



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
** Knights of Malta **

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Chancellor's Update

We Are All Prodigal Sons!

As the Liturgical year draws to an end and some contemplate the four last things or see all things in Christ The King, the parable of the Prodigal Son stands out. A review of Catena Aurea discussing the parable of the prodigal son takes 13 pages of font 12 Print. So we will choose only one theme of the many presented. The theme is to identify the elder son and the younger son represented in the world then and now. All quotes are from the Catena Aurea the gospel of St. Luke Chapter 15, v 11 to 32.

CYRIL; But some say that by the elder son is signified Israel according to the flesh, but by the other who left his father, the multitude of the Gentiles.

CHRYS. The younger son set out into a distant country, not locally departing from God, who is every where present, but in heart. For the sinner flees from God that he may stand afar off.

AUG. But that which is said to have taken place not many days after, namely, that gathering all together he set out abroad into a far country, which is forgetfulness of God, signifies that not long after the institution of the human race, the soul of man chose of its free will to take with it a certain power of its nature, and to desert Him by whom it was created, trusting in its own strength, which it wastes the more rapidly as it has abandoned Him who gave it. Hence it follows, And there wasted his substance in riotous living. But he calls a riotous or prodigal life one that loves to spend and lavish itself with outward show, while exhausting itself within, since every one follows those things which pass on to something else, and forsakes Him who is closest to himself. As it follows, And when he had spent all, there arose a great famine in that land. The famine is the want of the word of truth.

AUG. One of the citizens of that country was a certain prince of the air belonging to the army of the devil, whose fields signify the manner of his power, concerning which it follows, And he sent him into the field to feed swine. The swine are the unclean spirits which are under him.

BEDE; But to feed swine is to work those things in which the unclean spirits delight. It follows, And he would have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat.

CYRIL; But since the Jews are frequently reprov'd in holy Scripture for their many crimes, how agree with this people the words of the elder son, saying, Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed at any time your commandment. This then is the meaning of the parable. The Pharisees and Scribes reprov'd Him because He received sinners; He set forth the parable in which He calls God the man who is the father of the two sons, (that is, the righteous and the sinners,) of whom the first degree is of the righteous who follow righteousness from the beginning, the second is of those men who are brought back by repentance to righteousness.

CHRYC. Now the Scripture says, that the father divided equally between his two sons his substance, that is, the knowledge of good and evil, which is a true and everlasting possession to the soul that uses it well. The substance of reason which flows from God to men at their earliest birth, is given equally to all who come into this world, but after the intercourse that follows, each one is found to possess more or less of the substance; since one believing that which he has received to be from his father, preserves it as his patrimony, another abuses it as something that may be wasted away, by the liberty of his own possession. But the freedom of will is shown in that the father neither kept back the son who wished to depart, nor forced the other to go that desired to remain, lest he should seem rather the author of the evil that followed. But the youngest son went afar off, not by changing his place, but by turning aside his heart. Hence it follows; He took a journey into a far country.

AMBROSE; For what is more afar off than to depart from one's self, to be separate not by country but by habits. For he who severs himself from Christ is an exile from his country, and a citizen of this world. Fitly then does he waste his patrimony who departs from the Church.

TITUS BOST. Hence too was the prodigal denominated one who wasted his substance, that is, his right understanding, the teaching of chastity, the knowledge of the truth, the recollections of his father, the sense of creation.

AMBROSE; He rightly returns to himself, because he departed from himself. For he who returns to God restores himself to himself, and he who departs from Christ rejects himself from himself.

AUG. The elder son is the people of Israel, not indeed gone into a distant country, yet not in the house, but in the field, that is, in the paternal wealth of the Law and the Prophets, choosing to work earthly things. But coming from the field he began to draw nigh to the house, that is, the labor of his servile works being condemned by the same Scriptures, he was looking upon the liberty of the Church. Whence it follows; And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing; that is, men filled with the Holy Spirit, with harmonious voices preaching the Gospel. It follows, And he called one of the servants, &c. that is, he takes one of the prophets to read, and as he searches in it, asks in a manner, why are those feasts celebrated in the Church at which he finds himself present? His Father's servant, the prophet, answers him. For it follows; And he said to him, your brother is come, &c. As if he should say, your brother was in the farthest parts of the earth, but hence the greater rejoicing of those who sing a new song, because His praise is from the end of the earth; and for his sake who was afar off, was slain the Man who knows how to bear our infirmities, for they who have not been told of Him have seen Him.

AMBROSE; But the younger son, that is the Gentile people, is envied by Israel as the elder brother, the privilege of his father's blessing. Which the Jews did because Christ sat down to eat with the Gentiles, as it follows; And he was angry, and would not go in, &c.

AUG. He is angry even also now, and still is unwilling to enter. When then the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in, His father will go out at the fit time that all Israel also may be saved, as it follows, therefore came his father out and entreated him. For there shall be at some time an open calling of the Jews to the salvation of the Gospel. Which manifestation of calling he calls the going out of the father to entreat the elder son. Next the answer of the elder son involves two questions; for it follows, And he answering said

to his father, Lo these many years do I serve you, either transgressed I at any time your commandment. With respect to the commandment not transgressed, it at once occurs, that it was not spoken of every command, but of that most essential one, that is, that he was seen to worship no other God but one, the Creator of all. Nor is that son to be understood to represent all Israelites, but those who have never turned from God to idols. For although he might desire earthly things, yet he sought them from God alone, though in common with sinners. Hence it is said, I was as a beast before you, and I am always with you. But who is the kid which he never received to make merry upon? For it follows, you never gave me a kid, &c. Under the name of a kid the sinner may be signified.

