

THE PURIFICATION OF MEMORY

3rd Presentation



See, I am creating new heavens and a new earth; The former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind. Instead, shout for joy and be glad forever in what I am creating. Indeed, I am creating Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight;

(Isaiah 65:17-18)

Advent Retreat
Fr. James Northrop
December 10-12, 2021
Archbishop Brunett Retreat Center at the Palisades
www.thegraceofpentecost.com

MAKING ALL THINGS NEW

Mercy—as Christ has presented it in the parable of the prodigal son—has the interior form of the love that in the New Testament is called agape. This love is able to reach down to every prodigal son, to every human misery, and above all to every form of moral misery, to sin. When this happens, the person who is the object of mercy does not feel humiliated, but rather found again and “restored to value.” The father first and foremost expresses to him his joy that he has been “found again” and that he has “returned to life. This joy indicates a good that has remained intact: even if he is a prodigal, a son does not cease to be truly his father’s son; it also indicates a good that has been found again, which in the case of the prodigal son was his return to the truth about himself.

John Paul II. (1980). *Dives in Misericordia*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

A NEW CREATION

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17–19

2 CORINTHIANS

So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

INJURY INTO INTERCESSION

Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end, become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." It is there, in fact, "in the depths of the heart," that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.

“FEED MY SHEEP”

JOHN 21:15–17

JOHN

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The difference between “forgiveness” and “healing”
- The importance of the renunciation of lies (JP II Institute)
- Helping others by sharing our encounters of God’s mercy
- Celebrating Freedom (Romans 8)

ST. JOHN PAUL II'S PROPHETIC EXERCISE

The first criterion: The present-day Church cannot set herself up as a tribunal to deliver judgments on previous generations—even though sins of the past are necessarily implicated in the “*mea culpa*”; for without the sins of the past, we are unable to understand the situation of today. It is neither possible nor permissible for the Church to dwell arrogantly in the present day, to feel herself exempt from sins and to make out that it is the sins of others, of the past, that are the source of evil. The confession of the sins of other people does not set us free from acknowledging the sins of the present day. Rather, it helps to awaken our own consciences and to open up the way toward conversion for us all.

Ratzinger, J. (2005). *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*. (S. O. Horn & V. Pfnür, Eds., H. Taylor, Trans.) (p. 282). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

ST. JOHN PAUL II'S PROPHETIC EXERCISE

A second criterion: Confessing, according to Augustine, means: “Doing the truth”. That is why it demands, above all, the discipline and the humility belonging to truth, not to deny all the evil that has been carried out in the Church, yet also to avoid marking up against ourselves, in false modesty, sins that were never committed or concerning which there is no historical certainty.

Ratzinger, J. (2005). *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*. (S. O. Horn & V. Pfnür, Eds., H. Taylor, Trans.) (p. 282). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

ST. JOHN PAUL II'S PROPHETIC EXERCISE

Third criterion: Again in accordance with Augustine, we have to say that a Christian *confessio peccati* always has to go hand in hand with a *confessio laudis*. In any honest examination of conscience we can see that for our part in every generation we have done much that is evil. Yet we can also see that, in spite of our sins, God has always purified and renewed the Church and has always entrusted great things to fragile vessels. And who could fail to recognize how much good has been done, for example, in the past two centuries by new religious congregations and by lay movements in the sphere of education, in the social sector, in efforts on behalf of the weak, the sick, the poor, and the suffering, even while those centuries were at the same time ravaged by the atrocities of the atheistic systems? It would be failing in honesty to see only our evil and not the good that God has effected through the faithful—in spite of their sins. The Church Fathers saw this paradox of guilt and grace as being summed up in the words of the Bride in the Song of Songs: “*Nigra sum sed formosa*” (Song 1:4). “I am stained with sins, yet beautiful”—beautiful through your grace and through what you have done. The Church is able to confess the sins of the past and of the present in all openness and confidence, in the knowledge that evil will never completely ruin her; in the knowledge that the Lord is stronger than our sins and renews his Church again and again, that she may continue to be the instrument of God’s good works in our world.

Ratzinger, J. (2005). *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*. (S. O. Horn & V. Pfnür, Eds., H. Taylor, Trans.) (pp. 282–283). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

OUR STORY A STORY OF GIVING THANKS TO GOD

- We are all sinners and should strive to do everything to draw people into a life-changing encounter with God's mercy
- We must not “brood over injury” (1 Corinthians 13:1-11)
- We will reach the finish line someday and hear the beautiful words, “it is finished” and be totally in Christ and with Christ.