LENT 2016

Be At Peace

Have no fear for what tomorrow may bring. The same loving God who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. He will either shield you from suffering or give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations, and say continually “The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart has trusted in Him and I am helped. He is not only with me but in Me and I in Him.”

St. Francis de Sales

For a Holy Heart

Lord, grant me a holy heart that sees always what is fine and pure and is not frightened at the sight of sin, but creates order wherever it goes.

Grant me a heart that knows nothing of boredom, weeping and sighing.

St. Thomas More

Let me not be overly concerned with the bothersome thing I call :myself.”

Lord, give me a sense of humor and I will find happiness in life and profit for others.

St. Thomas More
The Old Testament taught us this truth by many figures and images, particularly that of the brass serpent that Moses erected on the pole to protect the Israelites from serpent bites. You know the whole story, I am sure, and how it happened. [Num. 21:6-9]. When God withdrew His people from slavery in Egypt to lead them to the Promised Land under the command of that great captain, Moses, a strange misfortune occurred. Small serpents came out from the earth and overran the desert where the poor Israelites were. Their bite, thought apparently not very painful, was certainly very dangerous. It was so venomous that all those bitten would surely have died if, in His goodness and infinite Providence, God had not provided a remedy. Moved by the sight of this pitiable misfortune, Moses spoke to God and asked for some remedy against it. The Lord commanded him to make a brass serpent and to place it on a tall pole, promising that those bitten by the small serpents would be cured by gazing upon it. Moses promptly did this, enjoining those bitten to cast their eyes on the brass serpent mounted on the pole. Those who did so were immediately cured. Those unwilling to gaze upon it died, for there was no other means of escaping death that that which was ordained by God Himself. “Oh! how good was the God of Israel” [Ps. 72(73):1].

I pray you to notice how well this incident symbolizes the cause or motivation of Our Lord's death. These children of Israel, withdrawn from slavery to Egypt, stand for the entire human race, whom God had preserved from sin and placed in the promised land of the earthly paradise, where He had established us in original justice. But in paradise a terrible thing took place: small serpents arose, and stung us in the persons of our first parents, Adam and Eve. The companions and accomplices of him who had stung our first parents so overran the desert, which is this world, that we would all surely have been bitten. I say all, because no creature can think himself exempt from such a bite, that is, from original and actual sin: Original Sin in the person of our first parents, and actual sin in our own person. If anyone says that he has been preserved from it he is certainly a liar. Indeed, as the great Apostle writes, if anyone thinks he is without sin, do not believe him, for iniquity reigns in him. [Rom. 3:23; 5:12-18; 1 Jn. 1:8-10]...

Assuredly, and He could have redeemed us in a thousand ways other than that of His Son’s death. But He did not will to do so, for what may haveen sufficient for our salvation was not sufficient for His love; and to show us how much he loved us, this divine Son died the cruelest and most ignominious of deaths, that of the Cross.

The implication in all this is clear: since He died of love for us, we also should die of love for Him; or, if we cannot die of love, at least we should live for Him alone. [2 Cor. 5:14-15].

Excerpt from the sermon for Good Friday
St. Francis de Sales
March 25, 1622
“The Institute of Christ the King operates under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception, to Whom it is consecrated.” Our founder and Prior General, Monsignor Gilles Wach, chose the Immaculate Conception as the primary patroness of our Institute. This consecration is renewed publicly and solemnly each year on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, on December 8, by our Prior General, and all canons join him in this important moment in the life of our young community, in the different parishes, churches and chapels, which are under the care of the Institute.

Why is the patronage of the Immaculate Conception so important for our community?

As part of the offertory prayers at Mass the celebrant pronounces the words: “O God, Who in creating human nature didst marvelously ennoble it, and hast still more marvelously renewed it …” God’s creation is good and full of beauty and splendor. Only the sin of man was able to darken this light of God’s goodness made visible in His works of creation. God’s best intentions were counteracted by original sin and they continue to be thwarted by every personal sin. By creating the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Immaculate Conception, “full of grace”, free from any stain of the original fall and as a perfect mirror of God’s uncreated truth, beauty and goodness, the Almighty did far surpass the brilliance of man’s original innocence. By the Immaculate Conception, God recreated His creation anew from within, without breaking nature but by elevating it to a new height of dignity and beauty.

The victory over sin is God’s victory, made visible for the first time in the immaculately conceived Virgin who was destined to become the Mother of God. In Mary, the Immaculate Conception, God has “still more marvelously renewed” His creation that desired for so long a savior who would be worthy to free us from our sins. In Mary, the Immaculate Conception, Christ’s victory on the Cross over the devil, over sin and death, was anticipated by granting the privilege of exemption from the fatal inheritance we carry into the world at birth.

