

34th Friday
27 November 2015
Conventual Mass

Lion. Bear. Leopard. Beast. Slain. Burned with fire. Visions in the night. Clouds of Heaven. Son of Man. "To him was given dominion and glory and Kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; ... his Kingdom shall not be destroyed." (cf Daniel 7)

That fantastic imagery gives us a glimpse of the battle waged by our Lord and King Jesus Christ. A battle won by the death of the Son. A battle won by the his resurrection at the hand of the Father. A battle still fought to this very day by the Holy Spirit. Yes, the battle still rages today. The battle for the Kingdom is all too evident in the evils perpetrated by angels and men down through the centuries and into our present day... fallen angels and wayward men who oppose Christ and his Church... and false prophets claiming to act in the name of Almighty God.

It is against this backdrop that certain men are called forth to be soldiers.

"This message of mine is for you, then, if you are ready to give up your own will, once and for all, and armed with the strong and noble weapons of obedience to do battle for the true King, Christ the Lord." [*Rule of Saint Benedict*, Prologue 3]

The weapons of obedience: obedience to Christ and obedience to the Rule. It is with these that the monk soldier engages in battle for the Kingdom. Then St. Benedict elaborates.

"Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see him who has called us to his Kingdom." [*Rule of Saint Benedict*, Prologue 21]

"Faith" expresses obedience to Christ. The performance of good works" expresses obedience to the Rule. The two joined together by the Gospel, the Gospel for our guide.

In light of today's Gospel, the Gospel selections of these days, see that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Feel the urgency. Once again, hear the command: set out on this way.

"If we wish to dwell in the tent of this Kingdom, we will never arrive unless we run there ... unless we run there by doing good deeds." [*Rule of Saint Benedict*, Prologue 22]

If you can feel the urgency, there is no room for sloth. If you can smell the battle, any spiritual apathy will vanish. In fact, St. Benedict gives a two-fold remedy to guard against any malaise: run and never swerve. Run he has already established. Then he develops the second guard: never swerve.

"Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his Kingdom." [*Rule of Saint Benedict*, Prologue 50]

So you see, the monk is to run on stable ground... in the monastery... towards the Kingdom. If both the impetus and the destination are clear in his sights, the monk can guard against swerving from the sure path. He can guard against becoming a fugitive or a deserter. (cf Cassian, *Institutes* 10.III) The path of sharing in the sufferings of Christ will become sweet. The efficacy of his toil will be sure.