

St. Leo Benedictine Abby-St. Leo, Florida

Benedictine Circle

Sunday January 21, 2018

Discussion points on Chapters 21-25

The Road To Eternal Life by Michael Casey

Chapter 21

Therefore with our loins girded with faith and the observance of good deeds, let us set out on his journeys with the guidance of the Gospel, so that we may be worthy to see the one who has called us into his kingdom.

Kingdom of Heaven not a place on a map but a desirable state of being described by Jesus

To be perfect disciples we have to conform our will with His will

We have *to tolerate the fact* that our following of Christ is far from perfect

The journeys that lead to Christ stem from His initiatives not ours

You did not choose me, I chose you (John15:16)-He has the initiative he sets us in motion

We need a strong sense of personal vocation to keep us going-**HOW DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR PERSONAL VOCATION? HOW DOES THE ST. LEO BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY HELP WITH THIS?**

The Gospel is our guide and the RULE sees itself as a practical compendium of Gospel living.

The Gospel is the GOOD NEWS-it excites, motivates and encourages us- It is the promise from on High that we will receive the wisdom, understanding and fortitude to put it's example into practice. **HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE THIS?**

This is not designed to be moral precepts extracted from the words of Jesus to create a code, it is to help us live as Jesus did by moving to the fullness of self giving love. Do we accept the Good News of God's Fatherly love and affection for us? If so, we revel in the sunshine of God's love and return that with prayer and thanksgiving and in a way that mirrors God's love for us? **HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE THIS?**

Casey then discusses:

Spiritual warfare-we are not alone God is with us, we need to make an active awareness of His presence-**HOW DOES THE COMMUNITY HELP WITH THIS?**

We are to engage in good deeds by which faith is expressed and embodied *Gird loins*-rolling up sleeves and getting to work-**HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE THIS?**

We are journeying to the beatific vision-totality of the human beatitude, interior happiness that exists in Christ's disciples is a foreshadowing of the superabundant happiness of

heaven, so great that any trial will seem a slight in comparison.-**THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CRUCIFIXION?**

Keep this outcome in view, Recommendation from the 4th chapter (RB 4.46) “to desire eternal life with the whole of our spiritual longing” **HOW MIGHT THIS HELP US TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING?**

Chapter 22

We cannot arrive at the tent of this kingdom in which we want to dwell, except by running there by means of good deeds.

Labors, vigils, fasts tears and contrition of heart required -Requirement of sustained effort on our part

Terese of L-Way of Love, practical acts of self-denial that constituted her “little way”

Casey writes about running to the kingdom with good deeds

History of religious focusing on morality without enough emphasis on the Good News of God’s grace

PJP II addresses the current generation lost sense of sin

HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THIS NEED TO EMBRACE THE GOOD NEWS WITH ALSO AN AWARENESS OF SIN?

Not enough to swept off our feet by oceanic feelings of peace and well-being and a sense of communion with the cosmos. We need to allow spiritual experience to become incarnate in our way of looking at things and how we live.

Hypocrisy-high ideals failing to put into practice the most common norms of human decency.

To embrace a spiritual life, recognize there are necessary obligations that accompany this high aspiration.

Concomitant of spirituality the gradual transformation of attitudes and behavior

Resistance to God’s grace –sins of omission (Matthew 25)

Routine helps with good habits we have to be careful that it doesn’t diminish our alertness

Routine goodness can lead to complacency and judgmental attitudes

Develop *conscientisation*-sharpen our conscious

Prayer as well as immersion in communal way of life.

A person who consents to monastic life participates, learns from those more advanced in the way of virtue-becomes more sensitive to the promptings of conscious and through the conscious of the Holy Spirit

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A Well-formed conscious can lead to paths of progress. Those who have committed to high obedience recognize that they are only beginners to receive full openness to the Grace of God and a sense of God's proximity-aware of sinful state and the need for God's merciful intervention. Keeps running with good deeds to be worthy to dwell in God's tent

PRAY FOR US OH HOLY MOTHER OF GOD THAT WE MAY BE MADE WORTHY OF THE PROMISES OF CHRIST FROM THE HAIL HOLY QUEEN

-Good deeds not routine only be alert to ways to grow, participate have humility grow closer to God

-HAVE CHARITY IN YOUR HEART AS A MOTIVATOR

Chapter 23

Let us, however, ask the Lord with the prophet and say to him: "Lord who will dwell in your tent? Who will find rest on your Holy Mountain?"

We are called to run and rest

Run in a relaxed and restful manner-the two support and sustain one another

-Appropriate care of health

-Maintenance of relationships

-Obligations of work

-Prudent allocation of our time for recuperation from our efforts

Spiritual progress habitually signaled by a growth in freedom, lightness of being, uncomplicated happiness **HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THIS?**

Being adamant about particular practices is often a sign of scrupulosity or excessive attention to superego or will **ARE YOU CHALLENGED BY THIS?**

How do we weight his with Job 7:1 about life being a long military campaign?

