if Christ's strength is poured out among all and into all and over all—for Christ was born among us of the Virgin and for our sakes, and even if it is poured over the good and bad, nevertheless Christ warms only those who come near.

Just as people shut out the sun's brightness when they close the windows of their houses and choose to live in darkness, so those who turn their backs on the Sun of Righteousness can't see the splendor or be warmed by it. Do you walk in darkness like such people?

It is plain to everyone that if you do this you are the cause of your blindness. Open your windows! Let light fill your entire inward house with a brightness greater than the physical sun can give. Let that inward house shine with the brightness of the True Sun. Open your eyes so you become able to see the Sun of Righteousness that is right here in front of you!!

The window you must open is that of faith. And you open it when you live in the love Christ has shown us. Throw open the windows of your life so that love may shine out of you and enlighten everyone around you in just the way Christ himself let his light shine on you and opened the eyes of Bartimaeus. In faith and trust you can be a lamp from whom Christ's light shines.

OPENING OUR EYES TO HOPE

A reflection based on a text by Fr. Jean Danielou

People are often called prophets now-a-days, and that is understood as a claim that they have an intuitive interpretation of some aspect of the historical processes of our time. This conception is shaped to fit our understanding of reality's historical character. This idea is open to the same criticism as our contemporary notions of history. One supposedly sees where class war or some form of technological progress will lead. This is a misunderstanding because the insight is taken to be absolutely, factually true. I take it that this is inspired by the Prince of this World; people tend to interpret history as they would like to have—so it will realize their will to power and their selfish lusts, whereas the true prophet is concerned with history as God makes it.

Real prophetism is the business of people endowed by God with insight into what can or cannot happen if people follow such worldly leadings in preference to God's leadings. The actual maker of history is the Holy Spirit and from the Spirit it gets its purpose and so its meaning. The Spirit alone penetrates into the depths of God's nature and purposes, and so looks beyond the merely earthly. Entering into the ways of God is the only path by which one can see "where things are heading", because God has revealed something about the direction in which things are being led.

Everything is moving toward the state of being God's Kingdom where all will be completely, and holily, what God calls all to be. We can say that the ways of God pass all human understanding, but this is only partly the case. God has revealed a good deal about the ways in which individuals and history are being led. One who not only has been entrusted with these "secrets" of God is able to discern, by the help of the Spirit, whether a certain way of doing things or of living can or can't lead into God's Kingdom.

The natural endowments of people called to prophecy are of little comparative importance. It is nice if they are talented and can use those talents to advance their prophetic mission. It seems that Jeremiah might have been handicapped by a stammer, but he was nevertheless the Lord's. A prophet is a witness. The quality required of a witness is the ability to see things as they are and to tell people the way things are—in this case, it is the way they are with God. Those who see "where God is leading" and how this matches up or fails to with where human organizations are trying to lead their members, is not required to testify to any personal facts. What a prophet is sent to do is to open people's minds—and ears and eyes—to God's hand working in history and in their hearts. The prophet's call is to follow God. This means it is a call to fidelity and trust. Rather than trusting in ourselves, or in our knowledge and capacities to make certain things happen, we are called to trust God to lead all things so they happen in a way that achieves what we call "God's will". That will achieve the good God intends to share with us, but which we ourselves can't attain. We need to have our eyes opened to the path which embodies trust in God. That is the only path which leads us to real hope. Hope needs a basis to be real and the only real basis is God. Look to God for real hope!

THE SIGHT THAT REQUIRES PURITY OF HEART

A reflection based on a homily by St. Augustine

“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God”. The goal of love and its fulfillment is seeing God. It is our “end”, as we say, but not the kind of end that is reached when something is used up; it is the kind that brings things to perfection. Food is destroyed when it has been finished by being eaten; a garment is finished, however, when nothing remains to be added to make it perfect. Now apply this distinction to yourself.

Whatever we do, whatever good deeds we perform, whatever we strive for, and whatever praiseworthy objective we long for, all of these efforts will end in their perfection—if they end in what we call the “vision of God”. What is left to long for or seek when one has God? What will be enough if God is not enough? We want to see God, we strive with all our might to see God, but who doesn’t?

Scripture says to us: ***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”!*** What do you need in order to see God? What good would it do one to long to see a sunset if that person were blind? What good does it do if one has damaged sight? If one’s eyes aren’t healthy one can’t enjoy a sunset because the light may bring torment. That happens to those who try to see God with an impure heart.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!” Do you think this blessedness is due to good works, services, merits and is a kind of reward? But Scripture says otherwise: ***“Blessed are the pure in heart for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”***. ***Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”*** ***“Blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted.”*** ***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”*** ***“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.”*** None of these are said to “see God”. Only to the pure in heart is seeing God is promised.

This is because it is the heart that has “eyes” capable of seeing God. To such eyes the apostle Paul refers when he talks about ***“having the eyes of your heart enlightened”***. Eyes of this kind are enlightened by faith now; it is only hereafter that they will be enlightened by sight. ***“As long as we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord, for we walk now by faith and not by sight.”*** When we are in this state of faith we are said ***“to see as in a mirror dimly; but then we shall see face to face”***. What is it that makes the “eyes of the heart” able to receive the gracious gift of seeing God?

It is love. The pure of heart are those who love the Lord with all their lives and strength and heart. How are we made able to love God so totally? We are changed little by little as we “see” God in others and respond to them with a love like the love of our Lord Jesus. The eyes of your heart are opened first by the faith that Christ is in all whom God has chosen to become “God’s own”. We learn to see this as our faith grows strong. But we don’t only see it; we respond by loving others as we want to love Our Lord. Then our eyes begin to become strong enough to see God. It is the ability to see God in others and love God in others that makes our heart’s eyes able to see God. That’s what God’s holy ones, God’s saints have learned to do. That is why we celebrate their holiness and seek to follow them.

HOW DO YOU IMAGINE THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED?

A reflection excerpted from a text by St. Catherine of Genoa

There is no complete joy save in paradise. There is no joy to be compared to that of a soul in purification except that of those in paradise. As the rust of sin is consumed one becomes more and more open to God's love. Just as a covered object left out in the sun can't for all that be penetrated deeply by the sun's light so it isn't just that surface defects, our sins, need to be removed. Having opened oneself to being made wholly one with God's will, one lets go of all sin. Only then can one open oneself fully to God. To the extent that God gives this gift one "sees into" God.

Joy in God, oneness with God, is the end of every human person. Seeking this is an instinct implanted in us at our creation. We want to respond fully to the love of God and what we say about God and what it is like to open oneself fully is nothing in comparison with the reality. When God finds one pure, as one was first created, then God tugs at us with a kind of glance. This draws and binds one to God with a love that is like pure fire. In that love God so transforms us that we know nothing but God. And God doesn't stop until we are brought to our perfection!

This is why one seeks to cast off all that gets in the way of being lifted up and brought close to God. Such obstacles are what causes suffering in one who is seeking only to be wholly God's. I don't think that those who have died and are with God but in a state of being purified dwell on their sufferings. They dwell rather on the resistences they find in themselves to abandoning self to God's will. Against a pure love bent on nothing but being one with God one runs into various obstacles. I imagine it as though a bolt of lightning darted from God's love to the person involved and it seems so intense and fiery as to seem to annihilate the one it strikes. Yet it makes one like wholly purified gold. The heat of love purifies one by burning away all that gets in its way.

The last stage of love is that which does its work with any human doing. Which of us is aware of the many flaws hidden in us? If we knew perhaps we would despair. But all these are burned away in us by God. God shows us our weaknesses and does this in a way that shows us how God works within us in ways we can't achieve of ourselves. If we are to come to our perfection many things must change but we can't make the changes. So God does. It is the pure and intense love of God that does this. The overwhelming love of God gives one a joy beyond words. Purification is a process of great joy that is also great suffering. They two don't exclude one another.

We have all experienced something like this in ourselves. We have seen that happening in those we love and with whom we sense ourselves united by prayer. Perhaps this gives us pain. Perhaps the pain is part of our purification, just as it is theirs. What response can be more fitting than one that brings a joy that is inseparable from suffering. Both feelings draw us mysteriously closer to our God and open our eyes to see God as God really is?

THE LORD IS WITH US!

A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Bernard

“Hail, filled with grace! The Lord is with you!” (Lk.1:28) Notice that the angel doesn’t say “the Lord in in you” but “the Lord is with you”. God by reason of the simplicity of the Divine Essence is equally and entirely present everywhere. Yet by reason of his working and influence in rational creatures God is present to them in a special way. And God’s presence in the good is different than God’s presence in the wicked. God is present in all creatures, yet not all can, so to speak, embrace God. That is why God is in a special way present with us humans. Because God has given us a special ability we can embrace our God.

Only those who are good embrace God in love. That means that only for the good is God is present in such a way as not only to be in but with them. This expresses the harmony of their wills with God’s will. You can so conform your will to God’s—for example, by one’s willing justice—that it won’t be unworthy of God to will what you will. This is concord between God’s will and a human will, and that means you are united with God in the special way I have described.

This is the case for everyone whom we can call holy. Yet it is particularly true of Mary. She was so closely united to God that not only her will but her flesh was united to God. From God’s own substance and the substance of the Virgin God fashioned one Christ. Better, God became the one Christ who was neither wholly from God nor wholly from the Virgin yet belonged wholly to God and wholly to her. There aren’t two sons but one. One and the same Christ is the son of both God and Mary.

You can see why the angel said, ***“Hail, filled with grace, the Lord is with you!”*** O Mary, God is with you—and not the son alone, whom you clothed with your flesh, but likewise the Holy Spirit, by whom you conceived, and the Heavenly Father, by whom from eternity your child is begotten. The Heavenly Father is with you and has given you the Son to be yours too. The Son is with you. The Son in a marvelous way has entered your womb without your losing your virginity. The Holy Spirit is with you, and is with the Heavenly Father and the Son in preparing your virginal body to be the dwelling place of your Lord and God’s Word. Indeed, the Lord is “with” you!

What is more, you will all this with all your heart and mind and strength and do this in love. That is what you call us to do with you, so that the Lord may be with us too as with you. Pray that we may indeed receive this grace, today and every day until we are made one with God, and so with you, in God’s Kingdom. Pray that we may be with the Lord even as the Lord is with you—in one will and love.