In an editorial published in the July 18, 2021 issue of The National Catholic Register, Fr Raymond de Souza commented on the historic 70th anniversary of Pope Benedict’s priestly ordination. Here are excerpts from that column.

The UNDERWHELMING observance in the Vatican was striking, given the usual prominence it gives to anniversaries. No one elected pope has ever been a priest for 70 years; Pope Francis would have to live to be 103 to complete seven decades. John Paul did not make 60 years.

On his 60th anniversary in 2011, Benedict devoted the lion’s share of his Peter and Paul homily to reflecting on his priestly ordination. At the time, at the end of the ordination rite the bishop spoke to the new priests the words of Jesus: “I no longer call you servants, but friends” (John 15:15). Benedict recalled: “Jesus calls me his friend. He welcomes me into the circle of those he had spoken to in the Upper Room… He grants me the almost frightening faculty to do what only he, the Son of God, can legitimately say and do: I forgive you your sins. … I know that forgiveness comes at a price: In his Passion he went deep down into the sordid darkness of our sins. He went down into the night of our guilt, for only thus can it be transformed. And by giving me authority to forgive sins, he lets me look down into the abyss of man, into the immensity of his suffering for us men, and this enables me to sense the immensity of his love. He confides in me: ‘No longer servants, but friends.’ He entrusts to me the words of consecration in the Eucharist.”

Five years later, Benedict’s 65th anniversary was marked with a special gathering of the cardinals in Rome, an address from Pope Francis and the formal publication of a collection of Benedict’s writings on the priesthood, edited by Cardinal Gerhard Müller, then the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

It was at that occasion that Benedict XVI gave his last public address. Speaking extemporaneously, he spoke about the priesthood as an identity of thanksgiving, a Eucharistomen. He recalled that one of his classmates, Father Rupert Berger, wrote that single word on his ordination card: benedixit, fregit, deditique.

Eucharist. The priest is ordained for thanksgiving in the first moments of his priesthood, and it remains so after the long passage of years.

Benedict then spoke of the words that just precede the consecration in Latin: gratias agens benedixit fregit deditique. Jesus, taking the bread, giving thanks, blessed it, broke it and gave it.

What Jesus does with the bread of the Eucharist, he also does with a man ordained a priest — he takes him, gives thanks to the Father, blesses him, breaks him and gives him to the Church.

Benedict was almost certainly thinking then of his friend, the late Hans Urs von Balthasar, who wrote that on his ordination card: benedixit, fregit, deditique.
“Eucharistomen harks back to the reality of thanksgiving, to the new dimension that Christ imparts to it,” Benedict said five years ago: “The cross, suffering, all that is wrong with the world: [Jesus] transformed all this into ‘thanks’ and therefore into a ‘blessing.’ Hence he fundamentally transubstantiated life and the world, and he has given us and gives us each day the bread of true life, which transcends this world thanks to the strength of His love.”

His voice now reduced to a whisper, Benedict no longer has public words to offer. What remains is the Eucharistomen of the former Servant of the Servants of God, who 70 years ago heard that he was no longer a servant, but a priestly friend of Jesus.

Father Raymond J. de Souza

Fr de Souza (b. 1971) is a Canadian priest, editor of Convivium magazine, columnist for The National Post, and chaplain of Newman House in Queen’s University, Kingston.

SEE THE PRICE I PAID FOR YOU

O man, you whom I want to save,
Why do you flee Me, and grieve Me sorely?
For you I took flesh from the Virgin Mary;
I struggled – to no avail –
To lead you to a safe haven;
And still you persist in your ingratitude. ...
Flee no longer, child of My heart:
Shielded from evil,
All sins forgiven,
I give you a kingdom as your inheritance.
Long have I sought you, dearest of brothers;
My Father has sent Me to bring you back.
Return in love to His joyous court,
Come and let us rejoice together.
...
Long and bitter was the pilgrimage I made for you.
Look here at My hands: see the price I paid for you.
Let the ice in you begin to thaw,
And your heart rejoice in your newfound riches.
Look here at My side: see the price I paid for you.

Here the spear tore through My flesh,
Here the iron pierced the heart.
Your name is writ therein, writ by Love.
In flight from Me you have let flesh deceive you
You have abased yourself for pleasure,
Mindless of what is to come,
Flee no more, My son, or you will stumble.
The world puts on a gladsome face
To persuade the unwary of its goodness;
Its emptiness and falsity it carefully conceals, knowing
That as you approach Me, I raise you up and crown you.

