

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

INSTRUCTION ON THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



The Introit of this day's Mass is the prayer of a soul that trusts in God's powerful and merciful protection:

INTROIT The Lord is the strength of his people, the protector of the salvation of his Anointed: save, O Lord, thy people, and bless Thine inheritance, and rule them for ever. Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord: O my God, be not Thou silent to me; lest if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. (Ps. XXVII.) Glory etc.

COLLECT O God of hosts, to whom belongeth all that is perfect: implant in our hearts the love of Thy name, and grant within us an increase of religion, that Thou mayest nourish in us what is good, and by the fervor of our devotion may preserve in us what Thou hast nourished. Through etc.

EPISTLE (Rom. VI. 3-11.) Brethren, All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been

planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer. For he that is dead is justified from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ. Knowing that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he died once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. So do you also reckon that you are dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

EXPLANATION The apostle here teaches that in consequence of our baptism we are made members of Christ's body, and must, therefore, die to sin; as Christ by His death died to physical life, but has risen again, so must we bury sin, by constant renewal of baptismal vows, and by self-mortification rise to a Christian life. As members of Christ's body we should in a spiritual manner imitate Him. As He permitted His body to be nailed to the cross to atone for our sins, so should we crucify our corrupt nature by self-denial, and as He after His Resurrection lives always, because having risen He dieth no more, so we, risen from the death of sin, should lead a pious life conformable to that of Christ.

ASPIRATION I trust, O Lord Jesus, that by the merits of Thy passion I have risen from the death of sin: grant me Thy grace, that as Thou diest no more, so may I die no more by sin, but live for God, according to Thy law.

GOSPEL (Mark. VIII. 1-9.) At that time, When there was a great multitude with Jesus, and had nothing to eat, calling his disciples together, he saith to them: I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I shall send them away, fasting, to their home, they will faint in the way: for some of them came from afar off. And his disciples answered him: From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness? And he asked them: How many loaves have ye? Who said: Seven. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground. And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, he broke, and gave to his disciples to set before them: and they set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes, and he blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat, and were filled, and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets: and, they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

Why did Christ say: I have compassion on the multitude?

Because of His mercy and goodness to man, as well as to prove that which He taught on another occasion, (Matt. VI. 33.) that to those who seek first the kingdom of God and His justice all other things will be added, without asking; for none of the multitude asked Christ for food, and yet He provided for all.

REMARK. The instruction after the gospel for the fourth Sunday in Lent, where a similar miracle is mentioned, may be read to-day.

INSTRUCTION ON BLESSING

And He blessed them. (Mark VIII. 7.)

Seduced by Satan, the first man violated the holy is command of God, and by his sin brought upon himself and his habitation the curse of divine wrath. (Gen. III. 17.) Man was made by God, and therefore subject: to Him, but was himself master of all created things. .After the sin of disobedience, however, all creation revolted against him: the animals fled from him, the fields yielded only thorns and thistles, the herbs became poisonous to him, or refused him their former wholesome power. Innumerable evils followed, all men and even the whole earth suffered from them; the devil drew both into his sphere and made them his servants, and this evil spirit now made use of created ,things to divert man altogether from God and to cause his eternal ruin. But God decreed that man and earth should not remain in this condition: Christ, the Son of God, came upon earth, redeemed it from the bonds of Satan, and gave all men the power to become once more God's children. The devil was conquered by the cross, but not slain; man and the earth were indeed taken from his dominion, but not from his influence; for he even now, as the apostle Writes, goes about like a roaring lion, seeking ,whom he may devour, (I Peter V. 8.); and as he used the forbidden fruit in paradise to seduce man, he now uses the created things of the earth to tempt man, and, make him his servant. Man and all creation had to be drawn from this pernicious influence, to be liberated from the bondage of corruption and be brought to the freedom of the children of God. (Rom. VIII. 19.) This is done in the Church, to which Christ entrusted the power of binding and loosing, and gave the work of sanctifying through the Holy Ghost, by means of blessing and consecrating. By virtue of the merits of Christ, and with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, the Church, or the priest in her name, therefore blesses and consecrates persons as well as other created things which they are to use, or which she is to apply to the service of God. In this the Church follows the example of Christ and the Apostles. Jesus embraced children and laid His hands upon them, blessing them; (Mark X. 16.) He blessed bread and fishes, the food of thousands; blessed breed and wine at the last supper; (Matt. XXVI. 26.) was recognized by the disciples in the blessing of bread; (Luke XXIV. 30.) blessing the disciples He ascended into heaven; (Luke XXIV. 51.) by His command the apostles wished peace to every house into which they stepped; (Matt. X. 12, 13.) and St. Paul expressly says, that every living thing is sanctified by prayer and the word of God. (I Tim. IV. 5.) Following the example and command of Christ the Church also introduced blessings and benedictions which were prefigured in the Old Law. God commanded the priests to sanctify and to consecrate whatever was to belong to His service, (Levit. VIII.) and the Old Law is full of blessings and consecrations which had to be used by the priests; (Exod. XXIX. 36.; XXX. 25.; XI. 9.) and if persons and things used for God's service were to be blessed, how much more so in the. New Law which in place of the type, contains the reality and truth The testimony of Scripture is confirmed by all the holy Fathers, and by the constant practice of the Church which has received from Christ, the power to bless and to consecrate.

