

**Jim's Notes**  
**August 9, 2006**  
**The Gospel According to St. Matthew 6:1-4**

**Matthew 6:1**

**Origen (died A.D. 232)**

Just as water always conflicts with fire and fire with water and such things can never dwell together simultaneously, so likewise egotism and virtue are opposed to each other and can never easily coexist in one and the same soul. Therefore egotism is to be expelled from our souls, and we must abide in Christ's commandments. (Fragment 114.1)

**St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)**

When Jesus warned, "Beware of practicing your piety before men," he then added pointedly, "to be seen by them." On first glance it seems as if the same thing were being repeated, but if you were carefully to pay attention, you will note a careful distinction. Alms may be given in the presence of others primarily to be seen by them, or they may be given in the presence of others but not to be seen, or they may be openly given in order to be seen but still not be seen, or they may be given quietly and still be seen. He is not focusing simply on the outward act done but the inward intent. (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.2.2)

**St. Hilary of Poitiers (died A.D. 368)**

He removes all concern for things of the present and bids those thunderstruck by the hope of the future to pursue neither the favor of others by parading their virtue nor religious boasting through an outpouring of public prayer. Rather, the fruit of good works is to be contained within the knowledge of faith, because the pursuit of human praise will receive only that reward which it looks for from people, while to yearn for God's approval is to pursue a reward longed for patiently. (On Matthew 4.28.3)

**Matthew 6:2**

**St. Chromatius of Aquileia (died A.D. 407)**

Earlier Jesus taught that the work of justice is to be done not for the sake of humans but for the sake of God. Now we are also instructed that we should not blow the trumpet when we perform acts of charity. That is, we should not broadcast what we do, because it is not the mark of a devout mind to do any of the works of God in order to anticipate the glory of human praise. Many people, you see, make a donation for the use of the poor in order to reap from the gesture the human praise and the renown of their contemporaries. The Lord shows that they have received the reward of their work in this age. For as long as they seek the glory of this age, they lose the reward of the future promise. (Tractate on Matthew 26.4.2.5)

**Matthew 6:3**

**St. John Chrysostom (died A.D. 407)**

Jesus is not talking about literal left and right hands. Rather, he speaks spiritually with intentional exaggeration. "If it is possible," he says, "for you to remain unaware, let this be your goal. The result, if it be possible, is that your giving be concealed from the very hands that serve." It is not, as some say, that we should hide it from wrong-headed people, for he

has commanded here that it should be concealed from all. (The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.2)

### **St. Chromatius of Aquileia (died A.D. 407)**

Here the Lord is not speaking literally of the hands of the human body. Hands as such cannot know, having the senses neither of seeing nor of language. Rather, "on the right hand" means righteous deeds and "on the left" signifies sinful deeds or persons. Thus we read it written in the book of Kings that "hand" means people when it says, "Do I not have ten hands in Israel?" -- that is, ten tribes of Israel. Therefore, there is no doubt that "on the right hand" means "the just" and "on the left" means "sinners," according to what Solomon related: "The Lord acknowledges the divisions on the right; the perverse are those who are on the left. The Lord makes very plain the meaning of this "right" and "left" in the Gospel when he declares that the just are to be placed at the right, the sinners on the left. If something is to be accomplished according to the teaching of the Lord, then the right hand of the just must not know what the left is doing. That is, in order to labor religiously and faithfully, we should not boast in the sight of sinners and unfaithful people. (Tractate on Matthew 26.5.2-4.11)

### **The Ecumenical Council of Florence (1438 – 1445)**

It has likewise defined, that, if those truly penitent have departed in the love of God, before they have made satisfaction by worthy fruits of penance for sins of commission and omission, the souls of these are cleansed after death by purgatorial punishments; and so that they may be released from punishments of this kind, the suffrages of the living faithful are of advantage to them, namely, the sacrifices of Masses, prayers, and almsgiving, and other works of piety, which are customarily performed by the faithful for other faithful according to the institutions of the Church. And that the souls of those, who after the reception of baptism have incurred no stain of sin at all, and also those, who after the contraction of the stain of sin whether in their bodies, or when released from the same bodies, as we have said before, are purged, are immediately received into heaven, **and see clearly the one and true God himself, as he is, yet according to the diversity of merits, one more perfectly than another.** (*Laetentur coeli*, July 6, 1439)