

THE NATIONAL QUEEN OF LIGHT CENTER
for Applied Divine Will Studies
Saturday, September 26, 2015

The Intermediate Coming of Jesus by the Transforming of our Minds

HYMN:

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

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The Three Comings of the Lord
St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Christ is Coming - the three coming of the Lord! This famous excerpt from a sermon by St. Bernard of Clairvaux (Sermo 5, In Adventu Domini, 1-3: Opera Omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 4 {1966}, 188-190 is used in the Roman Office of Readings for Wednesday of the First Week of Advent. It speaks of not 2 but 3 comings of the Lord.

We know that there are three comings of the Lord. The third lies between the other two. It is invisible, while the other two are visible. In the first coming he was seen on earth, dwelling among men; he himself testifies that they saw him and hated him. In the final coming all flesh will see the salvation of our God, and they will look on him whom they pierced. The intermediate coming is a hidden one; in it only the elect see the Lord within their own selves, and they are saved. In his first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness; in this middle coming he comes in spirit and in power; in the final coming he will be seen in glory and majesty.

In case someone should think that what we say about this middle coming is sheer invention, listen to what our Lord himself says: If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him. There is another passage of Scripture which reads: He who fears God will do good, but something further has been said about the one who loves, that is, that he will keep God's word. Where is God's word to be kept? Obviously in the heart, as the prophet says: I have hidden your words in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.

Keep God's word in this way. Let it enter into your very being, let it take possession of your desires and your whole way of life. Feed on goodness, and your soul will delight in its richness. Remember to eat your bread, or your heart will wither away. Fill your soul with richness and strength.

Because this coming lies between the other two, it is like a road on which we travel from the first coming to the last. In the first, Christ was our redemption; in the last, he will appear as our life; in this middle coming, he is our rest and consolation.

Three Comings of the Lord - St. Bernard of Clairvaux If you keep the word of God in this way, it will also keep you. The Son with the Father will come to you. The great Prophet who will build the new Jerusalem will come, the one who makes all things new. This coming will fulfill what is written: As we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, we shall also bear the likeness of the heavenly man. Just as Adam's sin spread through all mankind and took hold of all, so Christ, who created and redeemed all, will glorify all, once he takes possession of all.

Another reader asked about the theological validity of a popular prophecy where Jesus allegedly says, "I will manifest Myself in a series of supernatural events similar to the apparitions but much more powerful. In other words, My second coming will be different than My first, and like My first, it will be spectacular to many but also unknown initially to many, or disbelieved." Here again, the use of the term "second coming" is problematic, especially when used in conjunction with the alleged description of how He will return, which would be a contradiction of Scripture and Tradition as we'll see.

"SECOND COMING" IN TRADITION

In each of the above mentioned "messages," there is the potential for confusion and even deception without a proper understanding of the teachings of the Magisterium. In the Tradition of the Catholic faith, the term "second coming" refers to the return of Jesus in the flesh at the end of time when the dead shall be raised to judgment.

The resurrection of all the dead, "of both the just and the unjust," will precede the Last Judgment. This will be "the hour when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of man's] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." Then Christ will come "in his glory, and all the angels with him." ...Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. ...And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. —Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1038

This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven. (Acts 1:11)

He comes to judge the living and the dead in the same flesh in which He ascended. —St. Leo the Great, Sermon 74

Our Lord Himself explained that His Second Coming is a cosmic event that will manifest in a powerful, unmistakable fashion:

If anyone says to you then, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told it to you beforehand. So if they say to you, ‘He is in the desert,’ do not go out there; if they say, ‘He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For just as lightning comes from the east and is seen as far as the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be... they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matt 24:23-30)

...it is an event visible to all men in every part of the earth. —biblical scholar Winkhofer, A. The Coming of His Kingdom, p. 164ff

...we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord... will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thess 4:15-17)

A MIDDLE COMING?

Tradition also teaches that the power of Satan will be broken in the future, and that for a period of time—symbolically a “thousand years”—Christ will reign with the martyrs within the boundaries of time, before the end of the world.

I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus... They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Rev 20:4)

What exactly is this reign? It is the reign of Jesus in His Church to be established throughout the world, in every nation. It is the reign of Christ sacramentally, no longer in select regions, but in every place. It is the reign of Jesus present in spirit, the Holy Spirit, through a New Pentecost. It is a reign in which peace and justice will be established throughout the world, thus bringing about the. Lastly, it is the reign of Jesus in His Saints who, in living the Divine Will “on earth as it is in heaven,” in public and private life, will be made into a holy and purified Bride, ready to receive her Bridegroom at the end of time...

It is this reign of God through His Will, His Word, that has led some to interpret St. Bernard’s famous sermon as inferring not only a personal but corporate “middle” coming of Christ.

