

Father Goffine's instructions for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost.

From the *Explanation of the Epistles and Gospels* by Father Leonard Goffine. Imprimatur: Rt. Rev. Joseph F. Mooney, V.G. September 28, 1918. (Copyright 1880):



At the Introit of the Mass the justice and mercy of God are praised: Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right; deal with thy servant according to thy mercy. Blessed are the undefiled in the way; who walk in the law of the Lord. (Ps. CXVIII.) Glory &c.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH. Grant to Thy people, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to avoid the defilements of the devil, and with a pure mind to follow Thee, the only God. Thro'.

EPISTLE. (Ephes. IV. 1- 6.) Brethren, I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. With all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. Who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

ADMONITION. Implore God continually for grace to accomplish and make certain your vocation by practicing these virtues, recommended by St. Paul.

INSTRUCTION ON THE ONE ONLY SAVING FAITH

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. (Ephes. IV. 5. 6.)

These words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles show clearly, that it is not a matter of indifference, what faith or religion we profess. Yet in our times so poor in faith, we often hear the assertion from so-called enlightened men: "It is all the same to what religion we belong, we can be saved in any, if we only believe in God and live uprightly." This assertion is impious! Consider, my dear Christian, there is but one God, and this one God has sent only one Redeemer; and this one Redeemer has preached but one doctrine, and has established but one Church. Had God wished that there should be more than one Church, then Christ would have founded them, nay, He would not have preached a new doctrine, established a new, Christian Church; for the Jews also believed in one God. But Jesus cast aside Paganism and Judaism, promulgated a new religion, and founded a new Church. Nowhere does He speak of Churches, but always of one Church. He says that we must hear this Church, and does not add, that if we will not hear this Church, we may hear some other. He speaks of only one shepherd, one flock, and one fold, into which all men are to be brought. In the same manner He speaks always of one kingdom upon earth, just as there is only one kingdom in heaven; of only one master of the house and one family, of one field and one vineyard, whereby He referred to His Church; of one rock, upon which He would build His Church. On the day before His death, He prayed fervently to His Heavenly Father, that all who believe in Him, might be and remain one, as He and the Father are one, and He gave His disciples the express command to preach His gospel to all nations, and to teach them all things, whatsoever He had commanded them. This command the apostles carried out exactly. Everywhere they preached one and the same doctrine, establishing in all places Christian communities, which were all united by the bond of the same faith. Their principal care was to prevent schisms in faith, they warned the faithful against heresy, commanded all originators of such to be avoided, and anathematized those who preached a gospel different from theirs. As the apostles, so did their successors. All the holy Fathers speak with burning love

of the necessary unity of faith, and deny those all claim to salvation who remain knowingly in schism and separation from the true Church of Christ.

Learn hence, dear Christian, that there can be but one true Church; if there is but one true Church, it naturally follows that in her alone salvation can be obtained, and the assertion that we can be saved by professing any creed, is false and impious. Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, speaks of but one Church, which we must hear, if we wish to be saved. He who does not hear the Church, He says, should be considered as a heathen and publican. He speaks furthermore of one fold, and He promises eternal life only to those sheep who belong to this fold, obey the voice of the shepherd and feed in His pasture. The apostles were also convinced that only the one, true Church could guide us to salvation. Without faith it is impossible to please God, writes St. Paul to the Hebrews, (XI. 6.) and this faith is only one, he teaches the Ephesians. (IV. 5.) If the apostles had believed that we could be saved in any religion, they would certainly not have contended so strenuously for unity, they would not have declared so solemnly, that we should not belong to any other than to Christ alone, and that we must receive and obey His doctrine. As the apostles taught so did their successors and all the Fathers agree that there is no salvation outside of the true Church. St. Cyprian writes: "If any one outside Noah's ark could find safety, then also will one outside the Church find salvation." (*De unit. eccl. c. 7.*) From all this it follows, that there is only one true Church which insures salvation, out of which no one can be saved.

