



Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's

The Church's Year

INSTRUCTION ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

In thanks for the redemption the Church sings at the Introit:

INTROIT Declare the voice of joy, and let it be heard, allel.: declare it even to the ends of the earth: the Lord hath delivered his people. (Isai. XLVII. 20.) Allel. allel. Shout with joy to God, all the earth: sing ye a psalm to his name, give glory to his praise. (Fs. LXV.) Glory etc.

COLLECT O God, from whom all good things proceed: grant to Thy suppliants, that by Thy inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by Thy guidance may perform the same. Through etc.

EPISTLE (James I. 22-27.) Dearly Beloved, Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if a man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass: for he beheld himself and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was. But he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. And if any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless, and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world.

EXPLANATION True piety, as St. James here says, consists not only in knowing and recognizing the word of God, but in living according to its precepts and teachings; in subduing the tongue, the most dangerous and injurious of all our members; in being charitable to the poor and destitute, and in contemning the world, its false principles, foolish customs and scandalous example, against which we should guard, that we may not become infected and polluted by them. Test thyself, whether thy life be of this kind.

ASPIRATION O Jesus! Director of the soul! Give me the grace of true piety as defined by St. James.

GOSPEL (John XVI. 23-30.) At this time, Jesus saith to his disciples: Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father, anything in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto, you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs. The hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father. In that day, you shall ask in my name: and I say not to you that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples say to him: Behold, now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we know that thou knowest all things, and thou needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou comest forth from God.

Why does God wish us to ask of Him?

That we may know and confess that all good comes from Him; that we may acknowledge our poverty and weakness which in all things need the help of God; that we may thus glorify Him and render ourselves less unworthy of the gifts which He has promised us.

What is meant by asking to the name of Jesus?

By this is meant praying with confidence in the merits of Jesus, "who," as St. Cyril says, "being God with the Father, gives us all good, and as mediator carries our petitions to His Father." The Church, therefore concludes all her prayers with the words: "Through our Lord, Jesus Christ." It means also that we should ask that which is in accordance with the will of Christ, namely, all things necessary for the salvation of our soul; to pray for temporal things merely in order to live happily in this world, is not pleasing to Christ and avails us nothing. "He who prays for what hinders salvation," says St. Augustine, "does not pray in the name of Jesus." Thus Jesus said to His disciples: Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name, "because," as St. Gregory says, "they did not ask for that which conduces to eternal salvation."

Why is it that God sometimes does not grant our petitions?

Because we often pray for things that are injurious, and like a good father, God denies them to us, in order to give us something better; because He wishes to prove our patience and perseverance in prayer; because we generally do not pray as we ought; to be pleasing to God, prayer should be made when in a state of grace and with confidence in Christ's merits, for the prayer of a just man availeth much; (James V. 16.) we must pray with humility and submission to the will of God, with attention, fervor, sincerity, and with perseverance.

At what special times should we pray?

We should pray every morning and evening, before and after meals, in time of temptation, when commencing any important undertaking, and particularly in the hour of death. God is mindful of us every moment, and gives us His grace. It is, therefore, but just that we think often of Him during the day, and thank Him for His blessings.

How can we, in accordance with Christ's teachings, (Luke XVIII. 1.) pray at all times?

By making the good intention when commencing our work, to do all for the love of God, and according to His most holy will; by raising our hearts to God at different times during the day; frequently making acts of faith, hope, love, and humility, and by repeating short ejaculations, such as: O Jesus! grant me grace to love Thee! Thee only do I desire to love! O be merciful to me! Lord hasten to help me.

What is the signification of the different ceremonies that Catholics use at their prayers?

The general signification is that God must be served, honored and adored, not only with the soul but with the body; when we pray aloud we praise God, not only with the mind, but also with our lips; when we pray with bowed and uncovered head, with folded, uplifted, or outstretched hands, on bended knees, with bowed and prostrated body, we show our reverence and subjection to the majesty of God, before whom we, who are but dust and ashes, cannot humble ourselves enough. These different ceremonies during prayer are frequently mentioned in both the Old and the New Testaments, and Christ and His apostles have made use of them, as for instance, the bending of the knees, falling on the face, &c.

