

Fr. Perozich comments —

Below are 3 articles. The article from Fr. Paul Scalia, a most excellent writer, was sent to me by a priest in San Diego who used it in his homily on January 24. The following two are from St. Dorotheus a sixth century Palestinian abbot; they are included in week 9 Monday and Tuesday office of vigils of the Divine Office of the Catholic Church.

Some of Fr. Scalia's comments reflect a reprise of Abbot Dorotheus: know yourself, repent of your misdeeds. Fr. Scalia then adds believe in Jesus and the gospel and the kingdom which is here right now among the craziness in the world and in the church.

REPENTANCE FIRST:

Fr. Scalia writes, **“Sin is the construction of my own petty little kingdom. It might be a squalid, selfish, peevish place, but at least it's mine. Admission into the Kingdom of God requires that I repent and renounce this miserable rival kingdom.”**

I confess that it is easy to see the constructions of the petty kingdom of others. They are very obvious. In addition, I need to see my own constructions which rival God's kingdom and renounce them as well as avoiding the kingdoms of others which compete with Jesus' kingdom.

Dorotheus reminds us, **“Yet the reason for all disturbance, if we look to its roots, is that no one finds fault with himself.**

This is the source of all annoyance and distress”

“If he has turned from the path of self-accusation, he will never find peace. He will always be troubled himself, or else he will be a source of trouble for others and all his labors will be wasted.”

The saint concludes, **“For the more the soul advances, the stronger and more powerful it becomes in bearing the difficulties that it meets.”**

FAITH IN JESUS AND THE GOSPEL AS WELL

Previously I gave some practical expressions of repentance and faith while commenting on an article, “Stand Firm”, by Dr. Frank Wright. <http://richardperozich.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/standfirm.pdf> I include them here to flesh out Catholic living of repentance and faith in Jesus in a time of upheaval in the world and in the church:

- **A rule of life that respects time, work, pleasure yet allows for prayer and worship privately, as a family, as a church**
- **Sunday Mass in person, holy lives, and Holy Communion**

- **Knowing and living the 10 commandments and church precepts**
- **Monthly confession**
- **Daily Rosary**
- **Faith formation in systematic teaching by a sound catechism such as the Baltimore Catechism which most people under 60 do not know**
- **Devotions that we are no longer obliged to do such as fast and abstinence on Fridays and ember days**
- **Visits to the church for adoration**
- **Daily scripture reading such as the readings for the Mass of the day and more.**
- **Daily prayer of ACTS: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication (intercession).**
- **Avoiding the pied pipers of climate change, homosexuality, “reproductive rights”, etc, and rejecting politicians who promote them, nor following down the path of church leaders who preach these over the salvation from sin by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross**

“The history of America is like the history of the Christian church—a miraculous birth, followed by spiritual strength and prosperity, but periodically troubled by weakness of faith, timidity, and forgetfulness. But each falling away is succeeded by a Spirit-led revival and renewal, when the people of God remember the heights from which they have fallen and return to the standard of their Great King and Savior.” — Frank Wright

END OF FR. PEROZICH COMMENTARY

BEGINNING OF ARTICLES BY FR. SCALIA AND ABBOT DOROTHEUS

- The Catholic Thing - <https://www.thecatholicthing.org> -

A Different Inauguration

Fr. Paul D. Scalia
 Sunday, January 24, 2021

Saint John Henry Newman once observed that **men always think of their own day and age as the worst.** In every time, he said, “serious and anxious minds, alive to the honour of God and the needs of man, are apt to consider no times so perilous as their own.” Indeed, we see this from Cicero – *O tempora! O mores!* – to Thomas Paine – *These are the times that try men’s souls!* – to today’s political hyperboles.

Ironically, Newman made this observation on the way to claiming that the trials of his own day were indeed the worst. They were such that “would appall and make dizzy even such courageous hearts as St. Athanasius, St. Gregory I, or St. Gregory VII. And they would confess that dark as the prospect of their own day was to them severally, ours has a darkness different in kind from any that has been before it.”

One sympathizes.

As we look at the cultural, political, and ecclesiastical wreckage around us, we are tempted to conclude the same. Political division and cultural relativism, simmering religious persecution, widespread infidelity, and ecclesiastical confusion – these make our times arduous and presage more difficulties ahead.

Still, it’s of little use and of frequent distraction to try to pinpoint our time’s exact location on the chart of woeful times. **What matters is not how today’s evils compare to yesterday’s, but how we respond to them.** In such circumstances, it’s good to go back to

basics. And basics are just what today's Gospel gives us. (Mk 1:14-20)

Last week the world was focused on the presidential inauguration. Today's Gospel presents another – a very different and more important – **inauguration: the beginning of our Lord's public ministry.** “After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God.”

Our Lord even gives a brief inaugural address: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” Unlike the typical time bound, agenda-laden inaugural address, our Lord's words focus on eternal truths. They are timeless and thus apt for every moment in history, including our own.

He declares, **“This is the time of fulfillment.”** For the ancient Israelites, that had a very specific meaning: the realization of all that had been promised and prophesied for centuries. **The long-awaited Messiah has come. The kingdom of God is no longer a desire, but at hand.**

More broadly, we can take the “time of fulfillment” to indicate that **all time and all times have meaning only in relation to Christ and His Kingdom. He relates all of history to Himself and thus sets it in proper perspective. If we try to interpret and respond to our times apart from Him, we tragically misread them.**

This is the proper supernatural outlook: to measure our current circumstances not according to the world's

standard and solutions, but **according to the reality and power of the Kingdom of God that is at hand no less today than 2000 years ago. And that Kingdom requires two things: repentance and faith.**

“Repent” is the foundational Gospel command. It’s always timely. Sin is the construction of my own petty little kingdom. It might be a squalid, selfish, peevish place, but at least it’s mine. Admission into the Kingdom of God requires that I repent and renounce this miserable rival kingdom.

