

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jan 28th 2021

Today's liturgy is prayed in honor of Saint Thomas Aquinas, "the Angelic Doctor," for both his innocence and his brilliance. The structure of his theological thought served to guide and articulate Catholic Church thinking from his own lifetime in the early 12th Century until well into the 20th.

Standing as a giant intellect across the centuries of Western Civilization, Thomas, of the Noble Family of Aquino, Italy, is remembered in the Catholic Church for his mystical graces, his profound devotion for the Eucharist, (accompanied by his compositions of poetry and hymn) and his integration of Jewish, Islamic and Christian threads of insight that dramatically expanded the wisdom of theological insights in the 12th Century.

One of my favorite insights into Thomas's talents was his ability to dictate four or five different theological texts at a time while pacing a room. Not only could he keep his mind on the multiple arguments that he was making, he could do it in four or five languages. So he might be writing one text in French by dictating it line by line as we walked down the room. But each time he turned to walk up the long room he switched to Latin for another argument in another text altogether. This is multitasking beyond my imagination! Such were his gifts of insight into reality that he could keep a thought materially focused, while processing the logic of several other lines of thought at the same time. With such extraordinary talent Thomas serves as an exemplar of today's readings.

We may not have the gift of multi-tasking for the sake of the kingdom but perhaps we do have an unusual capacity for patience, or kindness, generosity, wisdom, insight – so many of the living gifts – the real expression of divine existence that is given to persons who desire them – bring their own expansion by practice. The Letter to the Hebrews that provides the first reading today challenges us to help one another find and exercise these gifts for one another. When that comes to pass then our mutual hope and our mutual love take us far beyond any isolated search for the good. What is truly gifting for any of us will be gifting for all of us, times infinity.

On a chilly day in January, it is helpful to explore the warmth of the greater gifts we bear, to express gratitude and to practice their power. We will be astonished at the wondrous empowerment that explodes within us, especially if the practice is aimed toward "filling up what is lacking" in any member of the Body of Christ.

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