

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's  
The Church's Year  
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT



On this day the Church not only makes mention in the office of the priest, but also in the Mass, of the two different Advents of Christ, that by His first gracious advent may be gladdened, and by His last terrible coming at the day of judgment we may be impressed with salutary fear. With this intention she cries out at the Introit:

*INTROIT* People of Sion, behold the Lord shall come to save the nations; and the Lord shall make the glory of his voice to be heard in the joy of your heart (Is. 30:30). Give ear, O thou that rulest Israel: thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep (Ps. 79). Glory be to the Father.

*COLLECT* Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the ways of Thine only-begotten Son: that through His advent we may be worthy to serve Thee with purified minds; who livest and reignest with God the Father, in union with the Holy Ghost, God for ever and ever. Amen.

*EPISTLE* (Rom. 15:4-13). Brethren, what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another,

according to Jesus Christ: that with one mind, and with one mouth, you may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also hath received you unto the honor of God. For I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. But that the Gentiles are to glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: Therefore will I confess to thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and will sing to thy name. And again he saith: Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again: Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and magnify him, all ye people. And again, Isaias saith: There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise up to rule the Gentiles, in him the Gentiles shall hope. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

*What does St. Paul teach in this epistle?*

The Jews and Gentiles who had been converted to the Christian faith were disputing among themselves at Rome, in regard to abstinence and the use of certain kinds of food, reproaching each other severely; the Jews boasted that the Savior, according to promise, was born of their nation, thus claiming Him from the Gentiles, who, in their turn, reproached the Jews for their ingratitude in having crucified Him. To restore harmony St. Paul shows that each had reason, the Jews and Gentiles alike, to praise God, to whose grace and goodness they owed all; that each had in Him a Redeemer in whom they could hope for salvation; and he warns them not to deprive themselves of that hope by contentions. By these words the Apostle also teaches that we too, have great reason to praise God, and to thank Him for calling us, whose forefathers were heathens, to the Christian faith, and to guard against losing our salvation by pride, envy, impurity, etc.

*Why should we read the Scriptures?*

That we may know what we are to believe, and do in order to be saved, as all Scripture inspired by God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice (11 Tim. 3:16); that we may learn from what Christ has done for us, and the saints for Christ, to be patient in our sufferings, and to be consoled and encouraged by their example. To derive this benefit from the Scriptures, the Catholic must read them by the light of that Spirit through whose assistance they came into existence, who lives and remains for ever with the Church: that is, the light of the Holy Ghost must be sought, that their meaning may be

read according to the sense of the Church and not be explained according to the reader's judgment. For he who reads the holy Scriptures by the light of his own private judgment, must, as experience shows, of necessity diverge from the right path, become entangled in manifold doubts, and at last, lose the faith entirely. For this reason the Catholic Church has very properly limited the reading of the Bible, not as has been falsely asserted, unconditionally forbidden it, but she allows the reading of those editions only, which are accompanied by notes and explanations that the unity of faith may not be disturbed, and that among Catholics there may not be the terrible bewilderment of the human intellect which has taken place among the different heretical sects who have even declared murder, bigamy and impurity to be permissible on the authority of the Bible. We are to consider also, that Christ never commanded the Bible to be written or read, and that not the readers but the hearers and the followers of the word of

God by which is meant those who hear the word of God in sermons, and keep it, will be saved!

Further instruction in regard to the doctrine of faith on this subject will be found in the "Instruction for Easter Tuesday."

*Why is God called a God of patience, of consolation, and of hope?*

He is called a God of patience because He awaits our repentance, of consolation, because He gives us grace to be patient in crosses and afflictions, and so consoles us inwardly, that we become not faint-hearted; of hope, because He gives us the virtue of hope, and because He desires to be Himself the reward we are to expect after this life.

*ASPIRATION* O God of patience, of consolation and of hope, fill Our hearts with peace and joy, and grant that we may become perfect in all good, and by faith, hope and charity, attain the promised salvation.

*GOSPEL* (Mt. 11:2-10). At that time, when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another? And Jesus making answer, said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them: and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold, they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? a prophet? yea I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.