But which is this Church? The Roman Catholic, Apostolic Church, for she alone was founded, by Christ, she alone was watered with the blood of the apostles and of thousands of holy martyrs, she alone has the marks of the true Church of Christ, [*see the Instruction for the first Sunday after Easter*] against which He has promised that the powers of hell shall not prevail. Those who fell away from the Church three hundred years ago do, indeed contend that the Church fell into error and no longer possessed the true, pure gospel of Jesus. Were they right, Jesus might be blamed, for He established this Church, promising to remain with her and guide her through the Holy Ghost until the end of the world. He would, therefore, have broken His word, or He was not powerful enough to keep it. But who dare say this? On the contrary, she has existed for eighteen hundred years, whilst the greatest and most powerful kingdoms have been overthrown, and the firmest thrones crumbled away. If she were not the only true and saving Church, founded by Christ, how could she have existed so long, since Jesus Himself said: Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. (Matt. XV. 13.) If she were not the Church of Christ, she would have been destroyed long ago, but she still stands today, whilst her enemies who battled against her have disappeared, and will continue to disappear; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, says our Lord. He has kept His promise and will keep it, notwithstanding all the oppositions and calumnies of her implacable enemies.

You see, therefore, my dear Christian, that the Catholic Church is the only true, the only saving Church; be not deceived by those who are neither cold nor warm, and who say: "We can be saved in any religion, if we only believe in God and live uprightly," and who wish to rob you of your holy faith, and precipitate you into the sea of doubt, error, and falsehood. Outside of the Catholic Church there is no salvation; hold this firmly, for it is the teaching of Jesus, His apostles, and all the Fathers; for this doctrine the apostles and a countless host of the faithful have shed their blood. Obey the teaching of this Church, follow her laws, make use of her help and assistance, and often raise your hands and heart to heaven to thank God for the priceless grace of belonging to this one, true Church; forget not to pray for your erring brethren, who are still outside of the Church that the Lord may lead them into her, that His promise may be fulfilled: There will be one fold, and one shepherd.

GOSPEL. (Matt XXII. 35-46.) At that time, The Pharisees came to Jesus, and one of them, a doctor of the law, asked him, tempting him: Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.

This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets. And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying: What think you of Christ; whose son is he? They say to him: David's. He saith to them: How then doth David in spirit call him Lord; saying: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word: neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

What is meant by loving God?

It means to find one's pleasure, happiness and joy in God, because He is the highest and most perfect Good; to rejoice in His infinite majesty and glory; to direct one's thoughts, words, and actions towards Him as our only end: to do His will in all things, and be prepared always rather to lose everything, even life itself, than His friendship.

What is meant by loving God with our whole heart, our whole soul, &c.?

These different expressions all properly mean the same thing, namely, that we should cling to God with a true, sincere and heartfelt love, but by our heart our will may be understood, that power by which we wish God all glory, and desire nothing more than that He be known, loved, and honored by all men. The soul signifies the intellect by means of which we should endeavor to arrive at the knowledge and love of God, praise and glorify Him above all things. The mind may signify our memory, with which we continually remember God and the innumerable benefits bestowed on us by Him, praise Him for them, thank Him, and always walk irreproachably before Him. Finally, we love God with all our strength, if we employ all the powers and faculties of our body in His service, and direct all our actions to Him as to our last end.

Is it true love, if we love God only because He is good to us?

This is grateful love, which is good and praiseworthy, but it is not perfect love, because the motive is self-love and self-interest.

What, therefore, is perfect love?

When we love God only because He is in Himself the highest Good, and most worthy of all love. In this manner we should endeavor to love Him; not through self-interest not through hope of reward, not through fear of punishment, but only because He, as the greatest Good, contains all goodness and, therefore, deserves to be loved only on account of Himself. Such love had St. Francis Xavier, which he very beautifully expressed in the following canticle, composed by himself:

O God, I give my love to Thee,
Not for the heaven Thou'st made for me,
Nor yet because who love not Thee
Will burn in hell eternally.
In dying throes on Calvary,
My Jesus, Thou didst think of me,
Didst bear the lance, the nails, the tree,
Rude scoffs, contempt and infamy,
And pangs untold, all lovingly, —
The scourge, the sweat the agony,
And death itself, — all, all for me,
A sinner and Thy enemy.

