

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

INSTRUCTION ON THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



Pray today at the Introit of the Mass with the, Church against her enemies: Have regard, O Lord, to thy conversant, and forsake not to the end the souls of thy poor: arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause, and forget not the voices of them that seek thee. O God, why hast thou cast us off unto the end: why is thy wrath enkindled against the sheep of thy pasture? (Ps. LXXIII.) Glory be to the Father, etc.

COLLECT Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us an increase of faith, hope and charity; and that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command. Thro'.

EPISTLE (Gal. III. 16-22.) Brethren, To Abraham were the promises made, and to his seed. He saith not, And to his seeds, as of many, but as of one: And to thy seed, which is Christ. Now this I say, that the testament which was confirmed by God, the law which was made after four hundred and thirty years doth not disannul, or make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise. But God gave it to Abraham by promise. Why, then, was the law? It was set because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom he made the promise, being ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not of one: but God is one. Was the law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could give life, verily justice should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

EXPLANATION St. Paul in this epistle proves to the Galatians who were misled by false doctrines, and adhered too much to the Jewish Law, that they could be saved only through a lively faith in Christ, enriched by good works. Therefore he says that the great promises, made by God

to Abraham, referred to Christ, through whom all nations of the earth, who would believe in Him, would be blessed and saved. (Gen. XII. 3., and XXII. 18.) The law, indeed, does not annul these promises, since it rather leads to their attainment, yet it must be placed after them because of their advantages, nay, even cease to exist, because the promises are now fulfilled, Christ, the promised Messiah, has really, appeared and liberated man, who could not be freed from their sins by the Jewish law.

ASPIRATION O, let us be grateful for this promise, yet more, however, for the Incarnation of Christ, whereby this promise has been fulfilled.

GOSPEL (Luke XVII. 11-19.) At that time, As Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee: and as he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us. Whom, when, he saw, he said: Go, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks: and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said: Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return, and give glory to God, but this stranger. And he said to him: Arise go thy way; for thy faith hath made thee whole.

What may be understood by leprosy in a spiritual sense?

Sin, particularly impurity, by which the soul of man is stained much more than is the body by the most horrid leprosy: In the Jewish law (Lev. XIII.) three kinds of leprosy are enumerated, viz: the leprosy of the flesh, of garments, and of houses. Spiritually, the impure are afflicted with the, leprosy of the flesh, who easily infect others, and are therefore to be most carefully avoided. The leprosy of garments consists in extravagance of dress and scandalous fashions, whereby not only individuals, but also whole communities are brought to poverty, and many lose their innocence. The leprosy of houses, finally, is to be found in those places, where scandalous servants are retained, where nocturnal gatherings of both sexes are encouraged, where, obscenities are indulged in, where unbecoming dances and plays are held, and filthy actions performed; where married people allow themselves liberties in presence of others, and give scandal to their household, where they take their small children and even such as already have the use of reason, with themselves to bed, where they permit children of different sexes to sleep together, &c. Such houses are to be avoided, since they are infected with the pestilential leprosy of sin, and woe to them who voluntarily remain in them.

Why did the lepers remain standing afar off?

Because it was thus commanded in the law of Moses, (Lev. XIII. 46.) so that no one would be infected by them. From this we learn that we must carefully avoid scandalous persons and houses; for he who converses with lewd, vain and unchaste persons, will soon become like them. (Ecclus. XIII. 1.)

Why did Christ send the lepers to the priests?

This He did to show the honor due to the sacerdotal dignity and to the law of God: for it was commanded, (Lev. XIV.) that the lepers should show themselves to the priests, in order to be

declared by them clean or unclean; He did it to try the faith, the confidence, and the obedience of these lepers: for Christ did not wish to heal them upon their mere prayer, but their cure was to cost them something, and they were to merit it by their cooperation. Their purification, therefore, was the reward of their obedience and faith. Further, Christ sent these lepers to the priests to show figuratively, as it were, that he who wishes to be freed from the leprosy of sin, must contritely approach the priest, sincerely confess his sins, and be cleansed by him by means of absolution.

Why did Christ ask for the others, who were also made clean?

To show how much ingratitude displeases Him. Although He silently bore all other injuries, yet He could not permit this ingratitude to pass unresented. So great, therefore, is the sin of ingratitude, hateful alike to God and man! "Ingratitude," says St. Bernard, "is an enemy of the soul, which destroys merits, corrupts virtues, and impedes graces: it is a heavy wind, which dries up the fountain of goodness, the dew of mercy, and the stream of the grace of God." "The best means," says St. Chrysostom, "of preserving benefits, is the remembrance of them and gratitude for them, and nothing is more acceptable to God than a grateful soul; for, while He daily overloads us with innumerable benefits, He asks nothing for them, but that we thank Him." Therefore, my dear Christian, by no means forget to thank God in the morning and evening, before and after meals. As often as you experience the blessing of God in your house, in your children, and your whole property, thank God, but particularly when you take in the fruits of the earth; (Lev. XXIII. 10.) by this you will always bring upon yourself new blessings and new graces. "We cannot think, say, or write anything better or more pleasing to God," says St. Augustine, "than: Thanks be to God."

