

THE SIXTY-FIRST DISCOURSE FROM THE MAGNA CATECHESIS,

BY SAINT THEODORE OF THE STUDIUM

translated by Alice Gardner, 1905

THE abundant cornfield delights the heart of the husbandman on his approach. Much more is the ruler of souls gladdened by the spiritual fruitfulness of those under his charge. Thus do you bring joy to me, my children, you who are the field of my labours and a plantation of God, by the increase, and as it were the blossoming forth of your virtues.

And I rejoice to see the zeal of each one about his business, the industry and care of each in working out his salvation; the gentleness of one; the laborious industry, even beyond measure, of another; the reverence and caution of a third; the skill of a fourth in replying to the attacks of adversaries, without cessation or weariness; the peaceable character of a fifth, unmoved by passions -- result of peace and calm within, not of outward forcing; in another, confidence in me, for all my unworthiness, and the disposition to regard me as better than I am; in yet another, a disposition untouched by earthly longings or any love of the world; in a word, I delight to see the growth and fruitfulness in the spirit as shown by all of you in all divers ways.

Are we not thus all walking together and knit together by our heavenly impulse, and by the holy prayers of my father [Abbot Plato]? I wonder not a little, and surely this is worthy of wonder. Yet I tremble above measure every day. For what if God, seeing how idle and unprofitable is my service, and waxing wroth against my sins, were to withdraw His favourable hand from the midst of us? For then there might come upon us what to speak were unfitting, or even to think, such a thing as discord, or slackness of soul, or a falling away, whether secret or manifest.

To the end, therefore, that you may confirm me--unworthy as I am--and yourselves, in the lot of the saints and the inheritance of the righteous, and in all good repute, keep to these same things, my children, or rather press on further still, in discipline and in zeal, from glory to glory, from knowledge to knowledge, from our citizenship to a citizenship meet for God; swerving not from what you have resolved and agreed upon in the presence of God and of the angels, and of my humble self.

Let us not become slack, nor lose heart if the time seems long -- though in truth it is not long -- for our life is but a dream and a shadow. And since we should become yet more humble and obedient by the study of the inspired Scriptures, let us beware lest we be puffed up in the vanity of our mind, so as to make our knowledge an occasion of evil, and likewise also our power in speech and argument, our experience, our skill, our correctness in framing and uttering our words; our good reading, or maybe our subtlety, our skill of hand, our psalmody, our learning, our skill in music, our culture, and the like. But let the gift of these things be to us rather a cause of fear and of self-abasement before God who has given them.

For thus we shall find God merciful, -- or rather bountiful, and ready to give us yet more, that we may be filled with good things. And we shall be a holy temple to God, beautified with gifts upon gifts. But if we shall become presumptuous towards God, and seek to lord it over our brethren, stretching up, as it were, the neck of our souls, and raising our eyebrows and hoisting our shoulders and walking boastfully, seeking this or that, judging others in our pride and foolishness: -- asking ever "why are not things otherwise?" or "why have not I the charge of this matter?" or "why should this man have the management of that business?" -- if we act thus, we are indeed vain and foolish, and are like those in the proverb who pour water into leaky vessels.

Not so, my brethren, not so. Let us not make our opportunities a cause of destruction or the day of work a day of loss; nor, when we may mount the walls of virtue, slip down into vice. Our opportunity is great, our days are delightful. For they are spent in following the commandments of God, in attaining everlasting wealth, in purchasing the kingdom of Heaven. Let us run, let us hasten. I exhort you, I beseech you. I would kneel before you and implore you as my inmost life and all my joy, my boasting and my crown, my glory and praise. Those who have affirmed

and those who have denied; those who have followed the way for long and those who are new to it; those from distant folds and those bred among us; all now of one herd and one flock, of one fold and one charge, nurslings of one shepherd! Let us think no more of evil that might come. May you live thus and strive thus and be perfected thus in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be the glory and the power with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

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Have mercy, O Lord, upon Thy servants the translator Alice and the scribes Paul, David, and Edward.

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THE END, AND TO GOD BE THE GLORY!