



Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's

The Church's Year

INSTRUCTION ON THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

INTROIT The Lord became my protector, and He brought me forth into a large place: He saved me, because he was well pleased with me. (Ps. XVII.) I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength: the Lord is my firmament, and my refuge, and my deliverer. Glory &c.

COLLECT Make us, O Lord, to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy name; for Thou never failest to help and govern those whom Thou dost establish in Thy steadfast love. Thro'.

EPISTLE (I ,John III. 13-18.) Dearly beloved, Wonder not if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death; whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself. In this we have known the charity of God, because he bath laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

EXPLANATION People who are really pious have always something to suffer from the wicked world, as, Jesus foretold, but they do not cease to love their persecutors as their best friends, and are ready, if necessary, to give their life for ,their enemies, as Christ did. Thus should all Christians act; for the love of our neighbor and even of our enemies is a universal command, a law that binds all; it is the life of the soul. Hatred deprives the soul of this life and makes man a murderer, because hatred is the beginning of murder, and often ends in homicide. By love we know the true Christians. (John. XIII. 35.) St. John even considers love the certain sign of being chosen for eternal life, when he says: We know, we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. Alas! how few will be chosen from among the Christians of to-day, because there is so little love among them! Empty compliments, assurances of friendships &c. love appears only in words, only on the tongue; and such idle, ephemeral, worthless love is found everywhere in this world; but that which is love in truth and reality, which shows charity to the suffering, how rare it is! and yet only to this love is promised eternal life, because it alone rests on the love of God.

GOSPEL (Luke XIV. 16-24.) At that time, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees this parable: A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant, at the hour of supper, to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out, and see it; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his, servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house maybe filled. But I say unto you, that none of these men that were invited shall taste of my supper.

What as to be understood by this great supper?

The Church of Christ on earth, in which His doctrine and His most precious Flesh and Blood are given as food to those who belong to her; also the Church triumphant in heaven, in which God Himself, in the beatific vision, is the nourishment. This supper is called great, because God Himself has founded the Church; because the Church embraces heaven and earth, hence many belong and will belong to her; and because having ended the contest on earth, she will last forever in heaven. There the saints of God will enjoy the Highest Good for all eternity, and will have nothing to wish for, since all their desires will there be realized. O, what happiness it is that we are invited to His supper, and as guests are nourished by the teachings of Christ, and by His most sacred Flesh and Blood.

Who is it that prepares the supper?

It is Christ, the God-Man, who for our benefit has not only instituted His Church to which He has entrusted doctrine and the Sacrament of His Flesh and Blood, but has gained eternal salvation for us by His passion and death, and who has invited us first by the prophets, who foretold Him and His divine kingdom, and afterwards by His apostles, and their successors to His great supper.

Who are they who excuse themselves?

They are principally the Jews who bound by pride and avarice to earthly possessions, and blinded by the pleasures of the world, did not recognize Jesus, and remained outside of His church. By him who said he had bought a farm are understood those who by constant anxieties about the possession of earthly goods, and the riches of this world, become indifferent to eternal salvation. By him who had bought five yoke of oxen, is to be understood that sort of busy men who are so burdened with worldly affairs that they find no time to work for heaven, for they even appropriate Sundays and festivals to their worldly affairs. By him who had taken a wife, and could not come, are represented the carnal, impure men who have rendered themselves by their lusts incapable of spiritual and heavenly joys. Since these different classes of people do not wish to have part in the heavenly banquet, God has excluded them and called others.

Who are meant by the poor, the feeble, the blind and the lame?

The humble and submissive Jews, the publicans, also the Samaritans and the Gentiles, who did not reject Jesus and His doctrine as did the proud, high-minded, carnal Scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke this parable. The former faithfully received Him, entered His Church, and became participators in eternal happiness. This is daily repeated, because God excludes from the kingdom of heaven those proud, avaricious, and carnal Christians who are ever invited by His servants, the priests, to the enjoyment of holy Communion, but who reject the invitation. On the contrary God welcomes the poor, despised people, the penitent sinners, by separating them from the love of the world by the inspiration of His grace, and by the adversities which He sends them. Thus, in a measure, He forces them to take part in the spiritual joys of a sincerely pious life in His Church on earth, and in the heavenly bliss of His Church in heaven.

SUPPLICATION I thank Thee, O most merciful Jesus that Thou hast called me into Thy Church, permitting me so often to share in the banquet of Thy love, and that by Thy sufferings and death Thou hast obtained the joys of heaven for me. Urge me as seems pleasing to Thee, compel me by temporal trials that by the use of these graces I may obtain the place which Thou hast prepared for me in heaven.

MORAL LESSON CONCERNING THE VICE OF IMPURITY

I have married a wife, and therefore I can not come. (Luke XIV. 29.)

From this foolish excuse it would seem as if married life were an obstacle to arriving at the heavenly banquet, whereas lawful, chaste, Christian marriage is, on the contrary, a means of eternal salvation for those to whom

the gift of continency is not given. The excuse of this married man was not grounded on his station in life, but on his inordinate inclination for carnal pleasures which render the one who gives way to it, unfit for spiritual or heavenly things, for the sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God. (I Cor. II. 14.)

