

the CATHOLIC NAVIGATOR

Aboard St. Peter's Barque with the Catechism Charting Our Course

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Chasing Holiness

Continuing our look at the Our Father, we have already noted that 'heaven' ('who art in...') is not a physical place, at least as we know it. Yet, we think in these terms because we are creatures who exist in time and space and cannot do otherwise (see Issue 26). More dramatic is the next line, and the first of seven petitions found in this prayer: "Hallowed be thy name."

What a beautiful word "hallowed" is! In this sentence it means both 'to make holy' (which only God can do) and 'to recognize as holy' (which we can do). Thus, saying these words is said to be a proclamation or a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. (CCC 2807)

But, Jesus also gave us these words as "...a petition, a desire, and an expectation in which God and man are involved... Asking the Father that his name be made holy draws us into his plan of loving kindness for the fullness of time..." (CCC 2807) Here we are asked by Jesus himself to desire that God's name be holy so that we become "holy and blameless before him..." (CCC 2807)

The 'holiness' of God that is shown within creation is termed "glory." (CCC 2809) Created in the image of God, mankind was "crowned... with glory and honor." (CCC 2809) Yet, in sinning, we let go of this. Jesus' invitation to us in this prayer is to return to this glory and honor from which we were created by becoming like him.



Dear Fr. Thom,

What is so important about reading the Old Testament? It seems to me that everything a Catholic needs to know is in the New Testament?

Signed,
Enough is Enough

Dear Enough,

Let me propose something. Let's say you decide from now on that you will only watch the last half of every new movie at your local theater. Also, you will not ask anybody to bring you up to speed as you figure out the story. Pretty outlandish proposition, right? Trying to understand the whole from half the story? Well, reading only the New Testament without reference to the Old Testament is equally preposterous. Why?

For starters, we Catholics are told that "All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and this one book is Christ, 'because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled in Christ.'" (CCC 134) If you don't know the Scripture, how can you know its fulfillment? Continuing on, "God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors... He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth." (CCC 135) How can one harvest the proper truth if the entire story isn't uncovered-circumstances, events, styles, etc.? Quite simply put, God would not have inspired 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament had he not wanted us to consult them all. Sacred Scripture is what God gave to the Church to guide us to salvation....both Testaments! Keep reading!

~Fr. Thom

SAINTS PRESERVE US!

St. Benedict (480- 543 A.D.) was born in Norcia, Italy, a small city next to the Apennine Mountains. Tradition holds that he was the twin of St. Scholastica, a nun and saint whom we reviewed in February (Iss. 11). Coming to be called St. Benedict of Nursia (the Latin equivalent), his contribution to the monastic calling has made him known as the 'Father of Western Monasticism'.

Raised in Rome, Benedict found life in the big city corrupt and empty. As a young man he withdrew to a small city southeast of Rome, but soon left for the more remote town of Subiaco. On his way there he met a monk living in a cave who introduced him to the life of a hermit. Benedict took up this life and lived in solitude for three years. Emerging from this experience he was very holy and sought after by many. He was persuaded to become the abbot of a group in a monastery even though he knew it wouldn't work. He was right; he tried to set up rules and the monks tried to poison him! He withdrew and started his own brand of monastery where men could go to give their life to God.

He wrote a 'rule,' or instructions, addressed to laymen that spelled out how to live one's days so as to become close to God. It was not written specifically for priests or to address any specific need facing the Church at the time. His best remedy for conquering the temptations that Paul speaks of in today's reading was to stay busy with work. His rule also covered the ways in which one should be social in community so that spiritual health and growth would be achieved. It is a most comprehensive guide and still used by the Benedictines today... [and is available for you to read! ~see website.]

It's Been Said...

... the Church is all about negatives, "Don't do this!... Don't do that!" The rules, like we set for our children, were given to us a time when we couldn't understand much more than "Don't!" Have you ever tried to explain "why" to a two year old? When the commandments were written, there was very little experience with the type of love our God was offering. Law guides. Good law guides us to good places.

As we grew in our understanding, individually and as a people, the virtues that underlie these rules, and are protected by them, became more visible. Yet, we still

struggle to grasp the full reality of Jesus: he is actually the Beatitudes he delivered in the Sermon on the Mount.

'Beatitude' comes from the Latin, *beatitudo*, meaning 'happy, fortunate.' This is not a temporal happiness or fortune. Rather, this happiness refers specifically to the deep and abiding joy and fortune one finds when they rest in God, and he in them. (CCC, p. 868) This kind of happiness can only come in the virtues that we see protected in our commandments, the virtues we see expressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, and the virtues found wherever the Holy Spirit is active.



CATECHETICAL CORNER

In our second reading today, Paul tells us not to "live according to the flesh." He speaks clearly to what many have forgotten; we are made for God! Therefore, we must plan for the eternal, not the temporal. The finite (this world) must be used in a way so as to make possible participation in the infinite (next world).

Paul was convinced that this involved an internal way of being and not just a way of behaving. He insisted that it be Christ who lived in us rather than sin. While we do certain things to avoid sin, we pray for God's grace in bringing about an internal change, a 'birth of the spirit' so to speak.

A 'vice' is "a *habit* acquired by repeated sin ..." (CCC, p. 903) Vices are often grouped in the category of 'deadly' or 'cardinal.' 'Cardinal vices,' are those vices upon which other vices depend (just like 'cardinal virtues' are those virtues upon which other virtues hinge). The seven Cardinal Sins are the following: *pride, avarice (or, greed), envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth.* (CCC 1866)

These vices are so serious that even the stopping of a sin in one of these areas will not get rid of the desire, or inclination, to do so again. As a matter of fact, it might take a very long time to get rid of this desire or inclination so that the opposing virtue might come to live in its place.

A virtue is "a habitual and firm disposition to do the good." (CCC, p. 903) We practice virtue so as to offer a place within us worthy of God, where he may come to rest and feel at home. Rather than the above vices, we seek to develop a habit acquired by repeated good. Specifically, we endeavor to develop habits of humility, generosity, charity, forgiveness, chastity, temperance, and passion for the good. These then can replace the habits of vice. Only when we make way for God to rest in us may we rest in him.

SCRIPTURAL SECRETS...

Today, Jesus implores all to:

'Take my yoke upon you
and learn from me,
for I am meek and humble of heart...
For my yoke is easy and my burden, light.'

A 'yoke' is the device which is slung over the beast of the field in order to harness and guide him in the work of plowing the fields. Notice that Jesus does not offer to remove our yoke. He simply offers us a better one: his. God's law guides us in our work of life. Jesus uses the image of the yoke to highlight how manmade yokes crush the one being guided, while God's yoke gives rest.

The *halakhah* (literally, the "path that one walks"), or Jewish law, is derived from three sources: the Torah, the rulings of the rabbis, and age-old customs. When abused by Pharisaic interpretation, this 'path' was made extremely complex and hard to bear up under.

By comparison, Jesus' interpretation of the law was simple. It wasn't easier (see Mt. 5:20), but it was simpler. In this passage, Jesus invites all to take instruction from him because he is the fulfillment of the Torah, the fulfillment of the law, and his way is gentle. He is meek and humble of heart. He asks that one let go of worry, striving, grasping, and competing. He calls for trust. God knows us by name and will provide for our every need.

Christ's law is the yoke that guides us in the fields of our lives. Our plowing-work is the practice of virtue as we move forward. Our labor is made easier by embracing the way of Jesus. Meekness is the germ of proper self-estimation; humility is the acceptance of it. We always begin with Jesus.