AMBROSE; The Jew requires a kid, the Christian a lamb, and therefore is Barabbas released to them, to us a lamb is sacrificed. Which thing also is seen in the kid, because the Jews have lost the ancient rite of sacrifice. Or they who seek for a kid wait for Antichrist.

JEROME; Or he says, You never gave me a kid, that is, no blood of prophet or priest has delivered us from the Roman power.

AMBROSE; Now the shameless son is like to the Pharisee justifying himself. Because he had kept the law in the letter, he wickedly accused his brother for having wasted his father's substance with harlots. For it follows, But as soon as this your son is come, who has devoured your living, &c.

AUG. The harlots are the superstitions of the Gentiles, with whom he wastes his substance, who having left the true marriage of the true God, goes a whoring after evil spirits from foul desire.

JEROME; Now in that which he says, You have killed for him the fatted calf, he confesses that Christ has come, but envy has no wish to be saved.

AUG. But the father does not rebuke him as a liar, but commending his steadfastness with him invites him to the perfection of a better and happier rejoicing. Hence it follows, But he said to him, Son, you are ever with me.

AMBROSE; But the kind father was still desirous to save him, saying, You are ever with me, either as a Jew in the law, or as the righteous man in communion with Him.

AMBROSE; For if he ceases to envy, he will feel all things to be his, either as the Jew possessing the sacraments of the Old Testament, or as a baptized person those of the New also.

THEOPHYL. Or he was in the field, that is, in the world, pampering his own flesh, that he might be filled with bread, and sowing in tears that he might reap in joy, but when he found what was being done, he was unwilling to enter into the common joy.

CYRIL; We also ourselves sometimes; for some live a most excellent and perfect life, another oft time even in his old age is converted to God, or perhaps when just about to close his last day, through God's mercy washes away his guilt. But this mercy some men reject from restless timidity of mind, not counting upon the will of our Savior, who rejoices in the salvation of those who are perishing.

THEOPHYL. The son then says to the father, For nothing I left a life of sorrow, ever harassed by sinners who were my enemies, and never have you for my sake ordered a kid to be slain, (that is, a sinner who persecuted me,) that I might enjoy myself for a little. Such a kid was Ahab to Elijah, who said, Lord, they have killed your prophets.

AMBROSE; Or else, This brother is described so as to be said to come from the farm, that is, engaged in worldly occupations, so ignorant of the things of the Spirit of God, as

at last to complain that a kid had never been slain for him. For not for envy, but for the pardon of the world, was the Lamb sacrificed. The envious seeks a kid, the innocent a lamb, to be sacrificed for it. Therefore also is he called the elder, because a man soon grows old through envy. Therefore too he stands without, because his malice excludes him; therefore could he not hear the dancing and music, that is, not the wanton fascinations of the stage, but the harmonious song of a people, resounding with the sweet pleasantness of joy for a sinner saved. For they who seem to themselves righteous are angry when pardon is granted to one confessing his sins. Who are you that speak against your Lord, that he should not, for example, forgive a fault, when you pardon whom you will? But we ought to favor forgiving sin after repentance, lest while grudging pardon to another, we ourselves obtain it not from our Lord. Let us not envy those who return from a distant country, seeing that we ourselves also were afar off.

Pope Francis has the un-envious job of bringing the youngest son back (in this case, ex, Germany). The Holy Father on Friday, November 20, 2015 told the German bishops the following: "Whereas in the 1960s the faithful almost everywhere attended Mass every Sunday, today it is often less than 10 percent," he observed Nov. 20 at the Vatican. "The Sacraments are always approached less often. The Sacrament of Penance is often missing. Fewer and fewer Catholics receive the Sacrament of Confirmation or contract a Catholic marriage. The number of vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life has significantly diminished."

"Given these facts, one can truly speak of an erosion of the Catholic faith in Germany," thus the first response must be prayer, the Pope said, and then "we must remain among the people with the ardor of those who were the first to welcome the Gospel.

"In this context of the new evangelization, it is indispensable for the bishop to diligently perform his function as a teacher of the faith – of the faith transmitted and experienced in the living communion of the universal Church – in the many fields of his pastoral ministry," Pope Francis reminded the bishops.

"I would like to emphasize only two points: Confession and the Eucharist. The imminent Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy offers the opportunity to rediscover the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Confession is the place where the gift of God's forgiveness and mercy is given. In Confession, there begins the transformation of each Christian and the reform of the Church," he stated.

In regard to the elder son he must find a way through the year of Mercy to have the Traditional movement (those few who refuse to remain in communion with the Universal Church) accept Pope Benedict's XVI Prelature. They like the elder son have been loyal to the dogmas and doctrines of the Church, but refuse the loving hand of the Pope.

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