Why therefore, should not I love Thee,
O Jesus, dead for love of me?
Not that I may in heaven be,
Not that from hell I may be free;
Not urged by dread of endless pain,
Not lured by prize of endless gain,
But as Thou, Lord, didst first love me,
So do I love and will love Thee.
To Thee, my King, I give my heart,
For this alone that God Thou art.

Can fear exist with love?

Servile fear cannot, but filial fear may. Servile fear is rather a fear of punishment than a fear of offending God. Where such fear exists, love cannot dwell; for in love, writes St. Augustine, (*in Joann. Tr.* 9.) there is no fear, for perfect love casteth out fear. (I John IV. 18.) Filial fear, on the contrary, is the fear of offending God. This fear leads to love and is also an effect of love; it is the beginning of wisdom. (Eccles. I. 16.) Let us cherish this fear, for it will drive away sin, as sentinels expel thieves; (Ecclus. I 16.) it will replenish us with joy, and gladness, and obtain for us in our last moments divine blessings and a holy death. (Ecclus.. I. 27.)

How may we obtain a perfect love of God?

By meditating on His infinite, divine perfections, such as His almighty power, His wisdom, His splendor, His beauty, &c.; by contemplating His boundless love for us, in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of His only-begotten Son; by frequently practicing this virtue; by fervent prayer; and by making acts of love, such as are found in good prayer-books.

When should we practice the virtue of love of God?

As soon as we have arrived at the age of reason; when the world, the devil and the flesh, endeavor to withdraw us from God, by their apparent goods and pleasures; when we have separated ourselves from God by mortal sin; when we receive the holy Sacraments, particularly holy Communion; when we receive a particular grace from God; when we use food and drink and other lawful enjoyments; when we contemplate God's creatures; often during the day; and especially in the hour of death.

[Concerning the love of our neighbor, see the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost].

Why is the commandment to love God and our neighbor called the greatest commandment?

Because in it are contained all the other commandments, for Christ says, in it consists the whole law. He who loves God with his whole heart, does not separate himself from God by infidelity, does not practice public or private superstition and idolatry; he does not murmur against God, does not desecrate the name of God by cursing and swearing; he does not profane the Sabbath, because he knows that all this is displeasing to God. On the contrary, he hopes in God, keeps Sundays and days of obligation holy, and observes all the commandments of the Church, because God wishes that we hear the Church; he honors his parents, inflicts no evil upon his neighbor; does not commit adultery, does not steal, calumniates no one, does not bear false witness, does not judge rashly, is not envious, malicious or cruel, but rather practices the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; and all this, because he loves God and his neighbor.

What is the meaning of the question What think you of Christ?

Christ asked the Pharisees this question in order to convince them, from their own answer, that He was not only the Son of David, but that He as the only-begotten Son of God was the Lord of David and of all men from eternity. (Ps. II. 7.) , Unhappily, even today there are men who like the Pharisees deny the divinity of Christ, the Son of the living God, consider Him merely a very wise and virtuous man, and do not receive His doctrine, confirmed by so many miracles. Beware, my dear Christian, of these men who rob you of the peace of the soul, and the consoling hope of a future resurrection and eternal life, together with faith in Christ, the divine Redeemer. But if you believe Christ to be the Son of God and our Lord, Lawgiver, Instructor, and Redeemer, follow His teaching, and do not contradict indeed what you profess with your lips.

PRAYER. O most amiable Jesus! who hast admonished us so affectionately to love God and our neighbor, pour the fire of Thy love into our hearts, that all our deeds and actions, all our thoughts and words may begin and end with Thy love. Grant, that we may love Thee with all the powers of our body and. soul, and thereby be so united to Thee, that, like St. Paul, no temptation, no tribulation, no danger, not even death, may be able to separate us from Thee. Grant us also, that we may love our neighbors, friends, and enemies as ourselves for Thy sake, and thus be made worthy to possess Thee as our Redeemer and merciful judge.

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