

Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

(St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday

6:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M.

6:00 A.M. Daily

Holy Days:

6:00 A.M.; 8:00 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel

Montgomery, Alabama

10:45 A.M.

Only on first Sunday

of each month

St Pius V Chapel

Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 A.M.

Every Sunday except

first Sunday of each month

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Weekly Bulletin #814

January 25, 2004 – Green

Mass of Sunday; Gl; Cr; Pref. Trinity; comm. Conversion of St. Paul; comm. St. Peter

Development of Virtue

(Part 1 – repeated)

So much do we hear talk about ABANDONMENT to the Will of God, and so much do we read about it. So much that we weary hearing about it or thinking about it. We wish that our conversations and all spiritual conferences would focus attention on something else. We all realize that the spiritual life must be primary, but is ABANDONMENT all that there is to the spiritual life? From some points of view the answer is “no,” but from one main point of view, ABANDONMENT is central. Just exactly, then, what does ABANDONMENT TO THE WILL OF GOD mean? Does it mean that we simply sit like puppets, motionless until God decides to move us about? Some have the mistaken idea that giving in to the Will of God is placing yourself at the end of a leash, and that from that point on there is nothing else to do but to obey the limits of the leash. Not quite! There is much more, and until ABANDONMENT TO THE WILL OF GOD is fully understood there is little use to talk about anything else. To begin with, let us make the connection: Abandonment to the Will of God – to DIVINE PROVIDENCE – is but the outward expression of the virtue of humility which is the foundation rock of the whole spiritual life. We have spent much time on the subject of humility, and have taught that it is humility which removes the obstacles to the outpourings of God’s goodness in us. Some have noted – perhaps have even complained – that such an approach fails to make clear the way that one develops humility.

We ask: “How am I to become humble?” and the immediate answer is “by the grace of God,” and that is the only truth. Only the grace of God can give us that insight into our condition, understanding that while humility is the very foundation stone of the very realm of life, there has to be more than just a foundation. In a building, for it to be a building, there is more than just a foundation. To begin with we must desire humility, and therefore we must pray for the virtue of humility – for the grace of humility. The next thing is to pray for the strength to accept humiliations, realizing at the same time that the virtue of humility and the acceptance of humiliations are not the same thing. There is an enormous difference between being humble and being humiliated. True humility necessarily springs from love, while the acceptance of humiliations can spring forth from a variety of reasons: from fear; from deceitfulness; from the desire to please; and so forth. Love, however, should be the feeling that prompts any acceptance of humiliations.

And so it must be understood that humility does not necessarily consist in the performance of humble actions. It is a serious mistake to think that a humble person is one who goes about being menial, servile, base, submissive, fawning, crouching, or such like. All such give the virtue of humility a most distorting coat of ugly paint. True humility is nothing at all but beautiful. Humility is beautiful because HUMILITY and LOVE and CHARITY are very difficult to tell apart – they form a trinity, separately defined perhaps, but so much the equal of each other that they can be defined as one. Humility, Love, and Charity must NOT be reduced to activities that are housed in the confines of the mind. One does not think humble, and therefore, one is thereby humble, and so on. Humility, Love, and Charity are NOT intellectual, and they are not begotten by logic or any other intellectual pre-determination. Humility, Love, and Charity are pure and genuine feelings of the heart – inseparable, they are but one single gift, and the three of them, taken together, demonstrate themselves in unnoticed silence. They reside only in the heart, because it is only in the heart that the Grace of God exists. The heart is constant. The mind is as inconstant as the moon. In the same way these three virtues must not be reduced to the natural level of body demeanor which is dishonest.

Now that we have touched upon the foundation of the spiritual life, let us turn our attention to the superstructure, and here we begin our plain talk, and here it is that we can become quite specific for those who seek SPECIFICITY. Here is where we need the fundamental strength of the foundation of the spiritual life, because the superstructure of the spiritual life consists of VIRTUE which needs the support of Humility, Love, and Abandonment. We have already said that we must desire, and we must pray for virtue, but prayer of itself is not of sufficient assistance. For prayer to be effective in us we simply have to give some “concrete” sign of a proper predisposition (St. Paul is an exception to this). If we really ask for God’s help in the matter of VIRTUE, then we must show God that we are ready and willing to