

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The 2nd Sunday after Trinity
June 25, 2017

+

Our Lord Jesus counseled His followers, including you and me, in the ways of the spiritual life. He instructs us to “walk by faith and not by sight.” He told us God is our Father, and that because the Father’s love is *the perfection of love*, there is no point in worrying, *come what may*. We enjoy being reminded that God is our Father and that He loves us. It is the *last* part of Christ’s instruction, the “come what may” part, that is the tall order!

Anyone with a rudimentary Christian education knows that of the Lord’s original closest followers, all but one died a violent death. And at the heart of the Gospel is the fact that God Incarnate did not exempt Himself from the torments of earthly life. We know only too well that life for us just might include the same possibilities Our Saviour endured: an innocent death, and a horrible death. So we need to know more about the Lord’s instruction “do not fear.”

When we look more closely at those original Twelve Apostles we become convinced each believed Jesus deeply and personally cared for him. This conviction led them courageously to take on all comers “come what may.” Had they *not* been convinced they were in the Lord’s hands and protection they certainly would not have died for Him. In the ancient tradition you remember the account of Saint Peter turning back to Rome when he was already in the midst of making good his escape. He went back to face death on a cross precisely because of this unshakable conviction He was being cared for by His Lord and Master.

“Come what may” works because the decisive ingredient is our *connectedness to Christ*. Our belonging to Christ does not save us from possible misery and misfortune. Christians are not told to cancel their fire and theft insurance! But it is our connectedness to Christ that brings victory even out of trial and tribulation.

Bishop Moberly once said prayer was not so much asking God for what we think we want, but rather prayer is practicing to think and will and speak to God face to face. The value of a long-standing prayer life is that it brings us increasingly into harmony with the Divine Will. We will come into familiar terms with Our Heavenly Father. The Psalmist said, “I pour out my heart by myself.” That is the

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The 2nd Sunday after Trinity
June 25, 2017

+

thing. Jesus assures us we have this freedom of access. In a memorable parable the Lord told us God has a care for every hair of our heads.

As we pray then, we gain confidence in familiarity with God. We do not worry we may sometimes pray ignorantly. We even stop praying for specific results, knowing by our friendship with God that today's defeat or emergency may be part of a wonderful victory of which we have no knowledge. We learn to trust the Lord "come what may."

As she is in so many ways, Our Blessed Lady is the perfect example of this trust. For thirty years she had been living in such holy familiarity with God Incarnate. We can only imagine the depth of her bond with her Son, Who is God Almighty. Very little of that relationship is known to us. But there are glimpses of it. One day at a wedding feast Mary said to God "they have no wine." Blessed Mary was simply stating the facts, content in perfect trust to make no actual petition.

Over the course of our Christian discipleship what changes is our own interior relationship to the things that happen to us. Nearly fifty years ago Dr. Louis Mella, chief of surgery at a Chicago hospital, told me when he had to sometimes bring bad news to family members in the surgical waiting room he began to notice something. "Christians grieve well." Those are his very words, and it was the beginning of his conversion. And it is why I would see Dr. Mella very early in the morning before surgery on his knees in the hospital chapel. The same things happen to us as to other people. The same things happen to us now as happened to us *before* our relationship to Christ had begun to grow stronger. But in that relationship to Christ we take life, and what it hands us, in a different way. The bond with Jesus becomes the center around which everything else becomes relative. And as with the first disciples of the Lord, fear fades away.