In the Immaculate Conception, the God-man and savior Jesus Christ found and chose the only adequate Mother, who allowed Him to come into this world to suffer and die for us. Whenever we celebrate the liturgy of the Church, we reap the fruits of the work of the Incarnation of Christ in Mary. That God made man becomes visible in the liturgy in which God’s grace is channeled to us in the sacred vessels of the sacraments and all sacramentals which accompany the celebration of these mysteries of faith.
In addition, Mary is always present when the Holy Sacrifice of Mass is celebrated. She is present as the Mother of Jesus Christ who accompanied Him throughout His life and who shared all of His sentiments and His redemptive love until His death on the Cross, out of love for all men. She continues to love all men also now with this same motherly and almost infinite love. Her Immaculate Heart moves her to love us, especially the priests, with a caring, protective and benevolent love that only a mother possesses and exercises.

The Immaculate Conception is eager and zealous in her intercession for us, because she wants all of us to spread the victory of Christ over the entire creation. The Institute’s mission is to make this victory visible and fruitful in all men. “The mission of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest is to spread the reign of Christ in all spheres of human life by drawing from the millennial treasury of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly her liturgical tradition, the unbroken line of spiritual thought and practice of her saints, and her cultural patrimony in music, art and architecture.” With her motherly care, the Immaculate Conception continues to sanctify, to purify, to correct, to guide, to pray for us and to protect us. In the 25 years of existence of the Institute, especially our superiors and all Institute members have experienced this gentle but most powerful protective and guiding hand of the Immaculate Conception.
A commentary on the fourth Psalm for Sunday Compline “Cum invocarem…”

Rev. Canon Jean-Marie Moreau
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The members of the Society of the Sacred Heart are called to pray the canonical hour of Compline every night, before retiring to bed. To help them pray with dignity, attention and devotion (“digne, attente et devote”), we would like to offer a brief commentary on the Psalm 4, the first that the Holy Church puts on our lips and in our hearts as Her official evening prayer.

The rule of our blessed patron St Benedict states:

“The prophet saith: seven times a day have I given praise to thee (Ps. 111:164). We shall observe this sacred number of seven, if we fulfill the duties of our service in the hours of Laudes, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline (Chap. 16). Let Compline be limited to the saying of three Psalms (Chap. 17). At Compline let the same Psalms be repeated every day: that is the fourth, the nineteenth and the hundred and thirty-third” (Chap. 18).

From old tradition therefore, the Psalm 4 is one of the favorites for the last hour of the day, when it is time to retire and take one’s rest after a long day of labor or struggle. We read as a matter of fact these words: “be sorry for your sins upon your beds (in cubilibus vestris)” (v. 5) and “I will sleep and will rest (dormiam et requiescam)” (v. 9). But also the reference to the light as it contrasts with the darkness of the night: “The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us (signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui)” (v. 7). “The traditional time for this psalm is the coming of night, the approach of darkness, and in such a context the psalmist remembers the true light, the light of glory that shines from the face of the Lord (cf. “Lumen Christi” of the Easter Vigil). “The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us.”

Here we touch the deepest level of desire in the book of Psalms, the longing for the glory of God, and the psalmist announces that this glory has already been signed (sealed, signatum, in Latin) upon us…such are the closing thoughts of the Christian’s day” (Reardon in Christ in the psalms).

V.1. When I called upon Him, the God of my justice heard me: when I was in distress, Thou hast enlarged me.

The two parts of verse 1 form what is called a parallelism in Hebrew poetry. “When I called upon Him” parallels “when I was in distress” and “thou hast enlarged me” responds or emphasizes how “the God of my justice heard me”. The historical context for the composition of this psalm seems to be the dispute of Absalom with his father David. But David putting all his trust in God, overcame his son’s rebellion and found mercy, victory and peace. Based on his own experience, he exhorts us on behalf of Christ (to whom he was only a prophet and a figure) to imitate him.

Note the shift of person after the star, from the third “God heard me” to the second “thou hast enlarged me”. It is frequent in the Psalms and it deserves all our attention. Our beloved patron St Thomas explains: “it was fitting to change the construction on account of the meter (poetry), or because of the manner of prayer, where by reason of diverse emotions, a person changes his manner of expression”. Therefore after telling us that God of justice justified him in the past, David turns to Him and as a faithful witness says “Thou hast enlarged me” and goes on “Have mercy on me and hear my prayer” (V.2) as if the new circumstances compelled him for the present and future to keep crying to
Note the word “enlarged” (Latin, *dilatasti*). To enlarge here means two things: 1- you have given space to my feet i.e. you have freed me from the tribulation by a kind of physical protection or by removing it. Or 2- you have enlarged my heart, my strength so that I can bear it with patience and even joy. Joy in tribulation enlarges the hearts and it is the greatest favor.

Then David turns towards humankind as he says:

V.3 “O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart (Latin, *gravi corde*, heavy of heart)? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying”.

By calling them the “sons of men”, the Psalmist either mention the condition of the children of Adam and Eve, mortals and sinners or in a more positive way their dignity: human beings are not beasts but created at the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ. The “How long” (Latin *Usquequo*) is often met in the Psalter and expresses either the longing of the just soul in exile or the complaint of our Savior for our conversion, like here. We have indeed a dull, a heavy heart when we are attracted by the things below, earthly and transitory. “Vanity of vanities,…all is vanity, except the fear of the Lord” comments the book of Ecclesiastes. “Lying” is here synonymous of sin in the sense that every sin turns us away from God who is the Truth and the only true Good. Turning to sin is seeking after lying.

