

# Christ the King Abbey

(Traditional Benedictines)

(St Francis of Assisi Chapel)

Cullman, Alabama

Every Sunday:

6:00 AM and 10:00 AM

6:00 AM Daily

Holy Days of Obligation:

6:00 AM - 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel

Montgomery, Alabama

10:45 AM

Only on first Sunday  
of each month

St Pius V Chapel

Birmingham, Alabama

9:30 AM

Every Sunday except  
first Sunday of each month

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TWENTY FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Weekly Bulletin #908

(5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany)

November 6, 2005 – Green

Mass of Sunday; Gl; Cr; Pref. Trinity

## PRAYER AND ART

from

*The Choice of God*

by Dom Hubert van Zeller (1956)

The poet who is too poetic cannot produce good poetry. The same principle applies to each of the arts. If an actor is more an actor than he is a person, he not only loses sight of the individual whom he is meant to be but also fails to express true drama. The painter, the composer, the dancer: each must discover for himself the point at which, if he goes any farther, he loses touch with his essential purpose.

At once you ask, ‘Do you mean his essential purpose as a man or as an artist?’ The answer is ‘Both.’ The purpose of the artist and the purpose of the rational being are the same. The artist differs from his fellows only in his vocation to unveil the beauty which he, together with the rest of mankind, must refer back to Beauty Itself (God).

Granted that all men are intended to see in created beauty a reflection of God, and that some men see this less clearly than others, and that some do not see it at all, the vocation of the artist is in a sense an apostolate. It is for him to give sight to the blind.

The artist is the one who has always got one lens more in his telescope than the ordinary man. He sees the heavens, and must explain them to others. This, whether he knows it or not and whether he likes it or not, is his function.

If the artist collaborates with God, uniting his creative art with the creative act of God, he will be a good man and probably a good enough artist. If he refuses to work with God – that is to say if he insists on creating independently of Him whom he recognizes as Creator – then he will not be a good man, nor, in the strictest sense, a good artist. In his rebellion against the source of truth and beauty, the artist may still show great talent and even genius. But he will fail in the one thing for which his power has been given him. He will be rendering no service to truth and beauty.

The artist who knows God’s purpose regarding art and defies it is like any other anarchist, any other heretic: in denying the order which is of God, he destroys the person which is himself. In trying to become more of an artist and less of a servant of God, he may become more of an individualist but he will become less of an individual. It is sad to watch promising artists deteriorate and turn out to be, in the literal sense, non-entities.

Truth is beauty and beauty is truth. This is all the artist knows and all he needs to know. If he fails truth he betrays beauty. And in that case there is no particular point in his pretending to be an artist any longer.

It is not only by expressing untruth and ugliness that an artist goes against his vocation. It is not even by expressing nothing at all, wrapping his talent in the napkin of laziness or false humility, that the artist sins. The most common failure of the artist lies in his mania for the expression of self to the exclusion of things more worth expressing.

Where the main consideration is self, what can prevent the finished work of art from being mannered? If the artist’s desire rises no higher than the personal adulation he receives, or the sensation he creates, then his gift is not being used as a revelation but as an advertisement.

The straining after effect is death to true art. Cleverness, technical competence, originality: these qualities do not of themselves guarantee true art. There is all the difference in the world between artistry and art.

What the above has been leading up to is this. The religious man, no less than the artistic man, can fail in his profession by being too professional. Just as the artistic can be the enemy of art, so religiosity can be the enemy of religion. The man of prayer can all too easily be beglamoured by an *expertise* of spirituality which has nothing to do with the true service of God. The service of God is a serious business, more serious than the service of art, and to make merely a culture out of it is to go far towards making mockery of God.

Art and religion seem to have this in common, that they attract the dilettante. The engineer is not as a rule a dabbler; nor is the soldier, the historian, the explorer, the scientist. But in art and religion we tend to follow too much our own taste and impulse to the neglect of reality. *(Continued on back)*

Nor is it only a question of the form which our fastidiousness takes in matters of religion – such as a flair for certain schools of spirituality, a cult of certain aspects of the liturgy, an observance of certain ascetical practices – but, and perhaps more generally, **there is the danger of our being smothered by legalism. The light of the spirit can be extinguished by the very laws of the spirit.** Laws are designed to bring light and life. It is we who turn them inside out so that they bring darkness and death.