The blessing or benediction of the Church is nothing more than a, prayer of intercession which the priest makes in the name of the Church, that for the sake of Christ (therefore the sign of the cross) and the prayers of the saints, God may give His blessings to a person or thing, and sanctify it. Through consecration, in which besides prayer and the sign of the cross, the anointing with holy oil is used, things required for divine service are separated from all other things and especially sanctified. Thus persons, fruits, bread, wine, houses, ships and fields, are blessed; churches, altars, bells, &c., are consecrated.

What virtue have these blessings?

The chief effects of the blessing of persons are: Preservation or liberation from the influence of Satan; preservation of the soul from his temptations and evil suggestions; reservation of the body and of the property from his pernicious malice; forgiveness of venial sins, and strength to suppress concupiscence; curing of sickness and physical evils, whether natural or supernatural; a blessing upon the person and his surroundings; the imparting of the grace of conversion; the advantage of the prayer of the Church and further grace for the remission of temporal and eternal punishment. The blessing of things withdraws them from the influence of the devil, so that he can no longer use them as a means of bringing us into sin, but that they rather serve us as a protection against the evil spirits and as a means for our salvation.

Whence do the blessings derive their force?

From the merits of Christ who by His death on the cross vanquished Satan. The Church asks God that He will through these merits and through the intercession of the saints bless a person or thing, and make that which is blessed profitable to us for both body and soul. Whether or not the effects manifest themselves in the person who receives the blessing, or makes use of the object blessed, depends on his faith and moral condition, as also on the usefulness or profit of the blessing to him. We should not, then, place obstacles in its way by diffidence in God and the prayers of the Church or by a sinful life, but should always be convinced that these benedictions will serve for our benefit, if according to God's will they are used as the Church intends, as a means to overcome evil, to sanctify ourselves, and to honor God.

Why are salt and water blessed?

This is plainly shown in the prayer the priest says in blessing them; for he asks, in the name of the Church, that God may pour the virtue of His blessing over the water that it may conquer devils, prevent sickness, and that everything which is sprinkled with it, may be preserved from every injury, and that He may bless the salt, so that it may be salutary for the body and soul of all who use it. The salt which Eliseus sprinkled into the unwholesome waters of Jericho healed them, (IV King. II. 20. 21.) and is a type of blessed salt.

Why are the people sprinkled with holy water on Sundays?

To remind the people of the interior purity with which they should come to divine service, and fulfil the duties of their calling; and to exhort them to purify themselves from the stains of sin by tears of sorrow, and repentance. Hence the priest in sprinkling the faithful recites the words of the fiftieth psalm: *Asperges me hyssopo*, etc. Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; to remind them to preserve the purity and innocence procured by the blood of the Lamb of God, and communicated to them in baptism. Finally, the people are sprinkled that the temptations of the devil may depart from them, enabling them to attend with great fervor and with more recollection to the holy service.

What else is to be remembered concerning the use of blessed things?

That they are to be used with faithful confidence for the purpose for which the Church blessed them, and are to be treated with great reverence, because they are blessed by the Church in the

name of Jesus, a custom almost as old as Christianity itself. The Christian must not believe that blessed things which he possesses, carries, or uses, will make him holy, for he should always remember that things blessed are only a means of sanctification, and are only effectual when the faithful have the earnest will to die rather than sin, to fight with all fervor against the enemies of their salvation, to follow Christ, and be thereby received into the freedom of the children of God, and into heaven.