

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

INSTRUCTION ON THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



The Introit of the Mass reads:

INTROIT We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple: According to thy name, O God, so also is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of justice. Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in his mountain. (Ps. XLVII.) Glory be to the Father, etc.

COLLECT Lord, we beseech Thee, mercifully grant us the spirit to think and do always the things that are right: that we, who can not subsist without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will. Through etc.

EPISTLE (ROM. VIII. 12-17.) Brethren, We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deed of the flesh, you shall live. For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Who live according to the flesh?

Those who follow the evil pleasures and the desires of corrupt nature, rather than the voice of faith and conscience. Such men are not guided by the Spirit of God, for He dwells not in the sensual man, (Gen. VI. 3.) they are no children of God, and will not inherit heaven, but eternal

death. But he who is directed by the Spirit of God, and with Him and through Him crucifies his flesh and its concupiscence, is inspired with filial confidence in God. by the Holy Ghost, who dwells in him, and by whom he cries: Abba (Father.) Prove yourself well, Christian soul, that you may know whether you live according to the flesh, and strive by prayer and fasting to mortify all carnal and sensual desires that you may by such means become a child of God and heir of heaven.

ASPIRATION Strengthen me, O Lord, that I may not live according to the desires of the flesh; but resist them firmly by the power of Thy Spirit, that I may not die the eternal death.

GOSPEL (Luke XVI. 1-9.) At that time, Jesus spoke to his disciples this parable: There was a certain rich man who had a steward: and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said to him: How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself: What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me my stewardship? To dig, I am not able: to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first: How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said: A hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another: And how much dost thou owe? Who said: A hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him: Take thy bill, and write eighty. And the Lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely: for the children of this world are wiser in their generations than the children of light. And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

Who are represented by the rich man and his steward?

The rich man represents God, the steward is man - to whom God has confided the various goods of soul and body, of grace and nature: faith, intellect, memory, free will; and five senses, health, strength of body, beauty, skill power over others, time and opportunity for good, temporal riches, and other gifts. These various goods of soul and body God gives us not as our own, but as things to be used for His honor and the salvation of man. He will therefore demand the strictest account of us if we use them for sin, luxury, seduction, or oppression of others.

Why did Christ make use of this parable?

To teach us that God requires of every man a strict account of whatever has been given to him, and to urge us to works of charity, particularly alms-deeds.

What friends do we make by alms giving?

According to St. Ambrose they are the poor, the saints and angels, even Christ Himself: for that which we give to the poor, we give to Christ. (Matt. XXV. 40.) And: He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him. (Prov. XIX. 17.) "The hands of the poor," says Peter Chrysologus, "are the hands of Christ," through whom we send our riches to heaven before us, and through whose intercession we obtain the grace of salvation.

Why did his lord commend the steward?

Because of his prudence and foresight, but not for his injustice; for he adds: The children of this world are wiser than the children of light: that is, the worldly-minded understand better how to obtain temporal goods than do Christians to lay up treasures for themselves in heaven.

Why is wealth called unjust?

Because riches are often massed and retained unjustly, often lead man to injustice, and because they are often squandered, or badly used.

SUPPLICATION Grant me the grace, O my just God and Judge, that I may so use the goods of this earth confided to me by Thee, that I may not make friends, who at my death will receive me into eternal joys.

ON THE SIN OF DETRACTION

And the same was accused unto him. (Luke XVI. 1.)

The steward in the gospel was justly accused on account of the goods he had wasted; but there are many who lose their good name and honor by false accusations, and malicious talk! Alas, what great wrongs do detracting tongues cause in this world! How mean a vice is detraction, how seldom attention is paid to its evil, how rarely the injury is repaired!

When is our neighbor slandered?

When he is accused of a vice of which he is not guilty; when a secret crime is made known with the intention of hurting him, or when our duty does not require us to mention it; when we attribute an evil intention to him or entirely misconstrue his actions and omissions; when his good qualities or commendable actions are denied or lessened, or his merits underrated; when we remain silent, or speak ambiguously in cases where praise is due him; when we lend a willing ear to detractions, and make no effort to stop them; and lastly, when joy is felt in the detraction.