Which is the best of all prayers?

The Lord's Prayer which Christ Himself taught us, and commands us to repeat. When said with devotion, it is the most powerful of all prayers. (Matt. VI, 9-13; Luke XI. 2-4.)

SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Of what does the Lord's Prayer consist?

It consists of an address, as an introduction to the prayer, and of seven petitions which contain all that we should ask for the honor of God, and for our own salvation. The address is thus: Our Father who art in heaven:

What does the word "Our" signify?

In the communion of saints we should pray for and with all the children of God; we should be humble and preserve brotherly love towards all men.

Who is it that is here called our "Father"?

Our Father is God who has made us His children and heirs of His kingdom through His Son.

Why do we say "Who art in heaven", since God is everywhere?

To remind us that our true home is heaven, for which we, should ardently long, because our Father is there, and there He has prepared our inheritance.

For what do we ask to the first petition: "Hallowed be Thy name?"

That we and all men may truly know, love, and serve God.

For what do we pray to the second petition: "Thy kingdom come?"

That the Church of God; the kingdom of Christ, may extend over the whole earth, and the kingdom of sin and the devil be destroyed; that Christ may reign in our hearts and in the hearts of all; and that God will deign to receive us into the kingdom of heaven when our earthly pilgrimage is ended.

For what do we ask to the third petition: "Thy will be done on earth as it is to heaven ?"

We beg that God would enable us, by His grace, to do His will in all things, as the blessed do it in heaven. In these three petitions we seek, as taught by Christ, first the kingdom of God, that all the rest may be added unto us. (Luke XII. 31.)

For what do we ask in the fourth petition: "Give us this day our dally bread?"

We beg for all necessaries for body and soul

Why does it say, "this day?"

The words "this day" signify that we should not be over anxious for the future, but place all our confidence in God who will provide the necessaries of life.

What do we ask for in the fifth petition: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us?"

We beg that God will forgive us our sins, as we forgive others their offenses against us. Those who make this petition, and still bear enmity towards their neighbor, lie in the face of God, and will not receive forgiveness. (Mark XI. 25, 26.)

What is risked for in the sixth petition: Lead us not into temptation?"

We ask God to avert all temptations or at least not to abandon us when we are tempted. We cannot, indeed be entirely free from them in this world, they are even necessary and useful for our salvation: for without temptation there is no combat, without combat no victory and without victory no crown.

What do we ask for in the seventh petition: Deliver us from evil?"

We beg that God would free us from all evil of soul and body.

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING THE PROCESSIONS ON ROGATION DAYS

What are processions?

Processions are solemn religious assemblages of persons marching together, and are instituted by the Catholic Church partly to encourage the piety of the faithful, partly in remembrance of graces received, and in thanksgiving for them. Processions are approved of by the Fathers of the Church from the earliest ages. Those who take part in them in a true spirit will reap wholesome fruit of Christian piety.

Are processions something new?

No, they were the custom in the very earliest centuries of the Church, as testified by the acts of the martyrs, of Saints Cyprian, Lucius, Boniface, and the Fathers of the Church, Saints Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Gregory, and others. They are also founded on Scripture. Thus King David caused the ark of the covenant to be carried in solemn procession to Jerusalem, (II Kings VI.) and Solomon, his son, had it carried in solemn procession into the new temple. (III Kings VIII. 1-6.)

What do processions signify?

