

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

INSTRUCTION ON THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



At the Introit of the Mass implore with great confidence the mercy of God in the words of Ps. LXXXV.:

INTROIT Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I have cried to thee all the day; for thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee.

Bow down thy ear to me, O Lord, and hear me, for I am needy and poor. Glory be to the Father, etc.

COLLECT Let Thy grace, we beseech Thee, O Lord, ever precede and follow us, and make us continually intent upon good works. Through etc.

EPISTLE (Ephes. III. 13-21) Brethren, I pray you not to faint at my tribulations for you, which are your glory. For this cause I bow my knees. to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth:, to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God. Now to him who is able to do all things more abundantly than we desire or understand, according to the power that worketh in us: to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus, unto all generations, world without end. Amen.

EXPLANATION In the epistle of the following Sunday St. Paul tells us, that he was at the time of writing this letter in prison at Rome, whither he was brought' upon the false accusations of the Jews. From prison he wrote to the Ephesians, whom he had converted to Christianity, and who zealously obeyed his counsels, in order to confirm them in their zeal and to console them in their grief on account of his sufferings which he bore for Christ's sake. These sufferings which I bear, he writes, redound to your honor, since I, your spiritual father, am considered by God worthy to suffer like His Son; yes, I thank the Father of our Lord Jesus

for it, and beg Him on my knees, that He vouchsafe to strengthen you with His Holy Spirit, so that you overcome, your evil inclinations and passions, cleanse your hearts more and more, and sanctify your souls, that if you live thus according to your faith, you may be made the habitations of Christ. He begs God also to. give them a well-grounded charity, which not only loves God on account of the reward, but also on account of our sufferings, thus to become like to Christ, the Crucified. By this constant love for Jesus, even in adversities, we only comprehend with the saints the greatness of the love of Jesus, the Crucified; its breadth, since all the members of His body, all the powers of His soul were tormented with all sorts of tortures, on account of the sins of all men; the length, since He had all these sufferings for thirty-three years before His eyes, and bore them in His soul; the depth, since these tortures surpassed in intensity all which men ever suffered or will suffer; the height, since Christ on the cross saw, with the most perfect knowledge, the malice of each single sin, and the terrible insult offered to the sublime Majesty of God, and He bore the punishment for them in Himself and did penance for them. Other holy Fathers say that by these words the whole mystery of our redemption is to be understood, and, indeed, the breadth thereof is, that it is for all men; the length, that it lasts for all centuries and reaches into eternity; the height, that its contemplation takes us away from earth and raises us to heaven; the depth, that it even penetrates. the kingdom of the dead. By contemplating these mysteries we learn to know the infinite love of God, to love Him more and more, and thus make ourselves partakers of His graces. - Obey the teaching of this holy apostle, contemplate the suffering Saviour and His love, endeavor to become like to Him by suffering, and when you see how the Church, her ministers, the bishops and priests, are persecuted and in tribulation, be not disheartened, but consider that the discipleship of Jesus consists particularly in suffering, that therefore, the Church and her ministers -must suffer, since their Head, Jesus, has suffered. The holy Church has borne the crown of thorns of Jesus for eighteen hundred years and drank from His chalice; but like Jesus, her Head, she will triumph over all her enemies, and whilst these are hastening to destruction, she will continually live victorious until the end of time and will triumph eternally in heaven.

GOSPEL (Luke XIV. 1-11.) At that time, When Jesus went into the house of one of the chiefs of the Pharisees on the Sabbath-day to eat bread, they watched him. And behold there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy. And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? But they held their peace: but he taking him, healed him, and sent him away. And answering them, he said: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into, a pit, and, will not immediately draw him out on, the Sabbath-day? And they could not answer him to these things. And he spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honorable than thou be invited by him; and he that invited thee and him come and say to thee: Give this man place: and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place: But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place: that when he who invited thee cometh he may say to thee: Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at the table with thee; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Why did Jesus eat with the Pharisees?