The Church teaches that the “second coming” is at the end of time, but the Church Fathers accepted that there may also be a coming of Christ in “spirit and power” before then. It is precisely this manifestation of Christ’s power that slays the Antichrist, not at the end of time, but before the “era of peace.” Let me repeat again the words of Fr. Charles Arminjon:

St. Thomas and St. John Chrysostom explain... that Christ will strike the Antichrist by dazzling him with a brightness that will be like an omen and sign of His Second Coming... The most authoritative view, and the one that appears to be most in harmony with Holy Scripture, is that, after the fall of the Antichrist, the Catholic Church will once again enter upon a period of prosperity and triumph. —The End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life, Fr. Charles Arminjon (1824-1885), p. 56-57; Sophia Institute Press

If before that final end there is to be a period, more or less prolonged, of triumphant sanctity, such a result will be brought about not by the apparition of the person of Christ in Majesty but by the operation of those powers of sanctification which are now at work, the Holy Ghost and the Sacraments of the Church. —The Teaching of the Catholic Church: A Summary of Catholic Doctrine, 1952, p. 1140

DANGERS LURKING

Jesus foretold that His coming again in flesh would be distorted by “false messiahs and false prophets.” This is happening today, particularly through the new age movement that suggests that we are all “christs.” So, it doesn’t matter how anointed or how “sure” you may feel that a private revelation is from God or how much it has “fed” you—if it contradicts Church teaching, it must be set aside, or at least, that aspect of it. The Church is your safeguard! The Church is your rock whom the Spirit leads “into all truth” (John 16:12-13). Whoever listens to the bishops of the Church, listens to Christ (see Luke 10:16). It is the infallible promise of Christ to guide His flock “through the valley of the shadow of death.”

WEDDING PREPARATIONS

The Era of Peace to come is a global reign of Christ in His Church to prepare her for the celestial wedding banquet when Jesus will return in glory to take His Bride to Himself. There are essentially four key factors that delay the Lord’s Second Coming:

I. The conversion of the Jews:

The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by “all Israel”, for “a hardening has come upon part of Israel” in their “unbelief” toward Jesus.—Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 674

II. An apostasy must take place:

Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the “mystery of iniquity” in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. —CCC, 675

III. The revelation of Antichrist:

The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh. —CCC, 675

IV. The Gospel is to be preached in the whole world:

‘This Gospel of the kingdom,’ says the Lord, ‘shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come. —Catechism of the Council of Trent, 11th printing, 1949, p. 84

The Church will be stripped_naked, as was her Lord. But the consequent triumph of the Church over Satan, the re-establishment of the Eucharist as the Heart of the Body of Christ, and the preaching of the Gospel throughout the whole world (during the period of time that follows the death of the Antichrist) is the re-clothing of the Bride in her wedding dress as she is “bathed in the water of the word.” It is what the Church Fathers called the “sabbath rest” for the Church. St. Bernard goes on to say of the “middle coming”:

Because this coming lies between the other two, it is like a road on which we travel from the first coming to the last. In the first, Christ was our redemption; in the last, he will appear as our life; in this middle coming, he is our rest and consolation. —St. Bernard, Liturgy of the Hours, Vol I, p. 169

Thus, these four criteria can be understood in the light of Scripture and the teachings of the Church Fathers as comprising a final phase of humanity in the “end times.”

JOHN PAUL II

Pope John Paul II commented on the middle coming of Jesus in the context of the interior life of a soul. What he describes as taking place in the soul is a perfect summary of what brings about the fullness of this advent of Jesus in the Era of Peace.

This interior Advent is brought to life through constant meditation on and assimilation of the Word of God. It is rendered fruitful and animated by prayer of adoration and praise of God. It is reinforced by constant reception of the Sacraments, those of reconciliation and the Eucharist in particular, for they cleanse and enrich us with the grace of Christ and make us ‘new’ in accordance with Jesus’ pressing call: “Be converted.” —POPE JOHN PAUL II, Prayers and Devotions, December 20th, 1994, Penguin Audio books

While at the Divine Mercy Basilica in Cracow, Poland in 2002, John Paul II quoted directly from the diary of St. Faustina:

From here there must go forth ‘the spark which will prepare the world for [Jesus’] final coming’ (Diary, 1732). This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. —Introduction to Divine Mercy in My Soul, leatherbound edition, St. Michel Print

This “time of mercy” we are living in, then, is truly part of the “end times” to ultimately prepare the Church and the world for those events foretold by our Lord... events that lay just beyond the threshold of hope which the Church has begun to cross.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2

CCC 1047 The visible universe, then, is itself destined to be transformed, “so that the world itself, restored to its original state, facing no further obstacles, should be at the service of the just,” sharing their glorification in the risen Jesus Christ.⁶⁴⁰

CCC 1048 “We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men.”

CCC 1107 The Holy Spirit's transforming power in the liturgy hastens the coming of the kingdom and the consummation of the mystery of salvation. While we wait in hope he causes us really to anticipate the fullness of communion with the Holy Trinity.

CCC 1127 As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power.

CCC 1129 The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

CCC 2745 Prayer and Christian life are inseparable, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has loved us. “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.”

CCC 1709 He who believes in Christ becomes a son of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and doing good. In union with his Savior, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven.