

Ab AUSTRo

Newsletter of
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Priory update

Dear Friends,

The cool weather has finally set in here at Jerusalem Estate, though certainly not 'cold' by any reckoning. As has long been said, 'it' never gets cold in Tasmania (though we have not yet quite worked out what 'it' is!) Despite this, we have been busy about the things of God and busy about looking after the gifts He has given us.

It's been a while since we have had a community work day, so in mid-June, we resumed this custom by spending the day planting trees and getting a few things in order outside. Like the spiritual life, without constant maintenance, things get out of control pretty quickly.



The community was blessed to welcome back Fr Paschal Corby OFM Conv. to preach our annual community retreat; this year's theme, the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi. Fr Paschal led the community through a series of reflections on the writings and spirit of St Francis, in particular with regards to his teaching on the evangelical counsels and the theological virtues. A profitable time was had by all, and we look forward to welcoming him back again soon.

Corpus Christi, that annual feast in honour of the Most Blessed Sacrament, was celebrated with great solemnity, with an outdoor Eucharistic procession on the Sunday within the Octave. The feast itself on the



previous Thursday was spent with quiet Adoration in the church. This feast is always a great reminder of Our Lord's love for us, and His desire to 'remain' with us always – *mane nobiscum Domine!*

In late June, Fr Prior travelled to the United States to give two retreats in Ohio; both were well attended, and also provided the opportunity to make fraternal visits to the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Chicago and St Anne's Monastery in Evansville.

Brother Chronicler



QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE





In the school of St Benedict

Chapter Four on the Instruments of Good Works, cont'd

Today we come to two of St Benedict's instruments for good works that offer us an intriguing perspective on the spiritual combat. He begins by telling us: *To hate one's own will*. And just a few lines later: *To hate no man*. So we need to hate ourselves, but nobody else. Let's make haste to acknowledge that this formulation baffles us. To not hate any other person is readily recognised as a Christian attitude, but to hate one's own will strikes fear into our hearts. We can understand the need to renounce our own will on certain occasions for the good of peace (e.g., in a family strife) or even for our own good (e.g., when we need to give up certain foods that are bad for our health). Giving up something we like and giving in to someone else is praiseworthy, and most people are able to practice such charity now and then. But from there to hating what we would like to do is a big step. How are we to understand this?

We can begin by pointing out that Our Blessed Lord Himself uses the language of hatred in the Gospel in a few verses that are not often quoted. St John records that Our Lord, just before His passion, said: *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal* (Jn 12:25). St Luke for his part, relays these words: *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple* (Lk 14:26). Our Lord then is telling us that we must hate not only our own life, but we must also hate our parents, children and siblings! He adds that this is required for following Him and it is necessary to obtain eternal life.

Did not God create all things? Are not all things good? Indeed: *For Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made: for Thou didst not appoint, or make any thing hating it* (Wisdom 11:25). So,

if God loves all things, and He tells us to hate ourselves, there must be some deeper meaning to the word "hate".

In reality, if the Lord uses such a strong word, it is to get across to us how important it is not to get our values wrong. He wants it to be perfectly clear that the most important thing in life is our relationship with Him. If that is good, all other things will be in peace. But the only way for the relationship with Him to be well-ordered is for us to sometimes do ourselves violence. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Mt 11:12).

Our fallen nature, due to original sin, is so inclined to put itself first in spite of God and others – and sometimes against them – that, unless we exert great energy against ourselves, going to the point of appearing to hate ourselves, then our chances of choosing God are slim. This is why we must hate our own will. An example that comes to mind is St Jane de Chantal, who as a widow discovered she had a calling to religious life. When one of her children lay down over the threshold of the door to prevent her from going to the convent, she simply stepped over him and went her way. Her maternal heart had to practice such vigorous detachment that an outside observer would have thought she hated her son. In reality, she loved him so much that she would not allow him to interfere with what she owed directly to God.

When St Benedict adds that we must hate no man, this flows logically from the preceding. The command to love our neighbour is universal, and so we can exclude no one from it, even those who may have hurt us deeply. We must entrust them to God's mercy and pray for them, but this we can do only if we have learned to overcome our self-centredness by "hating" ourselves. The two verses are intimately linked, for the first makes the second possible.



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Br Paphnutius Tours the Summa

Father Germanus commences today's lesson:

“Brothers, you will recall how, in our last class, we discussed the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Council of Nicaea. Today we consider the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In the years following the first Council, there was a great deal of turmoil, for the Arians, though condemned, did not all submit to the decisions of the Council, and furthermore they found support in the Emperor. It was during this time that St Athanasius was exiled several times from his See of Alexandria. But there was another cause of unrest, in that other heretics, admitting the divinity of Christ, refused the same honours to the Holy Spirit. They were known as *Pneumatomachi* or Fighters against the Spirit; they were also known as Macedonians, because the patriarch of Constantinople, Macedonius, is said to have spread the heresy. Whence the need for the Second Ecumenical Council which took place in Constantinople in 381, a little less than sixty years after Nicaea.”