This repentance takes on greater significance as we are called to confront the evils of our day. **The greatest danger in war is to adopt the immoral tactics of the enemy.** So, in opposing the culture of death, we risk growing bitter, hardened, and resentful. Our response to evil must always be seen in relation to the “time of fulfillment,” and thus preceded by our own repentance. **Only a heart set right with Christ can see with clarity and speak with charity.**

The prophets of Israel never considered themselves exempt from the sinfulness of their people. “Woe to me! For I am lost,” says Isaiah, “For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” (Is 6:5) **The first step in speaking the truth is repentance for our own actions against it.** As we have an obligation to bear witness to the truth, so we should understand ourselves as rebellious, sinful, and in need of the truth we proclaim.

Next, **“believe in the Gospel.” Repentance cleanses our souls; faith opens them to God’s grace and truth.** Again, this takes on greater significance in our trying times. **Against increasing darkness, the light of faith enables us to judge wisely, so that the world’s deceits will not mislead us. That faith also makes us stouthearted, able to stand fast and persevere, because we know the one in Whom we have believed.** (cf. 2 Tim 1:12)

An exchange between Frodo and Gandalf is helpful for this consideration. The poor hobbit has just learned that the evil Sauron was rising again and menacing Middle Earth. He says, “I wish it need not have happened in my time.” Again, one sympathizes. But Gandalf responds, “So do I, and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. **All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.**”

For us, the first and most fundamental thing to do with the time that is given us is to repent and believe in the Gospel.

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****Image: *The Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew* by Caravaggio, c. 1605 [Royal Collection Trust, London]**

Article printed from The Catholic Thing: [https://
www.thecatholicthing.org](https://www.thecatholicthing.org)
URL to article: [https://www.thecatholicthing.org/
2021/01/24/a-different-inauguration/](https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2021/01/24/a-different-inauguration/)

From the teachings of Saint Dorotheus, abbot

The reason for all disturbance is that no one finds fault with himself

Let us examine, my brothers, how it happens that many times a person hears something unpleasant and goes away untroubled, as if he had not heard it; and yet on some occasions he is disturbed and troubled as soon as he hears such words. What is the cause of this inconsistency? Is there one reason for it or many? I recognize a number of them, and one in particular is the source of all the others. As someone has put it: Occasionally this results from the condition in which the person happens to be.

If a person is engaged in prayer or contemplation, he can easily take a rebuke from his brother and be unmoved by it. On other occasions affection toward a brother is a strong reason; love bears all things with the utmost patience. Another reason may be contempt; if a person despises the one who is trying to trouble him and acts as if he is the vilest of all creatures and considers it beneath his dignity even to look at him, or to answer him, or to mention the affront and insults to anyone else, he will not be moved by his words.

The result of this is, as I have said, that no one is disturbed or troubled if he scorns and disregards what is said. But on the other hand, it is also possible that a person will be disturbed and troubled by his brother's words, either because he is not in a good frame of mind, or because he hates his brother. There are a great number of other reasons as well. **Yet the reason for all**

disturbance, if we look to its roots, it that no one finds fault with himself.

This is the source of all annoyance and distress. This is why we sometimes have no rest. We must not be surprised when we are rebuked by holy men. We have no other path to peace but this.

We have seen that this is true in many cases, and, in our laziness and desire for rest, **we hope or believe that we have entered upon a straight path when we are impatient with everyone, and yet cannot bear to blame ourselves.**

This is the way we are. It does not matter how many virtues a man may have, even if they are beyond number and limit. **If he has turned from the path of self-accusation, he will never find peace. He will always be troubled himself, or else he will be a source of trouble for others and all his labors will be wasted.**

(Doct. 13, De accusatione sui ipsius, 2-3: PG 88, 1699)

On false spiritual peace

The man who finds fault with himself accepts all things cheerfully – misfortune, loss, disgrace, dishonor and any other kind of adversity. He believes that he is deserving of all these things and nothing can disturb him. No one could be more at peace than this man.

But perhaps you will offer me this objection: “Suppose my brother injures me, and on examining myself I find that I have not given him any cause. Why should I blame myself?”

Certainly if someone examines himself carefully and with fear of God, he will never find himself completely innocent. He

will see that he has given some provocation by an action, a word or by his manner. If he does find that he is not guilty in any of these ways, certainly he must have injured that brother somehow at some other time. Or perhaps he has been a source of annoyance to some other brother. For this reason **he deserves to endure the injury because of many other sins that he has committed on other occasions.**

Someone else asks why he should accuse himself when he was sitting peacefully and quietly when a brother came upon him with an unkind or insulting word. He cannot tolerate it, and so he thinks that his anger is justified. If that brother had not approached him and said those words and upset him, he never would have sinned.

This kind of thinking is surely ridiculous and has no rational basis. For the fact that he has said anything at all in this situation **breaks the cover on the passionate anger within him, which is all the more exposed by his excessive anxiety. If he wished, he would do penance. He has become like a clean, shiny grain of wheat that, when broken, is full of dirt inside.**

The man who thinks that he is quiet and peaceful has within him a passion that he does not see. A brother comes up, utters **some unkind word and immediately all the venom and mire that lie hidden within him are spewed out. If he wishes mercy, he must do penance, purify himself and strive to become perfect.** He will see that he should have returned thanks to his brother instead of returning the injury, because his brother has proven to be an occasion of profit to him. It will not be long before he will no longer be bothered by these temptations. The more perfect he grows, the less these temptations will affect him. **For the more the soul advances, the stronger and more powerful it becomes in bearing the difficulties that it meets.**