

## **Friday (Brother Lawrence)**

When the mind has developed some bad habits of wandering and inattention, they are difficult to overcome and they draw us, in spite of ourselves, to earthly things. I do not advise you to do much talking at prayer, for much talking is often the occasion of wandering. Hold yourself before God, keeping in mind the presence of the Lord. If your mind wanders and withdraws at times do not be disturbed; the will must call it back quietly. One way to do this during the time of prayer is not to allow it to strive too much during the day. It must be kept strictly in the presence of God. Being accustomed to remember him from time to time, it will be easy to remain quiet during your prayers.

## **Scripture(Col.3:1-4)**

*Since you have been raised up to be with Christ, you must look for the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on things above, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed—and he is your life—you, too, will be revealed with him in glory.*

**Please note:** although the readings should be for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter I have stuck with the Ascension as this is such a key part of the Easter Season, setting us up for Pentecost, the Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi – all the steps on the way to us being drawn into the relationship with God which he always had in mind for us. Happy Easter continues!

martben1@btinternet.com

## *Feast of the Ascension*

### ***Christ has died, is risen and is up and about***

*When non-Christians read Jesus telling the apostles that people who believe in him as the Risen Lord will be able to pick up snakes and drink deadly poison without coming to any harm, (Mark 16:15-20), the obvious reaction would be to dismiss this as impossible. The same would be true of the account of Jesus being lifted up and going into a cloud, to be taken from their sight up to heaven, (Acta 1:1-11). Given their beliefs, both of these are reasonable reactions. But how do we, as believers, deal with them? One way is to say 'we don't need to take them literally – we should look for the meaning' (which has the danger of reducing our faith to fit what we understand of life); another is to say 'It's a mystery beyond our understanding', and leave it alone, (which has the danger of excluding our faith from life by separating it off into a heavenly sphere.)*

*A third way is to take St. Paul's prayer seriously, ((Ephesians 1:17-23) and allow ourselves to be drawn into the mystery so that we allow God to give us a 'spirit of perception of what is revealed' and so be brought to full knowledge of him.*

*In my case, I won't be surprised if this is a gradual growth in understanding, with wrong turns along the way. After all, Jesus had been preparing the apostles for this moment for forty days – which always means a lengthy period of instruction in the bible – and even then, their question 'has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?', showed that they still hadn't grasped that Jesus' Kingdom was not the one they expected. The other clue that this is a new phase is in the two men in white's answer 'he will come back in the same way', referring to the final Judgement day. The going to the Father and the return in the future bracket this next phase – the Messianic age.*

*This is why Jesus' instruction is so important. They are not to do anything until they are filled with the Holy Spirit – they are not to set off with their plans and their timetable.*

*The forty days of preparation was for their role in continuing the work which Jesus had begun, that of building God's Kingdom.*

*In Mark's Gospel, Jesus makes it clear that they will have far greater powers, (Mark When he tells them to 'Go out to the whole world', it is worth remembering that in Mark's Gospel, the apostles (and friends) are still hiding in fear after the events of Good Friday. Not only will they begin proclaiming the message to the ends of the earth, but the signs which will accompany believers, (gift of tongues, overcoming evil, curing the sick), show that they will not just be carrying out instruction or delivering a manifesto; they will be doing all that Jesus had done, because Jesus would be with them, through the Holy Spirit.*

*The Ascension is a mystery which I cannot make sense of; but being a mystery does not mean I should accept it blindly as though it was all beyond me. According to Luke, Jesus was taken from their sight by a cloud. Whenever there is a cloud in the bible, God is present in all his power and majesty, speaking out of it (e.g. the Transfiguration, Moses on Mount Sinai); today, Jesus goes into it. Jesus, fully human, is united with God.*

*St Paul's prayer, that we are to be able to see the hope, i.e. the certainty, that his plans will be fulfilled, is possible because of the absolute power (God's power) working in Jesus, and now in us. My prayer should be waiting and pondering the mystery to allow God to reveal it to me, and so allow me to be drawn into it. Martin Bennett*

### **Monday (A Carthusian monk)**

From time to time, God allows peace to well up from the soul and to pervade the nature of our senses. There is, as it were, a sudden uprising which makes us conscious of it. It is by faith that we perceive the divine Truth, and in particular the presence and action of God with us. Faith introduces us into another and higher world, that of God of which it is the light. Ask Jesus, then, to make this wonderful light shine more and more in our hearts—this light which, little by little, becomes love, and which is the true life.

### **Scripture (Psalm 33:13-15,18,20-22)**

*From heaven, the Lord looks down, he sees all the children of Adam. From the place where he sits he watches all who dwell on the earth; he alone moulds their hearts, he understands all they do. We are waiting for the Lord; he is our help and our shield, for in him our heart rejoices, in his holy name we trust. Lord, let your faithful love rest on us, as our hope has rested in you.*

### **Tuesday (St. John of the Cross)**

Tranquillity and repose in God is not all darkness to the soul but tranquillity and repose in the divine light and in a new knowledge of God, whereby the mind is raised to a divine light. The mind, tranquil and reposing in God, is raised up from the darkness of natural knowledge to the morning light of supernatural knowledge of God; not clear, indeed, but dim, like the night at the approaches of the dawn. In this tranquillity the understanding is lifted up in a strange way above its natural comprehension to the divine light.

### **Acts 1:3-4,9-11**

*He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the Kingdom of God. While at table with them he told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. Now, having met together, he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky as he went when two men in white were stood beside them, and they said, 'This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven.'*

### **Wednesday (Fr. P Lallemand, SJ)**

Without contemplation one will never make much progress in virtue, and will never be much use in helping the progress of others. One will never be quite free from imperfections, always being attached to earth and never rising above the feelings of nature. But with contemplation, one will do more, both for oneself and for others, in a month than one could do without it in ten years. Contemplation produces the very acts of sublime love of God and it perfects faith and all other virtues, lifting them to the highest degree to which it is possible to rise.

### **Scripture (Matthew 28:16-20)**

*The eleven disciples set out for Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, "All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always, yes to the end of time."*

### **Thursday (Fr. Richard Rohr)**

As a people, we are afraid of silence. That's our major barrier to prayer. I believe silence and words are related. Words that don't come out of silence probably don't say much. They are probably more unloading our own thoughts than a communicating. Yet words feed silence—that's why we have the word of God. But that word doesn't bear much fruit—it really doesn't break open the heart of the Spirit—unless it's tasted and chewed, unless it's felt and suffered at a level beyond words. That running from silence is undoubtedly running from our souls, ourselves, and therefore, from God. If I had to advise on thing for spiritual growth, it would be silence.

### **Scripture (Lamentations 3:22-26)**

*Surely the Lord's mercies are not over, his deeds of faithful love not exhausted; every morning they are renewed; great is his faithfulness! 'The Lord is all I have,' I say to myself, 'and so I shall put my hope in him.' The Lord is good to those who trust him, to all who search for him. It is good to wait in silence for the Lord to save.*