

Daily Prayer

Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys—and remember Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, Teacher of the Faith, 1109.

We begin by saying

You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face." Your face, Lord, will I seek.

Psalm 27.11

The First Reading

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God

through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5.1-11

The Psalm

The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, ♦
and their tongue speaks the thing that is right.

The law of their God is in their heart ♦
and their footsteps shall not slide.

The wicked spy on the righteous ♦
and seek occasion to slay them.

The Lord will not leave them in their hand, ♦
nor let them be condemned when they are judged.

Wait upon the Lord and keep his way; ♦
he will raise you up to possess the land,
and when the wicked are uprooted, you shall see it.

I myself have seen the wicked in great power ♦
and flourishing like a tree in full leaf.

I went by and lo, they were gone; ♦
I sought them, but they could nowhere be found.

Keep innocence and heed the thing that is right, ♦
for that will bring you peace at the last.

But the sinners shall perish together, ♦
and the posterity of the wicked shall be rooted out.

The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; ♦
he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.

Psalm 37.32-39

The Gospel Reading

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Matthew 11.25-30

We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

The Reflection

Come to Me

Jim Boyles

Often in the gospels we read of Jesus advising us, or actually telling us, to do things. We, as the followers of Jesus, as the church, develop long lists of things we must do, based on the gospel stories. In today's reading it's good to have another aspect of Jesus, as he provides comfort, not just tasks.

Today we honour Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (37th by my count) from 1093 to 1109. He is honoured as a holy man, a teacher, a theologian, a pastor, and an archbishop. He was born and raised in what we call today northern Italy. He joined a monastery in present-day France, and spent his last years in England. It was not an easy life. As Archbishop he found himself in conflict with his kings, William II and Henry I. He had to face the church politics in Europe,

at one point dealing with two men who claimed to be pope. There was tension over whether the Archbishop of York was co-equal with Canterbury, or whether Canterbury had precedence. His life was not easy.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." For us in this time of COVID-19 and its variants, a time of lockdown, a time of scrambling for vaccines, we know something of weariness and of heavy burdens. For some it is the burden of grief for loved ones who have died. For others it's the loneliness we face. Others are anxious about their work or lack of work. We are indeed weary of this disease. We feel keenly the heavy burdens we face.

Jesus says, "I will give you rest". That is something we deeply desire and seek in these days. For many of us, we do indeed find rest in Jesus, in the life of faith and in the community of the faithful. It's something too, that we offer to others in so many ways. It's an easy invitation and so simple.

But Jesus, here as elsewhere, complicates the story. Come and find rest, find relief from your heavy burdens, but the way to find this relief is to take up Jesus' yoke. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart." "...my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Perhaps, but what does this mean?

Anselm as a monk and a scholar must have relished his life, perhaps at times feeling burdened by the monastic routine and rule of life, but compared to what lay ahead for him, it was an easy yoke, a light burden. Once he entered the political scene in the church with his appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, the burdens were no longer light and easy. Instead, there was endless controversy, tense personal rivalries, conflict between sacred and secular leaders, between kings and bishops. What would he be thinking as he read

these words of Jesus from St. Matthew's gospel? Jesus' yoke would seem anything but easy, anything but light.

As I read about Anselm, I was drawn to the battles and intrigues of his years as Archbishop. I find that generally I am reading about history and politics, rather than theology. Most of my ministry over the years has been focused on the organization and management of the church in its human aspect, while acknowledging its sacred and mystical aspect, of course. Even within the church, the burdens can be very heavy indeed. Just think of the coming discussion on whether we replace pews with chairs.

Anselm in his theological writing explored the relation of faith and reason. Often the question is framed as one using reason to find faith, but he reversed this and framed it as 'faith seeking understanding'. If one has received the gift of faith, then that perspective colours the sense of burden and yoke. Yes, for a person of faith, Jesus' yoke is easy, and his burden is light, and we take it on in a spirit of thanksgiving and of joy and commitment. The burdens of life remain real for us, and we feel oppressed by their weight, and that's exactly when we hear Jesus' invitation to come, and find rest.

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ The Song of Christ's Love

Christ Jesus was in the form of God, ♦

but he did not cling to equality with God.

He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, ♦

and was born in our human likeness.

Being found in human form he humbled himself, ♦

and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him, ♦
and bestowed on him the name above every name,
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ♦
in heaven and on earth and under the earth;
And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, ♦
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2.5-11

We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions) and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.

The Intercessions

In joy and hope let us pray to the source of all life, saying,
“Hear us, Lord of glory!”

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his holy and
life-giving resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That isolated and persecuted churches may find fresh strength
in the Easter gospel, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may grant us humility to be subject to one another in
Christian love, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may provide for those who lack food, work, or shelter,
let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That by his power wars and famine may cease through all the
earth, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick, the weak, and the dying, that they may be comforted and strengthened, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people, that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

Our prayers conclude

O God,
who raised up your servant Anselm
to be a guide and teacher of faith
in its quest for understanding,
provide your Church in every age
with godliness and sound learning,
that we may have power to speak
the reason for the hope that is in us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,

and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

We conclude

May the risen Christ grant us the joys of eternal life.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

Credits:

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