Processions are a figure of our pilgrimage on earth; we are strangers and wanderers here below, our journey reaches from this valley of tears to the heavenly Sion, the procession therefore returns into the house of God; our journey leads over the thorny ways of life, the procession therefore takes place in the open air, where the pilgrim is exposed to all kinds of weather; they are a powerful incentive to fervor in prayer for the faithful; when hundreds, even thousands of faithful praise God aloud, or cry to Him for help and mercy, must not even the coldest heart be roused to vivid, fervent devotion, since Christ has promised to be present even where two or three are assembled in His name? Processions are an open acknowledgment that praise, thanks and adoration are due to God alone, while they are a public profession of our faith in Christ, the Crucified; they are a solemn thanksgiving for being permitted to profess Christ, our Lord, before the whole world, as also for all the graces obtained through Him; they are a public testimonial of our faith in the one, holy, Catholic Church, whose members are united by the same bond of faith, and who form under their head, Christ, one family in God. Finally, they are a sign of the triumph of Christian faith over the darkness of heathenism. If processions are solemnized with such intentions, with order and dignity, with fervent devotion, in the light of faith, they are indeed a pleasing sight for angels and men

Why are banners and the cross carried in procession?

The cross signifies that we are assembled as Christians, in the name of Jesus, in whose name we begin and end our prayers, through whose merits we expect all things from the Heavenly Father, and whom we must follow: on our journey to heaven; the red and white banners indicate that we must walk in all innocence under the banner of Christ, and fight unto death against sin, against the world and the devil, and be as ready as were the martyrs to give our life for our faith; the blue banners indicate that we must walk the road of self-denial and mortification, with really humble and penitent feelings for our sins. The banners are also emblematic of Christ's victory over death and hell, and of the triumph of His religion over the pagans and Jews.

Why do we go around the fields in processions?

To beg God to bless the fields with His fatherly hand, to give and preserve the fruits of the earth, and, as He fills the animals with blessings, and gives them food at the proper time, so may He give to us also our necessary food.

What is the origin of the procession on St. Mark's day and on Rogation Days?

The procession on St. Mark's day was instituted even before the time of Pope Gregory the Great (607) who, however, brought it into fervent practice, "in order," as he says, "to obtain, in a measure forgiveness of our sins." The same pontiff introduced another, called the Sevenfold Procession, because the faithful of Rome took part in it in seven divisions, from seven different Churches, meeting in the Church of the Blessed Virgin. It was also named the Pest Procession, because it was ordered by St. Gregory to obtain the cessation of a fearful pestilence which was at that time raging in Rome, and throughout all Italy. This pestilence so poisoned the atmosphere that one opening his mouth to sneeze or gape would suddenly fall dead; (hence the custom of saying "God bless you," to one sneezing, and of making the sign of the cross on the mouth of one who gapes). The same holy pope ordered the picture of the Blessed Virgin, which is said to have been painted by St. Luke, to be carried in this procession, and that the intercession of this powerful mother be these supplications and the pestilence asked. God heard ceased. It is said that the processions in Rogation Week owe their origin to St. Mamertus, Bishop of Vienne in France; in the neighborhood of which city there were, in the year 469, terrible earthquakes which caused great destruction, the fruits perished and various plagues afflicted the people. The saintly bishop assembled the faithful, recommended them to seek refuge in the merciful God, and led them in procession around the fields. Such processions spread over France, and gradually throughout the Christian world; they are held in order to obtain from God the averting of universal evils, such as war, famine, and pestilence, and are, at the same time, a preparation for the Ascension of Christ who is our most powerful mediator with His Father, and whom we should invoke especially during these days.

With what intentions should we take part in a procession?

With the intention of glorifying God, of thanking Him for all His graces, and of obtaining aid and comfort from Him in all our corporal and spiritual needs; with the view of professing our faith openly before the whole world, and with the sincere resolution of always following Christ, the Crucified, in the path of penance and mortification. He who entertains other intentions and takes part, perhaps, for temporal advantages, or for sinful pleasures, or to avoid labor, &c., sins against God and the Church who weeps over and condemns such abuses.

Thank you for visiting: <http://www.JMJsite.com>. Please share this information and tell others about this website.