Brother Jacopone

Jacopone da Todi (c.1230-1306) was an Italian Franciscan friar and poet. Dante admired his preaching and included Jacopone in the third part of The Divine Comedy. Jacopone may have been the composer of the Stabat mater, although this is disputed. He was also one of the earliest scholars who dramatized the Quem quaeritis trope, which marked the beginning of the western theatre tradition.
LABOR DAY

A "Retirement Mass", postponed due to Covid, will be celebrated by Fr Bradford in St Theresa of Ávila Church, West Roxbury, on Sunday, October 22nd at 10:00 AM. Fr Bradford was a parochial vicar in the parish for 23 years, where he still assists as needed. You are invited to attend.

Many thanks to those who brought flowers for Sundays and various holy days during the summer. There are a few open dates left during September. The sign-up chart is available after Mass on Sundays.

Thanks to Judie Bradford who has hosted a Sunday coffee hour and a reception after Evensong recently, and to Eric Mauro and Jim Reedy, who hosted a coffee hour after Sunday Mass on August 13th. We all appreciate these times to get together and get in a visit.

Fr Armano will be our celebrant on Sundays, September 3rd and 10th. Also, there is no Saturday Mass on September 2nd and 9th when Fr Bradford is away from Boston.

A year’s-mind Mass will be offered for parishioner Winifred Payne on September 20th. May she rest in peace.

The Son did not give himself for our sins outside the Father’s will, nor did the Father hand over the Son without the Son’s consent. The will of the Son is to abide by the will of the Father, as he himself says in the Psalm, I desire to do your will my God.

The Son gave himself to vanquish the unrighteousness within us by his own righteousness, and he handed himself over in wisdom to defeat foolishness. Holiness personified offered itself to erase wickedness, and strength, feebleness.

Christ has freed us in the future age, according to the promises and hopes in which we put our trust. He also has freed us from the present age, during which we who have died together with Christ are being transformed by a newness of mind. We are not of this world, and the world has no affection for us, and for good reason.

Saint Jerome

Saint Jerome (c.342-420) is best known for translating the Bible into Latin, later known as the Vulgate. He also wrote many commentaries on the books of the Bible. He is a Doctor of the Church. His Feast Day is Saturday, September 30th.

This article is taken from Jerome’s Commentary on Galatians, in Vol 121 of The Fathers of the Church, Catholic University of America Press, 1964.
THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

NATIVITY B.V.M.
Mary's Birthday

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH celebrates three great birthdays: that of Our Lord on Christmas Day, of John the Baptist on June 24th (of whom Our Lord said of all born of woman none was greater, see Matthew 11) and today’s feast, the birthday of Saint Mary the Virgin.

About the birthday of Jesus we have all the particulars, given us in Saint Luke’s Gospel. We know about John the Baptist too. His birth and death are recounted in the New Testament. In contrast to all this, there are no particulars regarding the birth or death of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at least not in the Holy Scriptures. Mary suddenly appears, a young girl. And the next sight of her is holding God in her arms! In all the Scriptures she speaks only seven times.

This girl was so willing when God sent Gabriel to gain her consent. But the Gospel good news is her Son, not Mary herself. And after redemption is accomplished, she was perfectly silent. Of the events of her death we have only the vision in Revelation of “a woman clothed with the Sun, and the Moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” (12:1)

What all of this tells us is not simply the fact the Gospel is about Jesus Christ and not about His mother. The paucity of Gospel information about the Blessed Virgin Mary reminds us she is no dramatic personage, concocted by a fertile imagination or product of the ecstasy of a fevered brain! Mary is a real mother of a real Man Who was and is also Almighty God. Saint Luke makes this abundantly clear in what he tells us. His account of the Birth of Christ is full of particulars, details, exactly given as precisely as he had information. The date, the time, the location, the people involved, are all mentioned. This was so there would be no mistake: Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, was born of a real mother, at a time and place certain. This is one of the things St Luke’s Gospel was written to establish.

As Scripture unfolds, and as we contemplate who Jesus Christ is, our amazement, awe, and reverence for our Lady as His mother grows. It grows because we realize Who He is. The more we contemplate Him, the more we revere her.

Father Bradford

A sermon preached in Saint Theresa of Ávila Church on Friday, September 8, 2017.

FEAST OF SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

Friday, September 29, 2023

Twenty-sixth Anniversary of the Founding of The Congregation of Saint Athanasius

Solemn High Mass & Sermon
Solemn TeDeum
in the presence of The Most Reverend Mark O’Connell Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia The Archdiocese of Boston
7:30 PM

A reception and meeting follows this service at which Bishop O’Connell will present some of the special features of the year-end transition in the chaplaincy.
HOLY CROSS DAY

HOW PRECIOUS the gift of the cross, how splendid to contemplate! In the cross there is no mingling of good and evil, as in the tree of paradise: it is wholly beautiful to behold and good to taste. The fruit of this tree is not death but life, not darkness but light. This tree does not cast us out of paradise, but opens the way for our return.