ASPIRATION O most gracious Jesus! who, as an example for us, wast always grateful to Thy Heavenly, Father, as long as Thou didst live upon earth, grant, that I may always thank God for all His benefits, according to Thy example and the teaching of Thy servant St. Paul. (Col. III. 17.)

INSTRUCTION ON THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDER

Go, show yourselves to the priests. (Luke XVII. 14.)

Such honor did God show to the priests of the Old Law that He sent the; lepers to them, although they could in no wise contribute to the removal of leprosy. What honor, therefore, do the priests of the New Law deserve, who through the sacerdotal ordination, gave not only received from God the power to free mankind from the leprosy of the soul, but also far higher privileges.

Is the priesthood a special and holy state, selected by God?

Yes; this is evident from the writings of the Old as well as of the New Testament, and is confirmed by holy, apostolic tradition. In the Mosaic Law God Himself selected a particular race - Aaron and his descendants - from among the tribes of Juda, to perform solemnly the public service, to pray for the people, and instruct them in matters of religion, (Exod. XXVIII. I.; Lev. IX. 7; King's II. Z8.) but particularly to offer the daily sacrifices, (Lev. I. II; Num. XVIII.) for which offices they were consecrated by different ceremonies, ordained by God, which ceremonies lasted seven days. (Exod. XXVIII. 4. &c. ib. XXIX.) Besides these, God instituted a sort of minor

priesthood, Levites, for the service of the temple and of God; (Num. III. 12; VIII. 6-18.) they were of the tribe of Levi, and received no land like the other tribes, but lived on the offerings and tithes, and were consecrated like the priests. (Num. XVIII. 21.; VIII. 66-26.) This priesthood, an emblem of the real priesthood of the New Testament, was not abolished by Christ, but He brought it to its fulfilment and completed it, since He did not come to take away, but fulfil the law. For this reason Christ selected twelve apostles and seventy-two disciples from among the faithful, at the commencement of His public life, and He said to them: I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit. (John XV. 16.) He gave them power to free man from sin, to sanctify, and reconcile him with God. (Matt. XVIII. 28.) He commanded them -to preach His gospel to all nations, (Matt. XXVII. 18-20.) and to offer up His holy Sacrifice. (Luke XXII, 19.) Just as the apostles were chosen by Christ, so afterwards by the Holy Ghost. St. Paul was chosen to be an apostle, and he calls himself a minister of Christ and a dispenser of the mysteries of God, (I Cor. IV. 1) and who together with Barnabas was ordained. (Acts XIII. 2, 3.) In the same manner the apostles chose their successors, and ordained them, (I Tim. IV, 14.; II Tim. I. 6.) and even appointed seven deacons, as assistants in the priestly office. (Acts VI. 1-3.) From these clear testimonies of holy Writ, it is evident that, as God in the Old, so Christ in the New Testament chose a particular class of men, and established certain grades among them, for the government of His Church, for the service of God, and the salvation of the faithful, as holy, apostolic tradition also confirms. Already the earliest Fathers, Ignatius and Clement, disciples of the apostles, write of bishops, priests, and deacons, who are destined for the service of God and the faithful. Subdeacons, ostiaries, lectors, exorcists, and acolytes, are mentioned by St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Justin, St. Cyprian, and many others, but particularly by the Council of Carthage in the year 398, which also gives the manner of ordaining priests.

The heretics, indeed, contend that the Roman Catholic Church robs the true believers of their dignity, since she grants the priesthood only to a certain class, and give as proofs of their assertion two texts, where St. Peter (I Pet. II. 9.) calls the faithful a kingly priesthood, and where St. John (Apoc. I. 6.) says that Christ made us kings and priests. But these texts speak only of an internal priesthood, according to which every Christian, sanctified by baptism, who is in the state of grace, and consequently justified, and a living member of Christ, the great High-Priest, should offer spiritual sacrifices,¹ that is, good works, such as prayer, mortification, charity, penance &c., on the altar of the heart, as also St. Peter, (I Pet II. 5.) St. Paul, (Rom. XII. 1.) and David (Ps. 1. 19.) teach. If the assertion of the heretics were true that all believers are priests, why did God in the Old Law institute an especial priesthood, why did Christ and the apostles choose suitable men for the service of God? If all believers must be priests, why are not all kings, since St. John says, that Christ has made us kings? God, on the contrary, severely punished those who presumed to arrogate to themselves a priestly office, as He did to King Ozias, who was afflicted with leprosy because he burnt incense in the temple, which the priests alone were permitted to do. (II Paralip. XXVI. 18. 19.)

Of course heretics must make this assertion; for since they say that Scripture is the only rule of faith, and that every one can explain it, for what purpose are preachers necessary? And since they have no sacrifice, and with the exception of baptism, no Sacraments, for what purpose should they want priests? But since the sacrifice of Jesus is to continue in the Catholic Church until the end of time, since all the Sacraments instituted by Christ are still dispensed by her, and the

command of Christ to teach all nations, must be carried out by her, therefore, there must be priests chosen and destined, who will perform the ministry of the Lord, and these must not only be chosen, but also be consecrated for this by a special Sacrament.

