

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

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY



[For the Introit of this day see the Introit in the Mass of the third Sunday after Epiphany]

On this Sunday mention is made of the practice of Christian virtues, and of God's sufferance of the wicked upon earth, that by them the just may be exercised in patience.

COLLECT Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy household by Thy continual mercy; that as it leans only upon the hope of Thy heavenly grace, so it may ever be defended by Thy protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

EPISTLE (Col. III. 12-17.) Brethren, put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another; even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also. But above all these things, have charity, which is the bond of perfection: and let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God. All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things, do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Why does St. Paul call charity the bond of perfection?

Because charity comprises in itself and links all the virtues in which perfection consists. For whoever truly loves God and his neighbor, is also good, merciful, humble, modest, patiently bears the weakness of his neighbor, willingly forgives offences, in a word, practices all virtues

for the sake of charity.

When does the peace of God rejoice in our hearts?

When we have learned to conquer our evil inclinations, passions, and desires, and have placed order and quiet in our hearts instead. This peace then, like a queen, keeps all the wishes of the soul in harmony, and causes us to enjoy constant peace with our neighbor, and thus serve Christ in concord, as the members of one body serve the head. The best means of preserving this peace are earnest attention to the word of God, mutual imparting of pious exhortations and admonitions, and by singing hymns, psalms, and spiritual canticles.

Why should we do all in the name of Jesus?

Because only then can our works have real worth in the sight of God, and be pleasing to Him, when they are performed for love of Jesus, in His honor, in accordance with His spirit and will. Therefore the apostle admonishes us to do all things, eat, drink, sleep, work &c. in the name of Jesus, and so honor God, the Heavenly Father, and show our gratitude to Him. Oh, how grieved will they be on their death-bed who have neglected to offer God their daily work by a good intention, then they will see, when too late, how deficient they are in meritorious deeds. On the contrary they will rejoice whose consciences testify, that in all their actions they had in view only the will and the honor of God! Would that this might be taken to heart especially by those who have to earn their bread with difficulty and in distress, that they might always unite their hardships and trials with the sufferings and merits of Jesus, offering them to the Heavenly Father, and thus imitating Christ who had no other motive than the will and the glory of His Heavenly Father.

ASPIRATION O God of love, of patience, and of mercy, turn our hearts to the sincere love of our neighbor, and grant, that whatever we do in thoughts, words and actions, we may do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through Him render thanks to Thee.

ON CHURCH SINGING

"Admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grade in your hearts to God." (Col. III. 16.)

The custom of singing in the Church-choir* has its foundation as far back as the Old Testament, when by the arrangement of David, Solomon, and Ezechias, the psalms and other sacred canticles were sung by the priests and Levites. This custom the Catholic Church has retained, according to the precepts of the apostles, (I. Cor. XIV. 26; Eph. V. 19.) and the example of Jesus who, after they had eaten the Pasch, intoned a hymn of praise with His apostles, (Matt XXVI. 30) that Christians on earth, like the angels and saints in heaven, (Apoc. V. 8. 9., XIV. 3.) who unceasingly sing His praises, might at certain hours of the day, at least, give praise and thanks to God. In the earliest ages of the Church, the Christians sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving during the holy Sacrifice and other devotional services, often continuing them throughout the whole night; in which case the choir-singers probably were bound to keep the singing in proper order and agreement. In the course of time this custom of all the faithful present singing together ceased in many churches, and became confined to the choir, which was accompanied later by instruments in accordance with the words of David

who calls to the praise of the Lord with trumpets, with timbrels, with pleasant psaltery and harps. (Ps, CL. 3, 4., LXXX. 3. 4.) In many churches, where the faithful still sing in concert, if done with pure hearts and true devotion, it is as St. Basil says, "a heavenly occupation, a spiritual burnt offering; it enlightens the spirit, raises it towards heaven, leads man to communion with God, makes the soul rejoice, ends idle talk, puts away laughter, reminds us of the judgment, reconciles enemies. Where the singing of songs resounds' from the contrite heart there God with the angels is present."