The man of prayer, like the man of art, can bury his head in a desert of formula. He can make it his whole business to perfect himself in things that are secondary. There is in fact no greater obstacle for the religious man than precisely this tendency to mistake the means for the end. The history of both mysticism and asceticism is witness to the tragedy of false emphasis.

**The letter of the law, wrongly applied, does not merely waste an energy which might otherwise relate directly to God: it kills it. Life comes from the spirit, and if the spirit is stifled by the letter which is intended to minister to the spirit, the fruit of the spirit is stillborn.**

The way to God has been so carefully and elaborately charted that we sit spellbound before the chart. Not before God but before the chart. It is not even that we are afraid to explore the country of God: it is simply that, hypnotized, we are kept in our seats by the chart. The only thing that will uproot us and send us on our way is the conviction that union with God is the one sole reason why we are confronted with a chart at all. But even this conviction, which no sane person would disown if he gave the thing a moment's thought, is not enough to uproot some of us.

We become saints, not by picking our way delicately between the prohibitions of the law, but by stretching out boldly in the direction of love. **Just as the only way to love is to keep the law, so the only way to keep the law is to love.**

**Fear, precision, knowledge of the commentaries will not perfect us in the law. Love will perfect us in the law. Prayer will perfect us in the law. The law without love is a dead thing. It is as dead a thing as prayer would be without God.**

Just as the rules and tricks of the art-school can be the most cramping influence when the painter goes out on his own to paint, so the system can be cramping when the soul sets out to love. Nothing so hinders the soul in prayer as the misgiving that the method which looked so good in the book is not being followed. Distractions about food and work are trivial compared with the distraction of remembering and applying the rules for the avoidance of distractions.

If the artist has to shake himself free of the egotism which will always try to dominate his work, of the sentimentality which will cheapen it, of the preoccupation with slogans and doctrinaire principles which will impinge upon his spontaneity, so also has the man of prayer to expose and renounce the same attachments if he is to aim at gospel perfection. The interior soul will never be rid of this selfishness unless he be born again in spirit and in truth – unless he be born again in Christ. □

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1. There will be **NO** Catechism class today.
  2. There will be **NO** 5:00 PM Sunday Vespers and Benediction today.
  3. Next Sunday, November 13, 2005, is the Feast of all the Benedictine Saints, and next Monday, November 14, 2005, is the Commemoration of all the Benedictine Poor Souls.
  4. November is the Month of the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Please remember them in your prayers and good works.
  5. The very beautiful 2006 Calendars are now available at the usual price of \$6.00 each. At Christ the King Abbey in Cullman, see either Father Abbot, OSB or Father Francis, OSB. At Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel in Montgomery, see Mrs. Pam Olson. At Saint Pius V Chapel in Birmingham, see Father Sebastian, OSB.
  6. Please pray for all the Sick and Shut-ins of our Chapels. **LET US ALSO PRAY FOR EVERYONE.** Let us pray for **ALL** the priests and religious men and women of the world. **NO MAN, WOMAN, OR CHILD SHOULD BE LEFT OUT OF OUR PRAYER.** God made all men to be with Him in heaven for all eternity, and this includes every human being on earth, regardless of station or condition or place. While Our Blessed Lord was hanging on the Cross He did not look around and pick and choose those for whom He was dying. He did not exclude a single member of the Human Race – even His enemies – from the wounded Love that came forth from Him during those momentous moments. Weak human nature and erroneous persuasions will prevent some from achieving the purpose intended for them by God, but that matter remains entirely between all such and God. Our only duty is to pray for **souls**. We make **no** judgments concerning such matters. If there is any sifting to be done, it is to be done by God, Himself alone. **We are NOT** the ones to do the sifting.
  7. **MASSSES FOR THE WEEK:** (Father Abbot Leonard's schedule only)
    - SUNDAY: For the People of our Chapels
    - MONDAY: Special intention Victoria Krawczak
    - TUESDAY: For the Poor Souls in Purgatory
    - WEDNESDAY: Special intention Peggy Rosenberg
    - THURSDAY: Special intention Virginia Nash
    - FRIDAY: Deceased Angelo Del Vescovo
    - SATURDAY: Special intention Peggy Wink