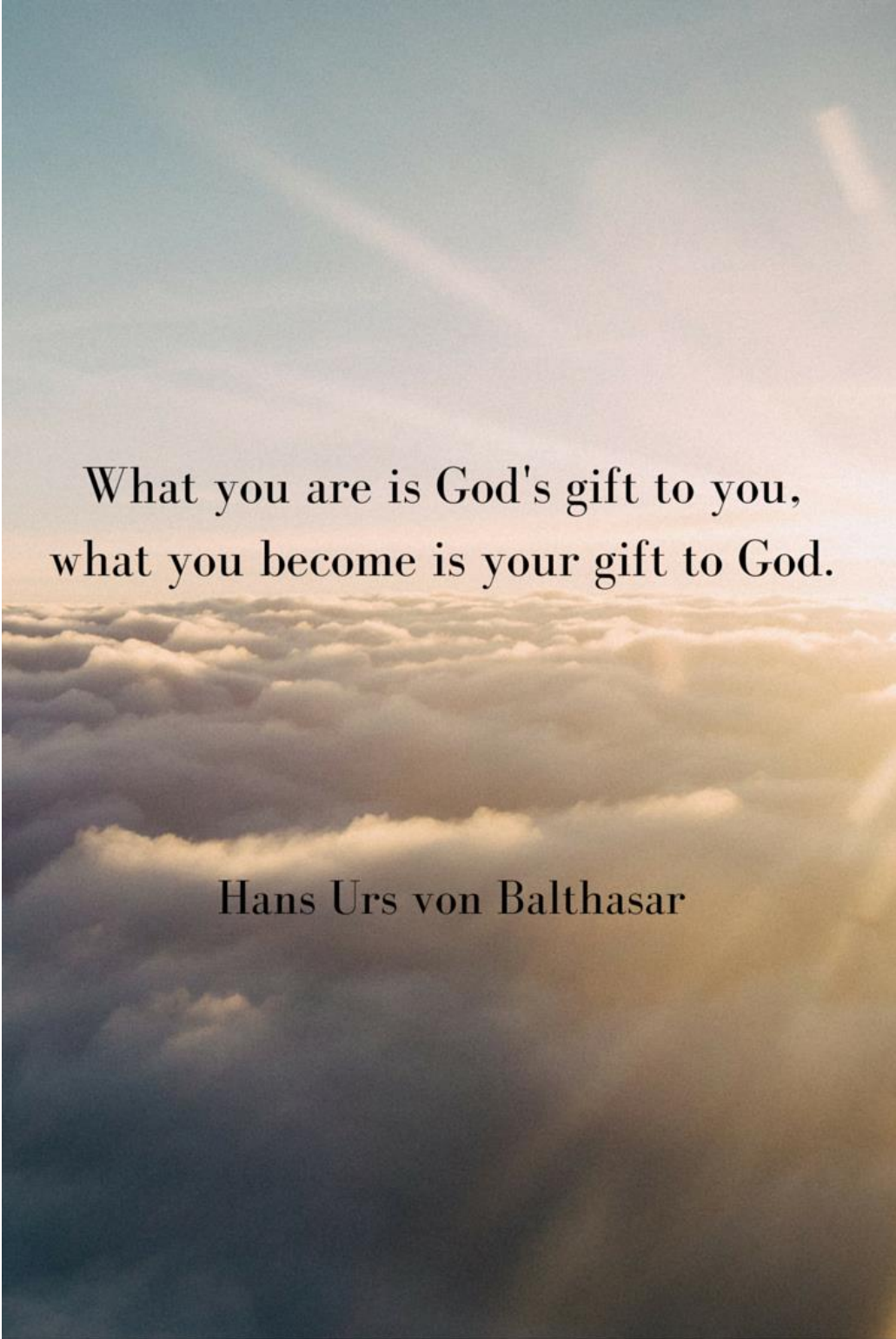


FROM FATHER JOHN – *“I rejoiced because they said to me, “We will go up to the house of the LORD.” And now we have set foot within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city with compact unity. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD. According to the decree for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. In it are set up judgment seats, seats for the house of David.” ~ Psalm 122*

Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord, Alleluia!



What you are is God's gift to you,
what you become is your gift to God.

Hans Urs von Balthasar

Here is the direct link to the readings for Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Easter.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/050521.cfm>

I thought I would share with you an excerpt from *The Letter to Diognetus*. But, before I do that, I need to give you a little background on this letter. The letter is actually a theological treatise that was written in the second century somewhere around 130 A.D. or shortly thereafter. Scholars make this estimate based on the textual evidence of the document and the language that it uses.