*The choir is usually a gallery in the Church in which the singers are stationed; the place where the clergy sing or recite their office, is also called the choir.

GOSPEL (Matt. XIII. 24-30.) At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to the multitudes: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the good man of the house coming, said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence, then, hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No, lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.

What is understood by the kingdom of heaven ?

The Church of God, or the collection of all orthodox Christians on earth, destined for heaven.

What is meant by the good seed, and by the cockle?

The good seed, as Christ Himself says, (Matt. XIII. 38.) signifies the children of the kingdom, that is, the true Christians, the living members of the Church, who being converted by the word of God sown into their hearts become children of God, and bring forth the fruit of good works. The cockle means the children of iniquity, of the devil, that is, those who do evil; also every wrong, false doctrine which leads men to evil.

Who sows the good seed, and by the cockle?

The good seed is sown by Jesus, the Son of Man not only directly, but through His apostles, and the priests, their successors; the evil seed is sown by the devil, or by wicked men whom he uses as his tools.

Who are the men who were asleep?

Those superiors in the Church; those bishops and pastors who take no care of their flock, and do not warn them against seduction, when the devil comes and by wicked men sows the cockle of erroneous doctrine and of crime; and those men who are careless and neglect to hear the word of God and the sacrifice of the Mass, who neglect to pray, and do not receive the Sacraments. In the souls of such the devil sows the seeds of bad thoughts, evil imaginations and desires, from which spring, later, the cockle of pride, impurity, anger, envy, avarice, etc.

Why does not God allow the cockle, that is, the wicked people, to be rooted out and destroyed?

Because of His patience and long suffering towards the sinner to whom He gives time for repentance, and because of His love for the just from whom He would not, by weeding out the unjust, take away the occasion of practicing virtue and gathering up merits for themselves; for because of the unjust, the just have numerous opportunities to exercise patience, humility, etc.

When is the time of the harvest?

The day of the last judgment when the reapers, that is, the angels, will go out and separate the wicked from the just, and throw the wicked into the fiery furnace; while the just will be taken into everlasting joy. (Matt. XIII. 29.)

PRAYER O faithful Jesus, Thou great lover of our souls, who hast sown the good seed of Thy Divine Word in our hearts, grant that it may be productive, and bear in us fruit for eternal life; protect us from our evil enemy, that he may not sow his erroneous and false doctrine in our hearts, and corrupt the good; preserve us from the sleep of sin, and sloth that we may remain always vigilant and armed against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, overcome them manfully, and die a happy death. Amen.

ON INCLINATION TO EVIL

Whence then hath it cockle? (Matt. XIII. 27.)

Whence comes the inclination to evil in man?

It is the sad consequence of original sin, that is, of that sin which our first parents, by their disobedience, committed in paradise, and which we as their descendants have inherited. This inclination to evil remains even in those who have been baptized, although original sin with its guilt and eternal punishment is taken away in baptism, but it is no sin so long as man does not voluntarily yield. (Cat. Rom. Part. II. 2. .43.)

Why, the sin being removed, does the inclination remain?

To humble us that we may know our frailty and misery, and have recourse to God, our best and most powerful Father, as did St. Paul, when he was much annoyed by the devil of the flesh; (II. Cor. XII. 7. 8.) that the glory of God and the power of Christ should be manifested in us, which except for our weakness could not be; that we might have occasion to fight and to conquer. A soldier cannot battle without opposition, nor win victory and the crown without a contest. Nor can we win the heavenly crown, if no occasion is given us, by temptations, for fight and for victory. "That which tries the combatant," says St. Bernard, "crowns the conqueror." Finally, the inclination remains, that we may learn to endure, in all meekness, the faults and infirmities of others and to watch ourselves, lest we fall into the same temptations.