Unfortunate indeed are they who suffer themselves to be carried away by their sensual lusts, who give away the priceless jewel of chastity and purity of heart which makes man equal to the angels, (Matt. XXII. 30.) who for a momentary enjoyment of sinful pleasure lose that white and precious garment in which chaste souls will shine for ever in heaven before the face of God! What benefit does the impure man derive from the gratification of vile lust? He gains the anger and contempt of God; intolerable disgust when the sin is consummated; the torment of a remorseful conscience, and unless he repent, the eternal torments of hell, for the apostle says: Do not err: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate shall possess the kingdom of God, (I Cor. VI. 9, 10.) It is seen from the examples of the Old Law, how much God hates and abominates the sins of impurity. Why did God regret having created man? (Gen. VI. 6.) , Why did He destroy all except a very few, by a universal deluge? (Gen. VI. 17.) Why did He lay the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in ashes by pouring upon them fire and brimstone? (Gen. XIX.) Why did He punish the two brothers Her and Onan, by a sudden death? (Gen. XXXVII. 7. 10.) Why did He permit the whole tribe of Benjamin to be extirpated? (Judges XX.) Because of their detestable sins of impurity. And is not this vice an object of the just wrath of God? By these sins an impure man disgraces his body which should be a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Ghost; he disgraces his soul the image of God, purified and purchased by the precious blood of Christ, and lowers himself beneath the animal, which, void of intellect, follows its instinct; he weakens the power of his body and soul, and ruins his health; he loses the respect of the good, scandalizes his fellowmen, voluntarily separates himself from the communion of saints, deprives himself of the sanctifying grace of God and participation in the merits of Jesus and His saints, and, if he continues like an animal to wallow in this vice, he finally falls into such blindness and hardness of heart that eternal truths, death, judgment, hell, and eternity no longer make any impression upon him; the most abominable crimes of impurity he considers as trifles, as human weaknesses, no sin at all. He is therefore but seldom, if ever, converted, because the evil habit has become his second nature, which he can no longer overcome without an extraordinary grace from God. This God seldom gives, because the impure man generally despises ordinary means and graces, and therefore despairs and casts himself into the pool of eternal fire, where the worm dies not, and where with Satan and his angels the impure shall be for ever tormented.

Do not suffer yourself to be deceived, Christian soul, by the words "love and friendship", which is sought to cover this vice and make it appear a weakness clinging to man. This impure love is a fire which has its origin in hell, and there it will eternally torment the bodies in which it has prevailed. That which God so much detests and so severely punishes, certainly cannot be a trifle, a human weakness! Impress deeply on your heart that all impure thoughts, desires and looks, to which you consent, all impure words, songs, exposures, touches, jokes, and 'such things, are great sins which exclude you from the kingdom of heaven, into which nothing defiled can enter. Remember that he who looks at a woman with a lustful desire, has already, as Christ says, committed adultery in his heart. (Matt. V. 28.) We must, then, carefully guard against "such trifles", as the wicked world calls them, if we do not wish to expose ourselves to the greatest danger of losing our souls. Although it is difficult for an impure person to be converted, yet he should not despair. God does not cast away even the greatest sinner; Jesus forgave the adulteress in the temple, and forgave and received Mary Magdalen. But he who wishes to repent must make use of the proper means to regain the grace of God, and prevent a relapse. Those who have not defiled themselves by the sin of impurity can make use of the following means:

1. Constant prayer. Hence the admonition of the wise King; As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought him. (Wisd. VIII. 21.)
2. Mortification of the flesh by fasting and abstinence. Jesus says these impure spirits can in no other way be cast out but by prayer and fasting. (Matt. XVII. 20.)

3. The frequent meditation on the four last things, and on the bitter sufferings of our Lord; for there is, says St. Augustine, no means more powerful and effective against the heat of lust than reflection on the ignominious death of the Redeemer.
4. The quiet consideration of the temporal and eternal evils which follow from this vice, as already described.
5. The love and veneration of the Blessed Virgin who is the mother of beautiful love, the refuge of all sinners, of whom St. Bernard says: "No one has ever invoked her in his necessity without being heard."
6. The careful mortification of the eyes. The pious Job made a covenant with his eyes, that he would not so much as look upon a virgin. (Job XXXI. 1.)
7. The avoidance of evil occasions, especially intercourse with persons of the other sex. "Remember," says St. Jerome, "that a woman drove out the inhabitants of paradise, and that you are not holier than David, stronger than Samson, wiser than Solomon, who all fell by evil intercourse."
8. The avoidance of idleness: for idleness, says the proverb, is the beginning of all evil.
9. The immediate banishing of all bad thoughts by often pronouncing the names of Jesus and Mary, which, as St. Alphonsus Ligouri says, have the special power of driving away impure thoughts.
10. The frequent use of the holy Sacraments of Penance and of the Altar. This last remedy in particular is a certain cure if we make known to our confessor our weaknesses, and use the remedies he prescribes. The Scripture says that frequent Communion is the seed from which virgins spring, and the table which God has prepared against all temptations that annoy us.

COLLECT In flame, O Lord, our loins and hearts with the fire of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may serve Thee with pure bodies, and please Thee with clean hearts. Amen.

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