*Why was John in prison?*

He was in prison, and lost his life, because he had rebuked king Herod for his adulterous marriage with his brother's wife (Mt. 14:310). Truth, as the proverb says, is certainly a very beautiful mother, but she usually bears a very ugly daughter: Hatred. St. John experienced that speaking the truth very often arouses hatred and enmity against the speaker. Let us learn from him to speak the truth always, when duty requires it, even if it brings upon us the greatest misfortunes, for, if with St. John we patiently bear persecution, with St. John we shall become martyrs for truth.

*Why did St. John send his disciples to Christ?*

That they should learn from Christ, who had become illustrious by His teachings and miracles, that He was really the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world, whom they should follow.

*Why did Christ say to the disciples of St. John: "Go and say to John, the blind see, the lame walk, etc."?*

That they should, by His miracles, judge Him to be the Messiah because the prophets had predicted that He would work such miracles (Is. 35:5-6). "Christ," says St. Cyril, "proved that

He was the Messiah by the grandeur as well as by the number of His miracles."

*Why does Christ add: "And blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in me"?*

Christ used these words in reference to those who would be scandalized by His poverty, humility and ignominious death on the cross, and who for these reasons would doubt and despise Him, and cast Him away; though "man," as St. Gregory says, "owes all the more love to the Lord, his God, the more humiliations He has borne for him."

*What was our Lord's object in the questions He asked concerning St. John?*

His object was to remove from St. John all suspicion of failing in faith in Him; and to praise the perseverance with which, although imprisoned and threatened with death, he continued to fill his office of preacher, thus constituting him an example to all preachers, confessors and superiors, that they may never be deterred by human respect, or fear of man, or other temporal considerations, from courageously fulfilling their duties. Our Lord commended also rigorous penance, exhibited by St. John's coarse garments and simple food, that we may learn, from his example, penance and mortification.

*Why does Christ say that John was "more than a prophet"?*

Because St. John was foretold by the prophet Malachias as was no other prophet; because of all the prophets he was the only one who with his own eyes saw Christ and could point Him out, and was the one to baptize Him: and because like an angel, a messenger of God, he announced the coming of the Savior, and prepared the way for the Lord.

*How did St. John prepare the way for the Savior?*

By his sermons on penance, and by his own penitential life He endeavored to move the hearts of the Jews, that by amending their lives, they might prepare to receive the grace of the Messiah, for God will not come with His grace into our hearts if we do not prepare His way by true repentance.

*ASPIRATION* O Lord Jesus, by the praise Thou didst accord to Thy forerunner St. John, for his firmness and austerities, inflame our hearts with love to imitate his steadfastness and penance, that we may never do anything to please man which may be displeasing to Thee; grant us also Thy grace that we too, like St. John, may have those who are confided to our care, instructed in the Christian doctrine.

## **CONSOLATION IN SUFFERING**

*"The God of patience and of comfort, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Rom. 15:5,13).*

*What gives us the greatest consolation in adversities?*

The strong and fervent belief that each and every thing that happens to us, comes to us for our own good from God, and that whatever evil befalls us, is by the will or permission of God. Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God (Ecclus. 11:14). If we

have received good things at the hand of God (Job 2:10), saith the pious job in his affliction, "why should we not receive evil?"

We should be fully convinced that without the permission of God not a single hair of our head shall perish (Lk. 21:18), much less can any other evil be done to us by man or devil (Job 1); we should have a steadfast confidence that if we ask Him, God can and will assist us in our sufferings, if it be for our salvation. Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands (Is. 49:15-16); we should hope for abundant reward in the future life, which we will merit by patience in our sufferings, for that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory (II Cor. 4:17); we should remember that all complaints and murmurs against the dispensation of God are useless, and lead only to harm and shame; Who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace? (Job 9:4) we should have a vivid remembrance of our sins, for which we have long since deserved the eternal punishments of hell - hence the well-known saying of St. Augustine: O Lord, here cut, here burn, but spare me in eternity. No other way leads to the kingdom of heaven than the way of the cross, which Christ Himself, His sorrowing mother, and all the saints had to tread. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory? (Lk. 24:26) Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:21). And we should not forget that sorrows and adversities are signs of God's love, and manifest proofs of being His chosen ones. Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth (Heb. 12:6. compare 7-11).

*PRAYER IN SORROW* O almighty, kind and merciful God! who hast said: "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Ps. 49:15), behold relying upon Thy word, I take refuge in Thee in my trouble. Give honor to Thy name, therefore, and deliver me, if it be pleasing to Thee and beneficial for me, that all may know, Thou art our only help. Amen.