

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's
The Church's Year

INSTRUCTION ON THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



At the Introit of the Mass pray with the Church for God's help to guard us against our enemies:

INTROIT When I cried to the Lord, he heard my voice, from them that draw near to me, and he humbled them, who is before all ages, and remains forever. Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. (Ps. LIV.) Hear, O God, my prayer, and despise not my supplication; be attentive to me, and hear me. Glory etc.

COLLECT O God, who dost manifest Thine almighty. power above all in showing pardon and pity: multiply upon us Thy mercy, that we running forward to the attainment of Thy promises, may be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasures. Through etc.

EPISTLE (I Cor. XII. 2-11 .) Brethren, You know that when you were heathens; you went to dumb idols according as, you were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, saith. Anathema to Jesus. And no man can say: the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one, indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom: and to another, the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another, faith in one Spirit: to another, the working of miracles: to another, prophecy: to another, the discerning, of spirits: to another, divers kinds of tongues: to another, of speeches. But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will.

EXPLANATION The apostle here reminds the Corinthians of the great grace they received from God in their conversion, and urges them to be grateful for it; for while heathens, they cursed Jesus, but being now brought to the knowledge of the Spirit of God, they possess Christ as their Lord and Redeemer who can be known and professed only by the enlightenment of the Holy , Ghost. The holy Spirit works in different ways, conferring His graces on whom He wills; to one

He gives wisdom to understand the great truths of Christianity; to another the gift of healing the sick; to another the gift of miracles and of prophecy; to another the gift of discerning spirits, to know if one is governed by the Spirit of God, or of the world, Satan and the flesh; to another the gift of tongues. The extraordinary gifts, namely, those of working miracles, and of prophesying &c. became rarer as the faith spread, whereas the gifts which sanctify man will always remain the same.,

[See Instruction on the gifts of the Holy Ghosts Pentecost.]

GOSPEL (Luke XDII. 9-14.) At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others. Two men went up into the Temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you: this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Why did Christ make use of this parable of the Pharisee and the Publican?

To teach us never proudly to condemn or despise a man, even though he should appear impious, for we may be deceived like the Pharisee who despised the Publican, whom he considered a great sinner, while, in reality, the man was justified before God on account of his repentant spirit.

What should we do before entering a Church?

We should reflect that we are going into the house of God, should therefore think what we are about to say to Him, and what we wish to ask of Him. That we may make ourselves less unworthy to be heard, we should humble ourselves as did Abraham, (Gen. XVIII. 27.) remembering that we are dust and ashes, and on account of our sins unworthy to appear before the eyes of God, much less to address Him, for He listens to the prayers of the humble only, (Ps. CI, 18.) and gives them His grace, while He resists the proud. (James IV. 6.)

Was the Pharisee's prayer acceptable to God?

No, for it was no prayer, but boasting and ostentation; he praised himself, and enumerated his apparent good works. But in despising others and judging them rashly he sinned grievously instead of meriting God's grace.

Was the Publican's prayer acceptable to God?

Yes, for though short, it was humble and contrite. He stood afar off, as if to acknowledge himself unworthy of the presence of God and intercourse with men. He stood with downcast eyes, thus showing that he considered himself because of his sins unworthy to look towards heaven, even confessed himself a sinner, and struck his breast to punish, as St. Augustine says, the sins which he had committed in his heart: This is why we strike our breast at certain times during Mass, for by this we acknowledge ourselves miserable sinners, and that we are sorry for our sins.

ON PRIDE AND VAIN GLORY

We should learn from this gospel that God looks upon the humble and exalts them, but is far from the proud. (Ps. CXXXVII. 6.) The Pharisee went to the temple entirely wrapt up in himself, and the good works which he thought he had performed, but returned empty and hated by God; the Publican, on the contrary, appearing before God as a public but penitent sinner, returned justified. Truly, an humble sinner is better in the sight of God than a proud just man!

He who glories in his own good works, or performs them to please men, or to win their praise, loses his merit in the eyes of the most High, for Christ says: Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. VI. 1.)

In order that we may learn to despise vain glory, these doctrines should be well borne in mind. We should consider that it will happen to those who seek after vain glory, as to the man who, made many toilsome journeys on land and sea in order to accumulate wealth, and had no sooner acquired it than he was shipwrecked, and lost all. Thus the ambitious man avariciously seeking glory and honor will find, when dying, that the merit which he might have had for his good works, is now lost to him, because he did not labor for the honor of God. To prevent such an evil, strive at the commencement of every good work which you undertake, to turn your heart to God by a good intention.