St. Gregory the Great-we are always given space to catch our breath before continuing the struggle

If we are conflicted and inconsistent with the ideals we uphold we never find progress or rest, we are not masters of our own household; we are unsettled and in a state of constant irritation and the cause is within our hearts Ghandi

HOW DO WE FIND BALANCE?

St. Benedict (RB 64.15) We will never find rest if we are turbulent or anxious, excessive, obstinate, overzealous or too suspicious. **HOW DO WE AVOID/MANAGE THESE FEELINGS/EXPERIENCES?**

It is necessary for us to actively seek after peace and pursue it. We have to create peace by having our will fixed on God in whose will is peace.

How to remain constant when things are going rough?

1. Our conduct is then in effective harmony with the direction we have chosen.
Remain faithful to the way of life we have adopted
2. Absorb the blows of life without becoming disoriented or vengeful, there is a need to grow in skills of finding peace when everything goes wrong. Wholesome respect for the workings of Divine Providence *Jean-Pierre de Caussade on Abandonment to Divine Providence*
3. Develop robust attitude toward life (resilience) Expect difficulties and do not drown in self pity **REMEMBER GERI TALKING ABOUT MOTHER THERESA "THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU"**
4. Have an eschatological vision-if for this life only we have hop in Christ Jesus then of all people are we the most to be pitied (1 Cor 15:19)

Interior rest only when we have a sufficient degree of self-knowledge **WHAT DO YOU THINK IS SUFFICIENT?**

We need rest to deal with things below the threshold of consciousness

A restful life derives form a balance of activities rather than from total inactivity

Mary and Martha- times of working on self-improvement and times of delighting to see the working grace, transforming our lives into something far more beautiful than we ourselves could ever imagine

Luke 10:38-42 Martha and Mary.* 38^a As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. 39* She had a sister named Mary [who] sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. 40Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." 41The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. 42* There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

NO EYE HAS SEEN NOR EAR HEARD WHAT GOD HAS IN STORE FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM-

1 Cor 2:9-19

9But as it is written:

"What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,"^e
10^f this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

Chapter 24

After this question, brothers, let us listen to the Lord answering, showing us the road to HIS tent

TENT discussion-portable

Moses and God

The search for God is the origin and purpose of the monastic journey

We need to find a way to speak to God face to face, giving God our full attention-**WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS?**

Benedictine spirituality gives us a map that will lead us to the tent of meeting God-**HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BENEDICTINE SPIRITUALITY AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MEETING GOD?**

We need to have an ongoing relationship with God to maintain equanimity

To become spiritual is to become fully human, to accept our humanity and ambiguity, see the humanity brought to fulfillment in Christ-**HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST IN YOUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?**

Chapter 25

He says: "The one who enters without sin and practices righteousness"

Turn away from evil and do good

Our inner experience attests to the damage inflicted on us by sin. These are not punishments inflicted by God or external agents; they are the automatic residue of behavior that is contrary to the noblest tendencies of human nature. **WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH HUMAN NOBLE TENDENCIES AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD?**

Sins effect on our conscience, if we are under sin our conscience feels defiled, lost or off track oppressed, helplessness, confusion, lack of freedom to do good it is a psychological weight. Resistance to God's grace if we sin we defile ourselves we lose our mental integrity and we submit to powerlessness to act as we should.

St. Peter

Jesus and Peter.^{*} 15When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,^{*} "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"^z He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." [Jesus] said to him, "Feed my sheep."ⁱ 18^{*} **Amen, amen, I say to you,ⁱ when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and**

someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” 19He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”^k

St. Paul Romans 7 13-25

Sin and Death.^{*} 13Did the good, then, become death for me? Of course not! Sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin, worked death in me through the good, so that sin might become sinful beyond measure through the commandment.ⁱ 14We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold into slavery to sin.ⁱ 15What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate. 16Now if I do what I do not want, I concur that the law is good. 17So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh. The willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not.^k **19For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want.** 20Now if [I] do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 21So, then, I discover the principle that when I want to do right, evil is at hand. 22For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self, 23^l but I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.^{*} 24Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? 25Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, I myself, with my mind, serve the law of God but, with my flesh, the law of sin.^m

Without stain is with a clear conscience, internal clarity not turmoil of moral compromise

We are purified by our obedience to the truth (1 Pet 1:22) **Mutual Love.**^{*} 22Since you have purified yourselves by obedience to the truth for sincere mutual love, love one another intensely from a [pure] heart.ⁿ

When our conscience is clear, the radiance of God easily penetrates through the self to the inner core of our being and beings or continues the work of transformation

Purity often associated with freedom from sexual sin (an area where inconsistencies easily arise) In the monastic tradition it is a purity of heart as a broader construct.

A heart free from stain is a pure heart, an undivided heart, a stable heart, a heart that easily slides into prayer when outward duties ease to occupy its attention.

2nd epistle of Peter” Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with God (2 Pet 3:13) **What else can be asked of any Christian?**