This was the tree on which Christ, like a king on a chariot, destroyed the devil, the Lord of death, and freed the human race from his tyranny. This was the tree upon which the Lord, like a brave warrior wounded in his hands, feet and side, healed the wounds of sin that the evil serpent had inflicted on our nature. A tree once caused our death, but now a tree brings life. Once deceived by a tree, we have now repelled the cunning serpent by a tree. What an astonishing transformation! That death should become life, that decay should become immortality, that shame should become glory! Well might the holy Apostle exclaim: Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world! The supreme wisdom that flowered on the cross has shown the folly of worldly wisdom’s pride. The knowledge of all good, which is the fruit of the cross, has cut away the shoots of wickedness.

The wonders accomplished through this tree were foreshadowed clearly even by the mere types and figures that existed in the past. Meditate on these, if you are eager to learn. Was it not the wood of a tree that enabled Noah, at God’s command, to escape the destruction of the flood together with his sons, his wife, his sons’ wives and every kind of animal? And surely the rod of Moses prefigured the cross when it changed water into blood, swallowed up the false serpents of Pharaoh’s magicians, divided the sea at one stroke and then restored the waters to their normal course, drowning the enemy and saving God’s own people? Aaron’s rod, which blossomed in one day in proof of his true priesthood, was another figure of the cross, and did not Abraham foreshadow the cross when he bound his son Isaac and placed him on the pile of wood?

By the cross death was slain and Adam was restored to life. The cross is the glory of all the apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the sanctification of the saints. By the cross we put on Christ and cast aside our former self. By the cross we, the sheep of Christ, have been gathered into one flock, destined for the sheepfolds of heaven.

Saint Theodore the Studite (759-826) was a Byzantine Greek monk and abbot of the Studion in Constantinople. He was a prolific writer of theology, poetry, sermons, hymns, and letters, many of which survive. Banished three times, he opposed iconoclasm and vigorously defended the use of images. This is an excerpt from one of his sermons. Holy Cross Day is Thursday, September 14th.

Obedience well lived frees us from selfishness and pride, and so it helps us to find God and in him the whole world. Obedience is a special grace and it produces unfailing peace, inward joy, and close union with God.

Obedience transforms small commonplace things and occupations into acts of living faith, and faith in action is love, and love in action is service of the loving God. Obedience lived with joy creates a living awareness of the presence of God.

This complete surrender of self to God must secure for us perseverance in God’s service, since by obedience we always do his most holy will and consequently obtain freedom from doubts, anxieties, and scruples.

We are infallible when we obey. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us that one grace. Only Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus on the cross, can teach us obedience, and that is by the reality of his own example.

If I live constantly in the company of Jesus, I will look like him and do as he did. Nothing pleases God more than when we obey. Let us love God not for what he gives but
Our obligation is to do God's will, and not our own. We must remember this if the prayer that our Lord commanded us to say daily is to have any meaning on our lips. How unreasonable it is to pray that God's will be done, and then not promptly obey it when he calls us from this world! Instead we struggle and resist like self-willed slaves and are brought into the Lord's presence with sorrow and lamentation, not freely consenting to our departure, but constrained by necessity. And yet we expect to be rewarded with heavenly honors by him to whom we come against our will! Why then do we pray for the kingdom of heaven to come if this earthly bondage pleases us? What is the point of praying so often for its early arrival if we would rather serve the devil here than reign with Christ.

The world hates Christians, so why give your love to it instead of following Christ, who loves you and has redeemed you? John is most urgent in his epistle when he tells us not to love the world by yielding to sensual desires. Never give your love to the world, he warns, or to anything in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. All that the world offers is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and earthly ambition. The world and its allurements will pass away, but the man who has done the will of God shall live for ever. Our part, my dear brothers, is to be single-minded, firm in faith, and steadfast in courage, ready for God's will, whatever it may be. Banish the fear of death and think of the eternal life that follows it. That will show people that we really live our faith.

We ought never to forget, beloved, that we have renounced the world. We are living here now as aliens and only for a time. When the day of our homecoming puts an end to our exile, frees us from the bonds of the world, and restores us to paradise and to a kingdom, we should welcome it. What man, stationed in a foreign land, would not want to return to his own country as soon as possible? Well, we look upon paradise as our country, and a great crowd of our loved ones awaits us there, a countless throng of parents, brothers and children longs for us to join them. Assured though they are of their own salvation, they are still concerned about ours. What joy both for them and for us to see one another and embrace! O the delight of that heavenly kingdom where there is no fear of death! O the supreme and endless bliss of everlasting life!

