

Homily For Tuesday of the 3rd Week of Ordinary Time- Year II

St Peter's 8:30am/7:00pm Masses - Jan 28, 2020

2 Sam 6:12-19 "David brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the trumpet."

Psalm 24:7-10 "Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

Mark 3:31-35 "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Light and Obedience

Introduction

The greatest of dangers lurks around every corner for those who have the greatest of intellects. And what is the cause of this danger? Pride, of course. For most of the history of thought, the things of this world and the things of the heavenly realm were considered together. In that light St. Thomas Aquinas was the greatest philosopher of all time, as well as the greatest theologian. Only in the arrogance of our day is he not considered so, because intellectual activity has been so divorced from considering the deeper mysteries of God and of faith. This is one of the greatest forms of pride and arrogance today and the reason we are so confused about what is true and how to behave.

Today's best thinkers like to call St. Thomas' period in history part of the dark ages. But how about a century that produced at the same time St. Thomas of Aquino and St. Francis of Assisi, and a little later St. Catherine of Sienna among many others.

St. Thomas wasn't just a great thinker. He was known to spend many hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament. He would often be seen to be almost in a trance like state as he prayed. One of the other brothers in the monastery wrote in his notes that, as he went by the chapel, there was brother Thomas again, elevated before the Blessed Sacrament. Then, in that pure state of relationship with God, Thomas would go to work. He was the master of understanding how all things fit together perfectly when properly understood.

David and the Ark

Leaving Thomas aside for a moment, we go to the event where David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

One of the truths of our faith is that the New Testament reveals what is hidden in the Old Testament. By the light of Christ, we are able to see that connection. Note that today we have David, who was anointed by Samuel as the king of Israel. But what is he doing in today's readings? He was leading the people in a great liturgical act as they brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. Then he offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. Then he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts.

Who is it that leads a liturgical action, offers sacrifice and blesses the people in God's name? It's a priest. The profound insight we get from this passage today is that, for a moment in salvation history, the king and the priest are one person. This is a foreshadowing, a pointing forward, to the time when those two things would be permanently and perfectly joined in Jesus Christ. He is the one from whom all authority comes, including David's. He is the king of kings, the king of glory, the Lord of hosts.

Jesus is also the priest who offers sacrifice and blesses the people. He does this in many ways but most profoundly at the Last Supper when he offers bread and wine which he blesses, breaks and gives to his disciples, then goes out and offers the sacrifice of his own body and blood on the cross, in a perfect act of self giving.

Mark

One of the things that St. Thomas explains so well is what happens at the fall. We were made in God's image and likeness. Because God has made us so, we remain in his image, but something of his likeness was lost. Our intellect, our ability to perceive the truth, was darkened. And, our wills, our capacity for obedience and to do what is good and holy, was weakened.

Jesus mother and brothers and sisters, probably cousins, are trying to get in to see him. But Jesus says to really be his mother or brother or sister what you need are two things. First is to be near to Jesus. That is how we experience the light that helps us understand clearly what is true. Jesus is the truth and to be close to him is to experience light pouring into our minds. Second, what you need is to do the will of God. That means to desire and to act in obedience to the truth that our illumined intellects help us see.

The point is that all are united in their obedience to the authority of the Father, of whom Jesus is the exact and complete image. And what is the will of God that unites us in a family bond to Jesus the Messiah. Doing God's will makes us part of the family of God.

Conclusion

Many of you will have heard that, two years before the end of his life, St. Thomas was already a living saint. People awaited his writings. He was well into his greatest work, the Summa, or summary of theology, when he simply stopped writing. He never wrote another word. Profoundly disappointed, many asked him why.

But St. Thomas had a vision at that time. He was transported directly into heaven. He explained the way it changed him like this: "Compared to what I have seen, what I have written is only so much straw." In that greatest moment of humility possible, the greatest intellect of all time saw the light of understanding that shines in heaven, that pours from Jesus himself, the king of glory. He also experienced the harmony with the will of the one who made us that leads us to desire only to do the will of God.