

Saved in Hope (*Spe Salvi*) – Pope Benedict XVI – Paragraph 47

Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Saviour. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgement. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves. All that we build during our lives can prove to be mere straw, pure bluster, and it collapses. Yet in the pain of this encounter, when the impurity and sickness of our lives become evident to us, there lies salvation. His gaze, the touch of his heart heals us through an undeniably painful transformation “as through fire”. But it is a blessed pain, in which the holy power of his love sears through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God. In this way the inter-relation between justice and grace also becomes clear: the way we live our lives is not immaterial, but our defilement does not stain us for ever if we have at least continued to reach out towards Christ, towards truth and towards love. Indeed, it has already been burned away through Christ's Passion. At the moment of judgement we experience and we absorb the overwhelming power of his love over all the evil in the world and in ourselves. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy. It is clear that we cannot calculate the “duration” of this transforming burning in terms of the chronological measurements of this world. The transforming “moment” of this encounter eludes earthly time-reckoning—it is the heart's time, it is the time of “passage” to communion with God in the Body of Christ. The judgement of God is hope, both because it is justice and because it is grace. If it were merely grace, making all earthly things cease to matter, God would still owe us an answer to the question about justice—the crucial question that we ask of history and of God. If it were merely justice, in the end it could bring only fear to us all. The incarnation of God in Christ has so closely linked the two together—judgement and grace—that justice is firmly established: we all work out our salvation “with fear and trembling” (*Phil 2:12*). Nevertheless grace allows us all to hope, and to go trustfully to meet the Judge whom we know as our “advocate”, or *parakletos* (cf. *1 Jn 2:1*).

Prayer Before the Crucifix (1205/06) – *Francis of Assisi – The Saint* – Page 40

While Thomas of Celano and Saint Bonaventure characterize the early years of Francis' life as a struggle to discern God's will, the author of *The Legend of the Three Companions*, according to two manuscripts, summarizes Francis' yearnings in this simple prayer and places it on his lips as he kneels before the Crucifix of the crumbling church of San Damiano in Assisi. The prayer may have been influenced by the liturgical opening prayer of the Eucharistic liturgy. This version of the prayer is based on the simple text found in the majority of Latin manuscripts. As it became more popular, the prayer was embellished and lost some of its simplicity.

Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command.

Imitation: Becoming what we love – *Franciscan Prayer* – Ilia Delio -- Page 147-(first 2 paragraphs)

One of the most popular works in the history of Christian spirituality is *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. This book provides a set of directives that appeal to the imagination and senses on following Jesus in this life and gaining the merits of eternal life. More recently the WWJD (“what would Jesus do”) movement, a revival of the nineteenth-century Protestant movement, has gained popularity, as people strive to live the gospel life by following the examples of Jesus Christ. While these imitations of Christ (*imitatio Christi*) paths may be helpful, the notion of imitation as described in the Franciscan path of prayer does not follow the logic of these other movements. The difference between the Franciscan *imitatio Christi* and the Thomas à Kempis/WWJD movements is that, in the latter, the Incarnation is extrinsic to the believer. When I ask, “what would Jesus do?”

I am looking to the example of Jesus as a moral guide to make the right decision or perform the right action. Jesus leads and I follow.

The Franciscan path is different because it does not ask, “what would Jesus do?” but “how does Jesus live in me?” For the Franciscans, the Incarnation is intrinsic to human personhood. What we are about as humans and what we are to become as children of God is integrally related to the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is not merely a person we follow, as if following John of Jim, nor is salvation about the “dos and don’ts” of being saved. Rather Christ, the Word incarnate, is the person in whom each person finds his or her unique meaning and origin. The logic of the Franciscan *imitatio Christi* is God’s self-emptying love which is incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. To say that Jesus is the theophany or manifestation of God means, that in the form of Jesus’ life, God has been fully revealed. Jesus Christ is the image of God because Christ is the “Word” or perfect self-expression of the Father. Therefore, it is Christ who is the perfect image of the invisible God (Col 1:15).

Isaiah 55:1-11

“Every one who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, merciful love for David.

Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.

Behold, you shall call nations that you know not,
and nations that knew you not shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy
One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

“Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy
on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from
heaven,
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I intend,
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.