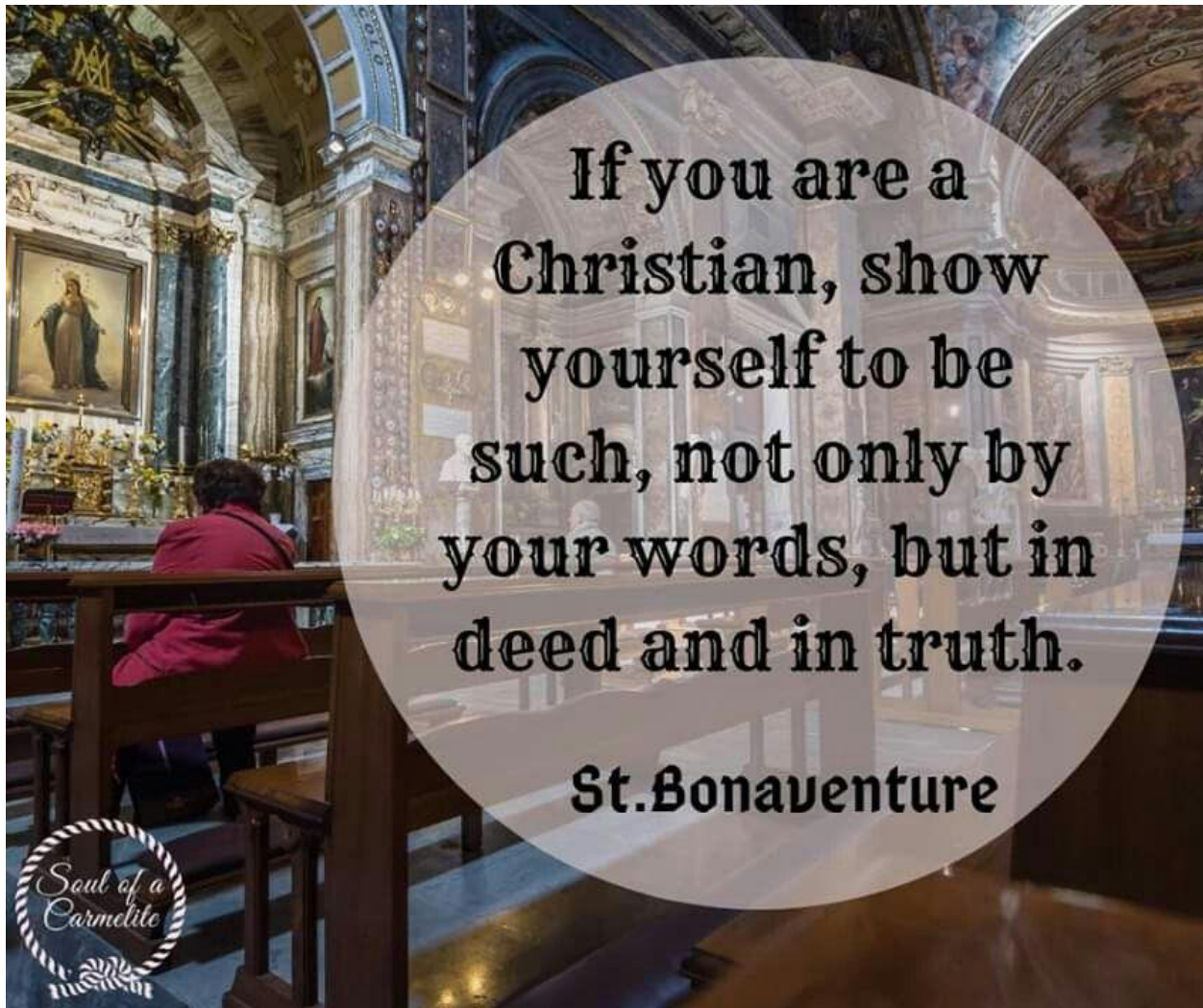
It is a treatise that defends Christianity to the wider Roman world against charges by various critics of Christianity. It is one of the earliest documents that we have of Christian apologetics. The writer and recipient were both Greek but their identities are not known. Neither were directly identified in the document. The document does use the Greek word '*mathetes*' which means student or disciple. It appears one time in the document when the author calls himself a student or a disciple of the Apostles.

Scholars think that the letter probably comes from within the Johannine Christian community (followers of St. John the Apostle) because the author uses the word '*Logos*' for our Lord Jesus Christ which was something that was prevalent in that particular community.

The title gives us the name *Diognetus*. It is possible that this is the name of the intended recipient but it is also possible that it is the name of a fictitious character that is being used to propagate the spread of the information in the letter. *Diognetus* was the name of the childhood tutor of Marcus Aurelius who later became the Roman Emperor from 161 A.D. to 180 A.D. The Greek word *Diognetus* literally means '*God-Born*'. It is possible that the *Diognetus* was a real person for whom the letter was intended but it is just as possible that it was a pseudo name. Scholars have not come to a definitive conclusion.

Christian apologetics were becoming more and more popular in the Roman Empire throughout the later part of the second century. Christianity was continuing to spread as Christians proclaimed the Good News of our Lord Jesus. Many powerful officials had secretly become Christians even though Christianity was prohibited in the Roman Empire until 313 A.D. when the Edict of Milan was issued by Constantine. This proclamation legalized Christianity and allowed for freedom of worship throughout the empire.

The excerpt that I am sharing with you from the letter speaks of how Christians lived in the world at a time when the forces of the world seem to be arrayed against Christianity. The persecution of Christians was prevalent in the Roman Empire during the second century when this was written. At times and in some places, Christians were left alone but at other times and places the persecutions were extremely severe. I hope you find this excerpt as interesting as I do.



**If you are a
Christian, show
yourself to be
such, not only by
your words, but in
deed and in truth.**

St. Bonaventure



“Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law.

Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich

many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred.

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body. As the soul is present in every part of the body, while remaining distinct from it, so Christians are found in all the cities of the world, but cannot be identified with the world. As the visible body contains the invisible soul, so Christians are seen living in the world, but their religious life remains unseen. The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution. Such is the Christian's lofty and divinely appointed function, from which he is not permitted to excuse himself."

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.