To take occasion, as St. Cyril says, to instruct them that it is allowed to heal the sick on the Sabbath, and to show how those who give invitations to a supper, and those who are invited, should conduct themselves. The Pharisees' invitation to Jesus was not actuated by kindness, but by the desire to find something in His actions which they might criticise; Jesus; however, approaches them with meekness and endeavors to inspire them with a better intention. Beware of the spirit of criticisms and like Jesus make use of every occasion to do good, even to your enemies.

Who may be understood by the dropsical man?

The debauchees and misers; for the more a dropsical person drinks the more his thirst increases, so the debauchee never succeeds in satisfying his shameful lusts; the same is the case with the miser. And just as the dropsical are hard to cure, so the debauchee and miser are difficult to convert.

Why is covetousness classed among the seven deadly sins?

Because it is the root of many evils, (I Tim. VI. 10.) for it leads to usury, theft, to the employment of false weights and measures, to the suppression of justice in courts, to perjury, to the oppression of widows and orphans, nay, even to the denial of faith, as was the case with Judas. Therefore the apostle says: They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition; and admonishes us: to fly these things: and pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness. (I Tim. VI. 9, 11 .)

A powerful remedy against avarice is to consider that we are not owners of what we possess, and can take nothing with us in death, but must render a strict account of the use we made of our riches. (I Tim. VI. 7.)

INSTRUCTION ON KEEPING SUNDAY HOLY

Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? (Luke XIV. 3.)

Why did Christ put this question?

Because the Jews, particularly the Pharisees, were so very superstitious in keeping the Sabbath, they would not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, while He healed on the Sabbath, which was really a good work. But, if the Jews were so conscientious, through superstition and hypocrisy, and considered the performing of an external good work on this day as a sin, some Christians, on the contrary, blinded by avarice and worldly pleasure, place themselves heedlessly, nay, insolently above the commandment to observe the Sabbath, and do not consider those things as wrong which are sometimes very grievous sins.

Consider, my dear Christian, you serve your body the whole week, you use all your powers for temporal business, to support yourself and your family, and God blesses you, if you work with a good intention. Now God chose one day in the week, Sunday, and in the year several other holidays, which you should devote to His service and the salvation of your soul; is it not, therefore, the greatest ingratitude to steal these days from God and your soul, and employ

them to gain a transient good, or to indulge in vain, sinful pleasures? At certain times man gives rest to irrational animals, and you give the powers of your body and soul none of the rest they would and should find in quiet devotion, in prayer and meditation, in attending divine service, in receiving the holy Sacraments, &c. If you inquire whence come these shameful violations of Sundays and holidays, you will find that there is no other reason than love of gain and avarice, sinful love of pleasure, and often complete want of faith and confidence in God's providence. We wish to become rich by all means, and we do not reflect that this will not happen without the blessing of God, and that wealth is a net, in which thousands entangle themselves to their eternal, perdition. We wish to live merrily and enjoy ourselves, but we do not consider that our life is only a time of penance, to attain that eternally blissful rest, of which Sunday is an emblem. We spend Sundays and holydays in idleness, vain conversations, buying and selling, servile work, or in still worse things, without experiencing the slightest scruple. But God will cover the violators of His sacred days with confusion and shame, (Malach. II. 3.) and permit many temporal evils to come upon them, as proved by daily experience. The blessing of God can never rest upon those who never care for it, but rather make themselves unworthy to receive it, by violating days consecrated to God. Let this be a warning to you.

PRAYER O good Saviour! how manifest are meekness, and wisdom in all Thy words and actions! O, grant, that we may regulate all our actions in such a manner, that they may be acceptable to Thee and tend to the edification of our neighbor. Give us the grace to employ all the days, consecrated to Thee, for Thy honor and our salvation, that we may never raise ourselves above others, but follow Thee in all humility.