
FROM THE DARK WOOD TO THE BEATIFIC VISION: JOURNEYING THROUGH LENT WITH DANTE

Part 4:

“.. where the human spirit is purged
and becomes fit to ascend to Heaven”



St Columba's, Culloden

Wednesday 14 March 2018

The Third Terrace: Wrath

- See last week's handout for details and quotations (available on our parish webpage).

The Fourth Terrace: Sloth

"And then they were upon us – that entire,
enormous mass of spirits on the run;
Two out in front were shouting as they wept:
Mary in haste ran to the hills, cried one"
(*Purg.* 18: 97-100)

The Fifth Terrace: Avarice

"Just as our eyes, attached to worldly goods,
would never leave the earth to look above,
so Justice, here, has forced them to the ground."

- Pope Adrian V (11 July-18 August 1276):

"I was, alas, converted very late:
only when I became Shepherd of Rome,
did I perceive the falseness of the world.

Man's heart, I saw, could never rest down here,
nor in that life could greater heights be reached,
and so, I came to love the other life.

Until that time I was a wretched soul,
servant of Avarice, cut off from God;
here, I am punished for it, as you see."
(*Purg.* 19: 106-114)

- Marian Counter-Example:

“Then somewhere up ahead of us, I heard
a voice wailing, “Sweet Mary!” and the cry
was like that of a woman giving birth;
The voice went on: “How very poor you were
is clear to all men from the place you found
to lay your holy burden down.”
(*Purg.* 20: 19-24)

The Sixth Terrace: Gluttony

so, from behind us, moving swiftly, came
and passed us by with a quick look of doubt,
a band of spirits, silent and devout,

their eyes dark-shadowed, sunken in their heads,
their faces pale, their bodies worn so thin
that every bone as molded to their skin.

The sockets of their eyes were gemless rings;
one who reads *omo* in the face of men,
could easily have recognised the *m*.
(*Purg.* 23: 19-24; 31-33)

- Dante meets Forese Donati, a former neighbour and poet:

All of us here who sing while we lament
for having stuffed our mouths so lovingly,
make ourselves pure, thirsting and hungering.

The fragrance of the fruit and of the spray
that trickles down the leaves stirs up in us
a hungering desire for food and drink –

and not just once: as we go running round
this road, our pain is constantly renewed.
Did I say pain? Solace is what I mean!
(*Pura.* 23: 64-72)

“It was my Nella with her flowing tears,”
he answered me, “who brought me here so soon
to let me drink the sweet wormwood of pain.

It was her pious prayers and her laments
that raised me from the slope where souls must wait,
and set me free from all the other rounds.

All the more dear and pleasing to the Lord
is my sweet widow that I greatly loved,
the more she is unique in doing good;”
(*Purg.* 23: 85-93)

The Seventh Terrace: Lust

“The acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honourable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude.” Sexuality is a source of joy and pleasure. (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* § 49; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2362)

- Fr. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*

The Earthly Paradise

- The Wall of Flame
- The Pageant of the history of the Church
- Beatrice
- The two rivers: Lethe and Eunoe

“From those most holy waters
I came away remade, as are new plants
pure and prepared to rise up to the stars.”
(*Purg.* 33: 142-145)