

Reflecting with Jeanne Chézard de Matel: Second Sunday of Lent A

In her Autobiography (Vol. 2 [1013-1014]), Jeanne experiences Jesus calling her to go up to the mountain and contemplate Him in the Transfiguration:

On the second Sunday of Lent, You wished to lead me with You up to Mount Tabor, where I contemplated You. You were spreading nets and cords up to heaven and on earth. Your Father and the Holy Spirit were there, bound and attracted through love, if I dare speak in that way.

Jeanne understands the Transfiguration as the revelation of who Jesus really is: God incarnate, who unites divinity and humanity out of love. She uses the visible image of nets and cords to describe the invisible unity that Jesus accomplishes in his very person. The theophany, the experience of God, is so overpowering that everyone falls to the ground:

There, Moses and Elijah and three of your Apostles fell to the ground. What charm, what fascination delighted heaven and earth! Only obstinate hell had no destiny in this light.

She cannot imagine how anyone could resist being enraptured by such a revelation. Only those who have already totally, obstinately rejected God (thus choosing hell) could fail to be moved by it and led to God. She continues, in poetic form, declaring her total love and commitment to God:

Dear Love, in your hands is my destiny. In your eyes are my dynamism and vitality. In your bosom is my treasure.

Now, she alludes to Peter's impulsive reaction, "Lord, it is good to be here. If you wish, I will pitch three tents..." (cf. Mt 17:4). She does not want to blurt out empty words, though. She wants to do whatever Jesus asks of her, and to know that, she must wait in silence to hear God's word:

It is good for me everywhere you wish to be. Saint Peter did not know what he was saying; I want to learn from You what You wish for me to do. It would please You for me to remain¹; your divine Father commands me to hear You. Speak, Lord, for your servant [Jeanne] is keeping silence to hear You in peace and quiet. She wants to see only Jesus of Nazareth, her flourishing² Spouse. It is the goal of your Transfiguration.

The whole purpose of the Transfiguration is for Jeanne (and for us) to see Jesus as he truly is, and thus to be more intimately united to him. Jeanne frequently uses spousal imagery to describe the love relationship she experiences with Jesus. In the conclusion of this passage, she speaks with the flowery and sometimes clever language of lovers:

Unite me to You; bind me with your bonds. I wish to be your captive. If I am as mute as a fish, entwine me in your net. In You, I will find my element and my aliment. You are the immense sea where my spirit spreads out and loses itself. You are my life. My gain is in You alone.

Herein is an explanation of the image of the net employed at the beginning of the passage. It is perhaps again an allusion to Peter - becoming a fisher of people. Jeanne is "caught" in Jesus' net. If she is a fish, he is the ocean. In Jesus is her element (her soul, that which constitutes her being) and her aliment (her only true nourishment). She is saying, effectively, "You are my all, my life, my treasure, my only desire. I want to lose myself in You!" This Lent, may we fall so deeply in love with Jesus that we truly desire nothing else but to lose ourselves in him.

Translation and Commentary by Sister Mary Clare Underbrink IWBS

¹ The French word *demeurer* can also mean to dwell in/with.

² The French *florissant* can mean flowering, blooming, thriving.