Br Paphnutius raises his hand: “Father, it’s easy to see how stupid Arius was in rejecting the divinity of the Son, but as for the Holy Spirit, does Holy Scripture make it all that clear?”

“If you study the Scriptures attentively,” Fr Germanus resumes, “you will find a great number of proofs, direct and indirect, of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. St Thomas went to the trouble of doing this in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Book 4, ch. 17). Here are just a few of the over twenty passages he brings to our attention, and which clearly show that the Holy Spirit is truly God, one with the Father and the Son:

“*Proof from Creation:* Only God can create things out of nothing; but the Psalmist attributes creation to the Holy Spirit in the following terms that you would be familiar with, as they are used in the prayer we recite before class: *Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created* (Ps 103:30). Furthermore Job (33:4) says: *The Spirit of God made me*. The Book of Sirach (Eccli 1:9) says of God: *He created her*, meaning wisdom, *in the Holy Spirit*. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is Creator, and if He

is Creator, He is God.

“*Proof from Omnipresence:* To be present everywhere at once is proper to God, who says in Jeremiah (23:24): *I fill heaven and earth*. But this omnipresence belongs to the Holy Spirit, for we read in Wisdom (1:7): *The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world*. The Psalmist also says: *Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy face?* (Ps 138:7-8). Our Lord also says to the disciples: *You shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth* (Acts 1:8), from which it is clear that the Holy Spirit is everywhere. Since only God dwells in every place, the Holy Spirit is clearly God.

“*Proof from Sanctification:* To sanctify men is the proper work of God, for Leviticus (22:32) says: *I am the Lord who sanctify you*. But it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies, as the Apostle says: *You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God* (1 Cor 6:11). Necessarily, therefore, the Holy Spirit is God.

“*Proof from Prophecy:* It is God who speaks by the Prophets. Numbers (12:6) says: *If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream*. And a Psalm (84:9) says: *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me*. But it is plain to see that the Holy Spirit has spoken in the Prophets. One reads in Acts (1:16): *The Scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David*. And in Matthew our Lord says: *How do the scribes say that Christ is the son of David. For David himself says by the Holy Spirit: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit you at My right hand*. And in 2 Peter (1:71) we read: *For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time, but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit*. Therefore, one plainly gathers from the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is God. It is for this reason that the Council of Constantinople will add to the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit, ‘the Lord and Giver of Life, spoke through the Prophets’”.

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JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

I am come to cast fire on the earth,
and what will I, but that it be kindled?

Lk 12:49

“The second reason we suffer desolation is that God wishes to try us, to see how much we are worth, and how much we will advance in His service and praise when left without the generous reward of consolations and signal favours” (Sp. Ex. # 322).



In our last instalment we saw that the first reason we undergo desolation is our own fault; it was a punishment we deserved for not having corresponded with the graces received. Here, St Ignatius tells us that sometimes desolation is not our fault at all, but rather is the Lord's doing. He allows us to lose our former joy and fervour, but for one very specific purpose: to teach us the very important lesson of how weak we are without His aid.

Weak persons need to be led on by the promise of rewards and satisfactions. They are very much like children who, without a pat on the head and a piece of candy, will drift off into amusements and not be diligent in their duties. So, in the spiritual life, there are many who are happy to pray when they feel the consolations of the Holy Spirit. But this cannot last, for such unending bliss is reserved for Heaven. The question we need to ask ourselves is: When we come to prayer, is it about ourselves or is it about God? Is our prayer time about feeling good about ourselves, or about truly coming to know and love our Blessed Lord?

Christ has many companions of His table, but few of His passion. There are many who love the Jesus who speaks tenderly of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air whom God looks after. Many more delight in contemplating Jesus as He embraces little children, or speaks words of consolation to those in

need. There are few, however, who follow Him in His tribulations and walk with Him to Calvary. And there are even fewer who, once they've reached Calvary, stay there and accept to be crucified with the Lord.

And yet, these last are the ones who are His most intimate friends, because they do not love Jesus for their own sake, but for Jesus' sake. The grandeur of such souls is revealed, however, only when tried and tested, like gold in the furnace or silver in the fire, as Holy Scripture says: *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Humble thy heart, and endure: incline thy ear, and receive the words of understanding; and make not haste in the time of clouds. Wait on God with patience: join thyself to God, and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end. Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation* (Sirach 2:1-5).

A good father is more demanding of the child who shows more promise. A good coach will work the best athlete the hardest, because he knows what he is capable of if pushed to surpass himself. Let's try to keep all this in mind, for although we find it daunting, it should actually give us great confidence and incentive. If the Lord puts us through such a trial, it's because He loves us and wants us to grow and get closer to Him, to learn how to suffer in peace, trusting that all is in His hands. The saints were flesh and blood like us, and they did not become saints overnight thanks to the sweetness of a consoling meditation. They became saints because they accepted the challenge, and grew through it. The ordeal changed them for the better, made them into new men and women who then became an inspiration for the whole world. As St Augustine said: *Quod isti et istae, cur non ego? – What these men and women did, why not I?*