There, is the glorious band of apostles, there the exultant assembly of prophets, there the innumerable host of martyrs, crowned for their glorious victory in combat and in death. There in triumph are the virgins who subdued their passions by the strength of continence. There the merciful are rewarded, those who fulfilled the demands of justice by providing for the poor. In obedience to the Lord's command, they turned their earthly patrimony into heavenly treasure.

My dear brothers, let all our longing be to join them as soon as we may. May God see our desire, may Christ see this resolve that springs from faith, for he will give the rewards of his love more abundantly to those who have longed for him more fervently.

Saint Cyprian

Saint Cyprian (c. 200-258) was a convert and became an illustrious Bishop of Carthage. His best known work, De Unitate Catholicae Ecclesiae (251) proclaimed the doctrine of one church founded upon Peter, whose "tangible bond is her one united episcopate. Cyprian was the first African bishop to be martyred. His Feast Day is September 16th.
WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE WE?

BLESSED ARE the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

My brothers and sisters, sweet is the thought of mercy, but even more so is mercy itself. It is what all men hope for, but unfortunately, not what all men deserve. For while all men wish to receive it, only a few are willing to give it.

How can a man ask for himself what he refuses to give to another? If he expects to receive any mercy in heaven, he should give mercy on earth. Do we all desire to receive mercy? Let us make mercy our patroness now, and she will free us in the world to come. Yes, there is mercy in heaven, but the road to it is paved by our merciful acts on earth. As Scripture says: Lord, your mercy is in heaven.

There is, therefore, an earthly as well as heavenly mercy, that is to say, a human and a divine mercy. Human mercy has compassion on the miseries of the poor. Divine mercy grants forgiveness of sins. Whatever human mercy bestows here on earth, divine mercy will return to us in our homeland. In this life God feels cold and hunger in all who are stricken with poverty; for, remember, he once said: What you have done to the least of my brothers you have done to me. Yes, God who sees fit to give his mercy in heaven wishes it to be a reality here on earth.

What kind of people are we? When God gives, we wish to receive, but when he begs, we refuse to give. Remember, it was Christ who said: I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat. When the poor are starving, Christ too hungers. Do not neglect to improve the unhappy conditions of the poor, if you wish to ensure that your own sins be forgiven you. Christ hungers now, my brethren; it is he who deigns to hunger and thirst in the persons of the poor. And what he will return in heaven tomorrow is what he receives here on earth today.

What do you wish for, what do you pray for, my dear brothers and sisters, when you come to church? Is it mercy? How can it be anything else? Show mercy, then, while you are on earth, and mercy will be shown to you in heaven. A poor person asks you for something; you ask God for something. He begs for a morsel of food; you beg for eternal life. Give to the beggar so that you may merit to receive from Christ. For he it is who says: Give and it will be given to you. It baffles me that you have the impudence to ask for what you do not want to give. Give when you come to church. Give to the poor. Give them whatever your resources will allow.

Saint Caesarius of Arles

| St Caesarius (468/470-542) was one of the most prominent and influential bishops in his generation. A major proponent of preaching, he also presided over the second Council of Orange, which rejected semi-Pelagian doctrine. | The name of our parish paper comes from the Latin phrase, “Athenasius contra mundum,” meaning “Athenasius against the world.” Our patron saint stood firmly for the fullness of the faith. Fr Bradford and the Congregation of Saint Athanasius have published this paper monthly since 1998. To receive it by mail, send your address to the editor, Susan Russo, at sjrusso@icloud.com or write to Fr Bradford at the rectory. All issues are on our website under Parish Paper. |
St. Lawrence Church
774 Boylston Street (Route 9)
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

Parking is in the church parking lot behind the Church. Use 30 Reservoir Road, Chestnut Hill 02467 for your GPS.

Directions by Car from the North or South:
Route 128(95) to Route 9 east. At the signal for Reservoir Road, take the right; the Church parking lot is a short distance on the left.

Directions by Car from Boston:
From Stuart/Kneeland St, turn left onto Park Plaza. Drive for 0.2 miles. Park Plaza becomes St James Avenue. Drive for 0.3 miles. Turn slight left onto ramp. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Route 9. Drive for 3.5 miles. Turn left onto Heath Street. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Reservoir Road. Drive for 0.1 miles. The parking lot is on your right.

Directions by Public Transportation:
From Kenmore Square station, board Bus #60, which stops in front of the Church. Alternatively, the Church is a 15-minute walk from the Cleveland Circle station on the Green Line C branch.

Contra Mundum
The Congregation of St. Athanasius
10 St. Theresa Avenue
West Roxbury, MA 02132