

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

A Matter of Heart Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, July 15, 2016 8:15 AM
Is 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8; Mt 12:1-8 **St. Bonaventure**, bishop and Doctor of the Church
(St. Bonaventure was a great light for the Church and for the Franciscans.)

Today we celebrate the memorial for **St. Bonaventure**. St. Bonaventure came along in the thirteenth century and was actually awarded the doctorate in philosophy in the same year that St. Thomas Aquinas received his doctorate, and a man almost equal to Thomas Aquinas, maybe even greater for all I know. He **was a great light for the Church and for the Franciscans** in general. He was from, as St. Thomas was, a rather wealthy family. He had all the advantages of life, but chose to give them up in following the way of the *poverello*, St. Francis. In a similar way, St. Thomas Aquinas gave up his very lofty life for being a friar of the Dominican order.

Now St. Bonaventure was different from Thomas in his whole disposition. He advises his followers, that is, the Franciscans, to “seek the bridegroom not the teacher.” That doesn’t sound like something St. Thomas would say. He says to seek the fire not the light. **It’s a matter of heart not mind; it’s grace not doctrine.** So it’s the inner life that he is **focusing on, the inner life of the soul**, of the heart, and he is believing that **one can attain great mystical vision even while living on earth.** Now this is true; it is possible for some, those who are called to it, not necessarily everyone. It’s not something one should necessarily decide to do, but it is surely true that some have done this. Before St. Thomas died he said everything he wrote was straw, so maybe he ended up agreeing with St. Bonaventure after all.

Now there is a story about St. Bonaventure that I think is very winsome, for example, it reminds me of Pope Francis. He was chosen to be Archbishop of York in England, but he didn’t want to become bishop and he turned it down—an act of humility and probably common sense. But eventually the pope prevailed upon him and insisted that he take the position of Cardinal Bishop of one of the suburban sees of Rome. So **the pope sent a legation to bring him the red hat which bestowed upon him the dignity of cardinal. And when they arrived he made them wait as he washed the dishes.** I think that says a lot about his character.