

Memorial of St. Bonaventure, Doctor of the Church

Homily of Bishop John Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

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In the 11th Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, Our Lord says: “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.”

The critical characteristic that the great Catholic saint theologians – St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, and St. John Henry Newman – share is their humility. The Holy Spirit touches their intellects, hearts, souls, imaginations and life of action and charity because they are meek and humble of heart.

Today, we celebrate the Memorial of St. Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, in his own significant contributions to Dogmatic theology, Biblical Theology and Liturgical Theology, frequently draws on the theology and mysticism of St. Bonaventure.

That is the beauty of our Catholic faith – a 21st century Catholic theologian can be in conversation and be inspired by a 13th Century theologian in their desires to be God’s instruments in exploring the Deposit of Faith.

In today’s Office of Readings from the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church offers us a selection from St. Bonaventure’s *The Journey of the Mind to God*. This selection gives us a glimpse into the heart, soul and mind of this great Doctor of the Church who lived in the 13th century and wrote theological and spiritual works and biblical commentaries.

St. Bonaventure writes: “Christ is both the way and the door. Christ is the staircase and the vehicle, like the throne of mercy over the Ark of the Covenant, and the mystery hidden from the ages. A person should turn their full attention to this throne of mercy and should gaze at him hanging on the cross, full of faith, hope and charity, devoted full of wonder and joy, marked by gratitude and open to praise and jubilation.”

As we celebrate the Memorial of this great saint and Doctor of the Church and as we celebrate his theological and spiritual influence on the mission of the Church through the centuries, we pray that “we may benefit from his great learning and constantly imitate the ardor of his charity.”