



Nothing Dearer than Christ

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Lock-Down Special 2020

Monastic Voice--St Gregory the Great-- *Life and Miracles of St Benedict-- The Dialogues*

"He was born in the province of Nursia of honourable parentage and sent to Rome to study the liberal sciences. But when he saw there many through the uneven paths of vice run headlong to their own ruin, he drew back his foot, but new-set in the world, lest, in the search of human knowledge, he might also fall into the same dangerous precipice. Contemning therefore learning and studies and abandoning his father's house and goods, he desired only to please God in a virtuous life. Therefore he departed skilfully ignorant and wisely unlearned. I have not attained unto all this man did, but the few things which I here set down, were related to me by four of his disciples.....

But Benedict more desirous to suffer afflictions than covetous of praise; and rather willing to undergo labours for the honour of God, than to be extolled with the favours of this world, fled secretly from his nurse to a remote place in the desert called Subiaco, distant about forty miles from Rome, in which a fountain springing with cool and crystal waters, extendeth itself at first into a broad lake, and running farther with increase of waters becometh at the last a river. As he was travelling to this place, a certain monk called Romanus met him and asked whither he was going. Having understood his intention, he both kept it secret and afforded him help, moreover he gave him a religious habit and assisted him in all things. ***The man of God being come to this place lived for the space of three years in an obscure cave, unknown to any man except Romanus the Monk, who lived not far off in a Monastery governed by Father Deodatus. But he would piously steal forth, and on certain days bring to Benedict a loaf of bread which he had spared from his own allowance. But there being no way to the cave from Romanus his cell by reason of a steep and high rock which hung over it, Romanus used to let down the loaf by a long cord to which also he fastened a little bell, that by the sound of it, the man of God might know when Romanus brought him the bread, and going out may receive it.*** But the old enemy, envying the charity of the one and the reflection of the other, when on a certain day he beheld the bread let down in this manner, threw a stone and brake the bell. Notwithstanding, Romanus afterwards failed not to assist him in the best manner he was able. Now when it pleased Almighty God that Romanus should rest from his labours, and that the life of Benedict should be manifest to the world for an example to all men, that the candle wet upon a candlestick might shine and give light to the whole Church of God, our Lord vouchsafed to appear to a certain Priest living far off, who had make ready his dinner for Easter Day, saying to him: "Thou hast prepared good cheer for thyself, and My servant in such a place is famished for hunger." Who presently rose up, and on the solemn day of Easter went towards the place with such meat as he had provided for himself, where seeking the man of God, amongst craggy rocks, winding valleys and hollow pits he found him hid in a cave. Then after prayers, and blessing the Almighty Lord, they sat down, and after some spiritual discourse the Priest said: "Rise, and let us

take our reflection, for this is Easter Day." To whom the man of God answered: "I know it is Easter, because I have found so much favour as to see thee." (For not having a long time conversed with men, he did not know it was Easter Day.) The good Priest did therefore again affirm it, saying: "Truly this is the day of our Lord's Resurrection, and therefore it is not fit that you should keep abstinence, and for this cause I am sent that we may eat together that which Almighty God hath bestowed on us." Whereupon blessing God, they fell to their meat. Their discourse and dinner ended, the Priest returned to his Church."

From The Oblatemaster's Desk

Fr. Abbot in his Lenten talks has traced for us the theme, spotlighted in recent events, seeming to counter our hopes that somehow we have cast off entire the ancient bonds of sin. Fr. Abbot has traced for us in Scripture the Lenten theme of slavery and of slavery to sin which to ignore is to be not forearmed but disarmed!

We are privileged in the Subiaco Cassinese Congregation to which we belong to have two of the original monasteries founded by our Holy Father St. Benedict in our own Congregation--Monte Cassino and Subiaco.

In Subiaco we have the very monastery built on the site, written of above by St Gregory, containing the Sacro Speco, the Holy Cave, where our Holy Father St Benedict was "locked-down" for three years and learnt to meet God in his cave and more importantly in his soul. (As Saint Augustine had pointed out before, not finding Him there, in prayer, you will fail to find Him anywhere else!)

In the Holy Scriptures lock-down, we could say, is a recurring experience of fallen humanity.

Locked down by sin and expelled from communion with God and one another from the first fall we have been in need of a Saviour.

God prepared us for His saving action by letting us experience the leaving of a false security and the following of Him wherever He has led.

This circuitous path, as Lent has reminded us, led to a lock-down in slavery in Egypt, a lock down in the desert condemned to waste places. Once in the Promised Land only then discovering that we are still locked down in sin and suffering new humiliations, imperialisms, captivities and foreign dominations not least by the Old Enemy.

What finally could be more locked down than to be nailed down on a cross as a public prison without even the privacy of a cell- instead a cruel and deadly stocks.

If we look up the expression "lockdown" in a dictionary of Modern English it says "(Mainly North American) confining of prisoners to their cells, typically in order to regain control in a riot"-- it seems to take us just where we are in Holy Week with Pontius Pilate fearing a riot and washing his hands to symbolically dissociate himself from the atrocious infliction of the lockdown of the Cross on our Lord, the Just One.

But what can be more locked down than the hasty tomb? What can be more locked down than the room where the Apostles were, locked up for fear of the Jews?

Our Lord came and stood among them and showed them his hands and His side.

After Pentecost the Apostles were locked down until their prison rocked and they could not be confined-- neither Peter nor Paul.

One Man, the Christ has died for us all, and burst the bonds of death and eternal solitude to fill us with His life (that cannot be confined or excluded). He has formed us into an Eternal Communion from which nothing in life or death can separate us.

Yes and a Happy Easter!-- Why in 2020? --Because!-- "Resurrexit sicut dixit!" ----- Because!-----Because!.....***He is Risen as He said!!!***----- Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Love and blessings to you all in this life and the next!

Fr. Martin--Pluscarden----PAX

Prayers Please: Sarah St Paul Akehurst just made her oblation during the retreat and for the repose of the soul of her son Jonny. Repose of the souls of Mary Bradley, Oblate, Murray Cole, Br. Thomas's father-- both just died and Fr. Gregory (superior of St Mary's Petersham), his mother. Judith Murdoch , wife of Campbell Murdoch received into the Church a fortnight ago. All those hit by the virus living and dead-- not excluding Fleury and Vivoldone Abbeys, both badly hit- - and all sufferers throughout the world-- suffering in mind or body and those tending them.