Is detraction a great sin?

Yes, for it is directly opposed to the love of our neighbor, therefore to the love of God, hence it is, as St. Ambrose says, hateful to God and man. By it we rob our neighbor of a possession greater than riches, (Prov. XXII. 1.) and often he is plunged by it into want and misery, even into the greatest vices; St. Ambrose says: "Let us fly from the vice of detraction, for it is altogether a satanic abyss, full of deceit." Finally, detraction is a great sin, because it can seldom be recalled, and the injury done by it is very great, and often irreparable.

What should we do when we have committed this sin?

We should retract the calumny as soon as possible and repair the injury done to our neighbor in regard to his name or temporal goods; we should detest this sin, regret it, and be cleansed

from it by penance, we should daily pray for him whom we have injured, and in future guard against the like fault.

Are we ever allowed to reveal the wrongs of our neighbor?

To make public the faults of our neighbor only for the entertainment of idle people, or for the sake of news, and to satisfy the curiosity of others, is always sinful. But if after having reproached or advised our neighbor fraternally, without obtaining our end, we make known his faults to his parents or superiors for the sake of punishment and reformation, far from being a sin it is rather a duty, against which those err who are silent about the sins of their neighbor, when by speaking they could prevent the sin and save him much unhappiness.

Is it a sin to listen willingly to detraction?

Yes, for we thus give the detractors occasion and encouragement. Therefore St. Bernard says: "Whether to detract is a greater sin than to listen to detraction, I will not decide. The devil sits on the tongue of the detractor as he does on the ear of the listener." In such cases we must strive to interrupt, to prevent the detracting words, or else withdraw; or if we can do none of these, we must show in our countenance our displeasure, for the Holy Ghost says: The northwind driveth away rain, so doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue. (Prov. XXV. 23.) The same demeanor is to be observed in regard to improper language.

What varieties of detraction are there?

There is a certain detestable kind of detraction which degrades and ridicules others by witty and sneering words. Still worse is that detraction which carries the faults of others from one place to another, thus exciting those who are on good terms to hard feeling, or making those who are living in enmity more opposed to each other. The whisperer and the double tongued, says the Holy Ghost, is accursed, for he bath troubled many that were at peace.

What should deter us from detraction?

The thought of the enormity of this sin; of the difficulty, even impossibility of repairing the injury caused; of the punishment it incurs, for St. Paul expressly says: Calumniators shall not possess the kingdom of God, (I Cor. VI. 10.) and Solomon writes: My son, fear the Lord, and the king; and have nothing to do with detractors; for their destruction shall rise suddenly. (Prov. XXIV 22.)

SUPPLICATION Guard me, O most loving Jesus, that I may not be so blinded, either by hatred or, envy, as to rob my neighbor of his good name, or make myself guilty of such a grievous sin.

CONSOLATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED FROM DETRACTION

If your good name has been taken away by evil tongues, you may be consoled by knowing that God permitted this to humble you, to exercise you in patience and free you from pride and vain self-complacency. Turn your eyes to the saints of the Old and the New Law, to the chaste Joseph who was cast into prison on a false charge of adultery, (Gen. XXXIX.) to the meek

David publicly accused by Semei as a man of blood, (II Kings XVI. 7.) to the chaste Susanna who was also accused of adultery, tried and condemned to death. (Dan, XIII.) Jesus, the king of saints, was called a drunkard, accused and condemned as a blasphemer, a friend of the devil, an inciter of sedition among the people, and like the greatest criminal was nailed to the cross between two thieves. Remember besides that it does not injure you in the sight of God, if all possible evil is said of you, and that He, at all times, cares for those who trust in Him; for he who touches the honor of those who fear God, touches, as it were, the pupil of His eye, (Zach. II. 8.) and shall not go unpunished. St. Chrysostom says: "If you are guilty, be converted; if you are innocent, think of Christ."

PRAYER O most innocent Jesus, who wert thus calumniated, I submit myself wholly to Thy divine will, and am, ready like Thee, to bear all slanders and detractions, as with perfect confidence I yield to land care my good name, convinced that Thou at Thy pleasure wilt defend and protect it, and save me from the hands of my enemies.