

From the Fathers

From a sermon on the Beatitudes by Saint Leo the Great (400-61)

Christian wisdom

The Lord then goes on to say: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. This hunger is not for bodily food, this thirst is not for any earthly drink: it is a longing to be blessed with righteousness, and, by penetrating the secret of all mysteries, to be filled with the Lord himself. Happy is the soul that longs for the food of righteousness and thirsts for this kind of drink; it would not seek such things if it had not already savoured their delight. When the soul hears the voice of the Spirit saying to it through the prophet: Taste and see that the Lord is good, it has already received a portion of God's goodness, and is on fire with love, the love that gives joy of the utmost purity. It counts as nothing all that belongs to time; it is entirely consumed with desire to eat and drink the food of righteousness. The soul lays hold of the true meaning of the first and great commandment: You shall love the Lord God with your whole heart, and your whole mind and your whole strength, for to love God is nothing else than to love righteousness. Finally, just as concern for one's neighbour is added to love of God, so the virtue of mercy is added to the desire for righteousness, as it is said: Blessed are the merciful, for God will be merciful to them. Remember, Christian, the surpassing worth of the wisdom that is yours. Bear in mind the kind of school in which you are to learn your skills, the rewards to which you are called. Mercy itself wishes you to be merciful, righteousness itself wishes you to be righteous, so that the Creator may shine forth in his creature, and the image of God be reflected in the mirror of the human heart as it imitates his qualities. The faith of those who live their faith is a serene faith. What you long for will be given you; what you love will be yours for ever.

Feasts and Festivals

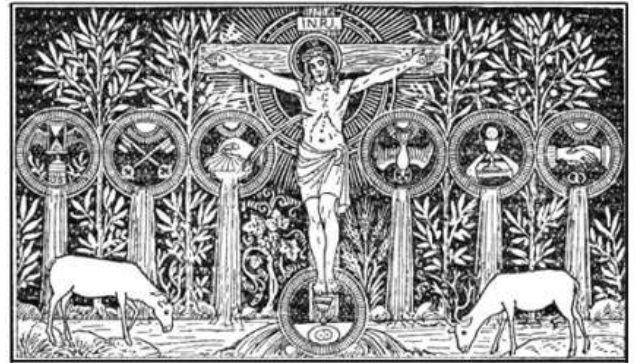
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary 8th September

It was following the Council of Ephesus in 431 – when Mary was officially given the title Theotokos ('God-bearer') – that the devotion to the Virgin Mary developed apace. The feast of her birth developed at about this time and drew upon the Gospel of James, an early second century text. It told of Mary's wonderful conception in the womb of Anna, as well as her upbringing and marriage to St Joseph. It also speaks of Mary's perpetual virginity. In keeping this Feast (along with the Feasts of the Virgin's Immaculate Conception on 8th December) we are grafted to the incarnate reality of our faith: God the Son was very and truly born of a very and true woman.

3rd September 2023

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary



In today's Gospel the Lord speaks in explicit terms about the cross that he is to bear and suffer upon. If that were not shocking enough to his listeners (it is sufficiently shocking for S. Peter to remonstrate with him for speaking in these terms), the Saviour presses his point further. He says to his disciples (i.e. you and me) that if we are to be his followers, we also must renounce ourselves and take up the cross and follow him. To us, today, the cross has become a religious symbol, and as a result our senses are numb to its horrifying power. We must never forget that for the first eight centuries of the Christian era the cross was not depicted in Christian art, so abominable was its associations with violence, suffering, humiliation. It was the very symbol and means of state-sponsored terrorism in the Roman world. And yet it is precisely this instrument – which represents and encapsulates the estrangement of a sinful world from its creator – that the Lord asks us to associate ourselves with. Why? Because for the Christian the cross is seen through the eyes of faith, and faith teaches us that this abominable instrument of suffering and death was the very thing God used to reconcile what was divided, to heal the great breach. The eyes of faith look at the cross and see the reach of the Divine Love for mankind; faith makes the instrument of the Saviour's death into the sign and seal of our faith that there is nothing so dreadful in all the world that God in Christ has not already overcome and overthrown by the power of his cross.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 16:21-27