V.4 “Know ye also that the Lord hath made His Holy One wonderful”

The psalmist now exhorts the son of men to change their attitude based on the knowledge of the kindnesses God grants His Saints and particularly the Holy One par excellence Our Lord Jesus Christ (to whom once again David was a figure, which he foresaw by divine inspiration), the “Wonderful” described by Isaiah 9:6, conqueror over sin, death and Hell, whom God raised from the dead and placed him as our advocate and mediator. How can we doubt if I am holy that:

“The Lord will hear me when I shall cry unto Him” (V.4) (inclusion with V.1 “When I called upon Him”)

V.5 “Be angry, and sin not: the things you say in your hearts, be sorry for them upon your beds”.

Now then he exhorts the sons of men to convert i.e. not to sin anymore first through the capital sin of anger. If they be angry, may it be either of a just anger like Christ casting the sellers in the temple which is called holy indignation or they can be angry against themselves or rather against their own sins. “Be angry with your past sins so that you will not commit others” (St Robert Bellarmine).

“The things you say in your hearts, be sorry for them upon your beds” means, according to St John Chrysostom “make your examination of conscience every night and your act of contrition” and according to St Paul to the Ephesians: “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil” (Ephes.4:26).

Following this, the Prophet David urges the sons of men to practice the perfect act of religion by saying:

V.6 “Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and trust in the Lord” which St Paul will echo later on for the Romans “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God” (Rom.12:1). How can we not think of the sacrifice par excellence, the sacrifice of the mass in which the Holy One pays all justice to the “God of my justice” (cf.v.1)?

We “trust in the Lord”, rather than in our good works for fear of presumption.
However the sons of men come up with an objection like the Hebrews to Moses wandering in the wilderness: “many say, who showeth us good things?” repeating the eternal refrain of those who are so disorderly attached to their worldly ways. “Who has come up from Hell? Who has gone up to Heaven?”.

V.7 “The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us: Thou hast given gladness in my heart”. David answers to the objection by addressing God (note here again the shift of person like in verse 1) and let God respond. David will not address the sons of men anymore in this psalm. The countenance of God, explains St Thomas, is that through which God is known, as a man is known through his countenance. Through the seal of our Baptism, a likeness of the light of His countenance shines forth from our own souls like a sign upon our faces. It is the image of Christ in the soul in state of grace. It produces like a tree produces a fruit, the fruit of joy, the true joy that satisfies the deepest longing of the human heart. “Thou hast given gladness in my heart”.

As opposed to the temporal goods that have to be indefinitely multiplied: “By the fruit of their corn, their wine, and oil, they are multiplied” V.8

St Augustine though remarks that after all, we Christians have also our abundance of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist and oil in other sacraments for our own spiritual strengthening.

V.9 “In peace in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest “.

David’s conclusion then is, as if talking to himself, whatever the conduct of the sons of men whom he has been exhorting may be, that his desire is to confide entirely in God. Only in Him he can rest in peace. Note that the word selfsame (Latin, in idipsum) is difficult to translate. St Augustine translates it in “Being itself” i.e. God the self-existing who owes his existence to nobody. St Thomas in “the one who always remains the same. Others in “with” or “in union with Him who is God”. “In peace”, i.e. in the most perfect tranquility of a charity well ordered, in a single heart, not divided, nor troubled by multiple affections.

V.10. “ For thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope”. The word “singularly” (Latin, singulariter) means both “in a unique way” and “You God alone”, as opposed to the multiplication of worldly desires of unsettled minds.

Sleep is a Christian image of death. To rest in peace in David’s case becomes eternal rest at the funeral of Christians with the hope of the resurrection from the dead. Therefore we cannot hesitate to give to the conclusion of this beautiful Psalm its eschatological dimension. We can also put it in our Lord’s lips as He was placed in the tomb, the first among the dead. Having consummated His redemptive mission by his death on the cross He certainly had the inspired words of David in mind, “ In pace in idipsum, dormiam et requiescam. Quoniam tu Domine, singulariter in spe, constituisti me”. It is no surprise that this psalm is sung at the Office of Tenebrae on Holy Saturday!

May we follow David in his rest and our Lord in his death as we make this psalm our own evening prayer, and we will rise with them in the Light and glory of the eschatological morning.
After the fire that severely damaged the Shrine of the Institute of Christ the King, the Holy Mass is now offered at Gymnasium of First Presbyterian Church of Chicago (The Upper Room)
6400 South Kimbark Avenue
Chicago, IL  60637

Please consider donating, if you are able, for the restoration of the Shrine of Christ the King Sovereign Priest
Donation may be made on the website of the Shrine at www.Institute-Christ-King.org or Facebook via a GoFundMe Account

Mark your calendars:  Annual Retreat Dates have been scheduled for the weekend of May 27-29 at Mundelein Seminary, Libertyville, Illinois.

visit the Society’s website at www.society-sacred-heart.org

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