

Memorial of St. Jerome

Bishop Barres' Homily

St. Agnes Cathedral

September 30, 2020

The great Saint Jerome (345-425), the patron of biblical scholars, translated the entire Bible into Latin from the original biblical languages. Biblical translation is quite a responsibility and requires intense concentration and prayer to capture the nuances from the original language into the Latin.

Theologian Fr. Richard Fragomeni once said on the September 30th Feast Day of St. Jerome that the same care and contemplative concentration that enabled St. Jerome to labor over the translation of every word in the Old Testament and New Testament is needed for our “translation” of biblical texts into our hearts, souls, minds, imaginations and the fabric of our daily lives.

Similarly, St. Francis de Sales once said that what sung music is to sheet music, the lives of the saints are to the Gospel.

In his book *Prayer*, Hans Urs von Balthasar states: “If we fail to let the word’s sharp edge have its effect on us, we shall always be meeting a merely imaginary Redeemer.”¹

We are called to live the words of Psalm 119: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

In *The Word of the Lord* 48, Pope Benedict XVI asserts that the saints of every decade and century inspire us since “the most profound interpretation of Scripture comes precisely from those who let themselves be shaped by the word of God through listening, reading, and assiduous meditation.”

The great saints and prayer mystics of the Catholic Church have a completely different approach and philosophy.

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 224.

They teach us century after century that contemplative silence over biblical texts leads to effective action and effective evangelization.

Fr. Leiva Merikakis urges us “to be molded by the text; the text must echo in our souls and establish its own rhythm in our thinking, feeling, and even breathing.”²

Thomas Cardinal Collins, the Archbishop of Toronto, writes: “Never speed-read the word of God (or any really important text), rushing along quickly to extract the meaning. No, the divine reading of the Bible is prayerful, and occurs at a measured pace; it is a matter of savoring the word of God, repeating the word of God, praying the word of God. When we read aloud, we are using our eyes, our mouths, our ears, our mind and memory to prepare a way for the word of God to enter our hearts... In *lectio divina* we seek not to master or to grasp the sacred text, but rather, prayerfully and silently, to come into the presence of God through it. We seek to be humbly attentive to God’s Holy Word, to savor it, and to let it enter into our hearts as much as into our heads, so that it may transform us.”³

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Word of the Lord* (2010), Pope Benedict XVI gives us an excellent process of praying individual biblical passages, a process of *lectio divina* or sacred reading of the text that includes reading, meditating, praying, contemplating and living the biblical text.

Pope Benedict teaches us that this process of *lectio divina* purifies, refines and directs our everyday actions with the Fire of the Holy Spirit and makes us sensitive to the power of the small unseen deed of charity and self-sacrifice.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Rejoice and Glad*, Pope Francis reminds us biblically that holiness is found in the small details of every day.

He writes:

“Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details.

The little detail that wine was running out at a party.

The little detail that one sheep was missing.

The little detail of noticing the widow who offered her two small coins.

² Fr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Fr. Simeon), *Fire of Mercy/Heart of the World: Meditations on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Volume 1), (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 24.

³ Cardinal Thomas Collins’ *Pathway to our Hearts: A Simple Approach to Lectio Divina with the Sermon on the Mount*, xiv.

The little detail of having spare oil for the lamps, should the bridegroom delay.

The little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had.

The little detail of having a fire burning and a fish cooking as he waited for the disciples at daybreak.” (144)

Our *lectio divina* of the Sacred Scriptures opens our souls to focus on these little details, and so we not only grow in holiness, but we reflect the Face of Christ to the people we serve.

Thank you all for your passion and daily dedication to the inspired Word of God. Sacred Scriptures.

Thank you for reading, studying, meditating, praying, contemplating and living the inspired Sacred Scriptures.