But that you may plainly recognize this vice, which generally keeps itself concealed, and that you may avoid it, know that pride is an inordinate love of ostentation, and an immoderate desire to surpass others in honor and praise. The proud man goes beyond himself, so to speak, makes far more of himself than he really is, and, like the Pharisee, despises others; the humble man, on the contrary, has a low estimate of himself, looks upon himself as nothing and, like the Publican, despises no one but himself, and thus is pleasing in the sight of God.

ASPIRATION O God, who hearest the prayers of the humble, but dost resist the proud, I earnestly beseech Thee to give me an humble heart, that I may imitate, the humility of Thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and thereby merit to be exalted with Him in heaven.

INSTRUCTION ON GRACE

In the epistle of this day the Apostle St. Paul speaks of the different gifts of the Holy Ghost which He distributes as He pleases. These extraordinary graces which the apostle mentions, are not necessary for salvation. But the Church teaches, that the grace of the Holy Ghost is necessary for salvation, because without it we could neither properly believe, nor faithfully observe the commandments of God. For the holy religion of Jesus teaches, and experience confirms, that since the fall of our first parents we are weak and miserable, and of ourselves, and by our own strength, we cannot know or perform the good necessary for our salvation. We need a higher aid, a higher assistance, and this assistance is called grace.

What, then, is grace?

Grace is an inward, supernatural gift which God through finite goodness, and in consideration of Christ's merits, grants us to enable us to work out our salvation.

Grace is a gift, that is, a present, a favor, a benefit. It is an inward and supernatural gift; an inward gift, because it is bestowed upon man's soul to distinguish it from external gifts and benefits of God, such as: food, clothing, health; grace is a supernatural gift, because it is above nature. In creating our souls God gives us a certain degree of light which enables us to think, reflect, judge, to acquire more or less knowledge: this is called natural light. In the same way He gives our souls the power in some measure to overcome sensual, vicious inclinations; this power is called natural power (virtue). To this natural light and power must be added a higher light and a higher power, if man would be sanctified and saved. This higher light and higher power is grace. It is, therefore, called a supernatural gift, because it surpasses the natural power of man, and produces in his understanding and in his will wholesome effects, which he could not produce without it. For example, divine faith, divine love is a supernatural gift or grace of God, because man of his own power could never receive as certain God's revelations and His incomprehensible mysteries with so great a joy and so firm a conviction, and could never love God above all things and for His own sake, unless God assisted him by His grace.

God grants us grace also through pure benevolence without our assistance, without our having any right to it; He grants it without cost, and to whom He pleases; but He gives it in consideration of the infinite merits of Christ Jesus, in consideration of Christ's death on the cross, and of the infinite price of our redemption. Finally, grace is a gift of God, by which to work out our salvation, that is, it is only by the grace of God that we can perform meritorious works which aid us in reaching heaven. Without grace it is impossible for us to perform any good action, even to have a good thought by which to gain heaven.

From this it follows that with the grace of God we can accomplish all things necessary for our salvation, fulfil all the commandments of God, but without it we can do nothing meritorious. God gives His grace to all, and if the wicked perish, it is because they do not cooperate with its divine promptings.

How is grace divided?

Into two kinds, actual and sanctifying grace.

Actual grace is God's assistance which we always need to accomplish a good work, to avoid sin which we are in danger of committing, or that grace which urges us on to good, and assists us in accomplishing it; for it is God, says the Apostle Paul, (Phil. II. 13.) who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish. If a good work is to be performed by us, God must enlighten our mind that we may properly know the good and distinguish it from evil; He must rouse our will and urge it on to do the known good and to avoid the evil; He must also uphold our will and increase our strength that what we wish to do, we may really accomplish.

This actual grace is, therefore, necessary for the just, that they may always remain in sanctifying grace, and accomplish good works; it is necessary for the sinner that he may reach the state of sanctifying grace.

What is sanctifying grace?

It is the great benefit which God bestows upon us, when He sanctifies and justifies us; in other words: sanctifying grace is the love of God, given to us by the Holy Ghost, which love dwells in us and whose temple we become, or it is the advent and abiding of God in our hearts, as promised in the words of Jesus: If any one love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. (John XVI. 23.)

He who possesses sanctifying grace, possesses the greatest treasure that a man can have on earth. For what can be more precious than to be beautiful in the sight of God, acceptable to Him, and united with Him! He who possesses this grace, carries within himself the supernatural image of God, he is a child of God, and has a right to the inheritance of heaven.

How is this sanctifying grace lost?

It is lost by every mortal sin, and can only be regained by a complete return to God, by true repentance and amendment. The loss of sanctifying grace is a far greater injury than the loss of all earthly possessions. How, terrible, then, is mortal sin which deprives us of this treasure!