

Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



Virtues

Tuesday in the First Week of Lent

Reading: Ephesians 1: 15- 23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and authority and **power** and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Commentary

The word for ‘power’ used by St Paul in this passage is the Greek word ‘dunamis’ (from which we get the word ‘dynamite!’) and means ‘power’ in the sense of something inherent; an attribute vested within a person.

When St Jerome translated the Scriptures into Latin (the Vulgate Bible) in the 4th century, he used the Latin word ‘virtus’ to translate the word ‘power.’ Thus, in the King James version of the story of the woman with the issue of blood who is healed by touching the hem of Jesus’s garment

(Luke 8 43-48)) we read ‘And Jesus said, ‘Somebody has touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out from me.’

And so, we could translate the verse in our reading from Ephesians, as does the 16th century Douay Rheims translation of the Bible, as ‘far above all principality, power, **virtue** and dominion...’

Virtue here means ‘power,’ as in the last verse of the well-known Advent hymn, ‘Hark a herald voice is calling,’ (a translation of a 6th century Latin hymn).

Honour, glory, virtue, merit,
To the Father and the Son,
With the co-eternal Spirit,
While unending ages run. Amen.

The angelic Virtues are not, therefore, virtues in the sense of a personal trait or morally good quality, but ‘Virtues’ from the Latin word for ‘power.’ They are sometimes referred to as ‘Strongholds,’ because Pseudo- Dionysius commented on their immoveable strength. They are also strongly connected with the working of miracles.

Virtues are said to help people who are overburdened by work or duty or any kind of affliction, by strengthening them with resilience, courage, determination, patience, staying power and endurance. They strengthen our faith in God.

Various artists have painted Virtues carrying a white lily for perfection or a red rose to symbolise Christ’s passionate love.

In our window the characteristics of the Virtues are portrayed in the presenting of a crown – the power they hold is from God and they are at His service – and a ciborium, the vessel used at the Eucharist to keep the consecrated bread. The passionate love of God is revealed to us on the Cross where Christ’s Body is broken and His blood spilled for the sins of the world. It is in the Eucharist, when we break bread, that we, like the disciples on the Emmaus Road, recognise that the Risen Christ is among us.

Meditation

Give thanks for the Holy Eucharist in which we receive Christ, the Bread of Life.

By Pope Francis

“It is in the Lord, who gave His life for us on the cross, that we will always find that unconditional love which sees our lives as something good and always gives us the chance to start again. In the Eucharist, Divine Mercy reveals itself in a special way. Celebrating the greatest mysteries of our faith, we touch the source of mercy.

The Eucharist is flavoured with Jesus’ words and deeds, the taste of His Passion, the fragrance of His Spirit. When we receive it, our hearts are overcome with the certainty of Jesus’ love.

Let us pray that frequent participation in the Holy Mass would expand our hearts, enrich our strength and enable us to give ourselves to our neighbours.”

Prayer

Dear God, please give me strength when I am weak, love when I feel forsaken, courage when I am afraid, wisdom when I feel foolish, comfort when I am alone, hope when I feel rejected, and peace when I am in turmoil. Amen.

Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast;
Body of Christ, be thou my saving guest;
Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in thy tide,
wash me with waters flowing from thy side.

Strength and protection may thy passion be;
O Blessed Jesus, hear and answer me;
deep in thy wounds, Lord, hide and shelter me;
so shall I never, never part from thee.

Guard and defend me from the foe malign;
in death's dread moment make me only thine;
call me and bid me come to thee on high,
where I may praise thee with thy saints for aye.

(Anima Christi 14th century)