What is Holy Order?

Holy Order is a Sacrament by which Bishops, Priests, &c. are ordained, and receive grace and power to perform the duties belonging to their charge.

What is the external sign, by which grace is communicated to the priests?

The imposition of the bishop's hands, the presentation of the chalice with bread and wine, and the words by which power is given to offer the Sacrifice of . the New Law, changing, bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and to forgive or retain sins. (*Conc. Flor. in Decr. Eug. et Trid Sess. 14. C. 3. de poen. et Sess. 22. C. 1.*)

When will Christ institute this Sacrament?

At the Last Supper, when, having changed bread and wine into His body and blood, He said: Do this, for a commemoration of me, and when after His Resurrection He said to them: As the Father hath sent me, I also send you (to free man from sin and to sanctify him). When he had said this, he breathed on them: and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. (John XX. 21. 22.) The power to forgive and retain sins He gave them when He said: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. (John XX. 23.)

Has Holy Order always been regarded as a Sacrament in the Church?

Yes, for St. Paul admonishes his disciple Timothy (I Tim, IV. 14.) not to neglect the grace conferred upon him by the imposition of hands, and in another place he admonishes him, (II Tim. I. 6.) to stir up the grace which was in him by the imposition of his (St. Paul's) hands. From this it follows, that St. Paul believed that the external sign of the imposition of hands of the bishops conferred a particular grace, wherein, indeed, the essence of a Sacrament consists. Therefore the Council of Trent (Sess. 23. *de ord. can.* 3.) declares those anathema, who contend, that Holy Order is not a real and true Sacrament, instituted by Christ, but only a human invention, or a certain form of electing the ministers of the Word of God and the Sacraments.

Are those called to the priesthood ordained at once?

No, they are not admitted to Holy Order until they have undergone a rigid examination regarding their vocation, moral conduct, and their knowledge of the sacred science.

How many degrees are there in Holy Order?

In Holy Order there are seven degrees: four lesser, and three greater. Of the lesser, the first is that of Porter, whose office is to keep the keys of the Church, sacristy, treasury, and to see that due respect is observed in the house of God: to him the bishop says, in his ordination: So behave yourself as to give an account to God of what is kept under your charge. 2. That of Lector; his office is to read aloud the lessons of the Old and New Testament, which belong to the divine office, and to instruct the ignorant in the rudiments of the Christian religion: the bishop gives him

a book containing those things, and charges him faithfully and profitably to fulfil his office. 3. That of Exorcist; to him is given power to exorcise possessed persons: the bishop gives a book of exorcisms, and bids him receive the power to lay his hands on such as are possessed, whether baptized or catechumens. 4. That of Acolyte; his office is to assist the deacon and subdeacon at the altar; to carry the lights, to prepare the wine and water for consecration, and attend to the divine mysteries: the bishop gives him a wax candle, with two little cruets, bidding him light the candle, and serve wine and water in the cruets.

The first of the greater is the order of subdeacon; he serves the deacon; prepares the altar, the chalice, the bread, and the wine; he reads the epistle aloud at high Mass; the bishop before he ordains him declares that none are to receive this order, but those who will observe perpetual continency; he then gives him a chalice, paten, basin and towel, two little cruets, and the book of epistles; bids him consider his ministry, and behave so as to please God. The second of the greater orders is that of Deacon; his office is immediately to assist the bishop or priest at high Mass; and the administration of the sacraments. He reads the Gospel aloud at high Mass; he gives the cup when the sacrament of the Eucharist' is given in both kinds; he may administer baptism, and preach the Gospel, by commission. To him the bishop gives a book of Gospels, with power to read it in the Church of God. The third is that of Priesthood, which has two degrees of power and dignity: that of bishops, and that of priests. The office of a priest is to consecrate and offer the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, under the forms of bread and wine; to administer all the sacraments, except Confirmation and Holy Order; to preach the Gospel, to bless the people, and to conduct them in the way to life eternal; as also to bless such things as are not reserved to the benediction of the bishop. The bishop, when he ordains a priest, anoints his hands with oil; he gives him the paten with bread upon it, and a chalice with wine, with power to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead; then he lays his hands upon him and says: Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins &c., and performs several other ceremonies.

Learn from this instruction to honor and respect the priests, whose dignity as representatives of God, and dispensers of His mysteries, surpasses all human dignity; upon whom a load, too heavy even for angels, as St. Chrysostom says, has been imposed, namely, the care of your immortal soul; who daily enter the sanctuary before the face of the Lord, to offer the immaculate Lamb of God for the forgiveness of our sins; to whom Jesus confided the merits of His most precious blood, in order to cleanse your soul therewith in the tribunal of penance, if you confess your sins contritely; of whom God will one day ask the strictest account. Honor, therefore, these ministers of God, pray daily for the assistance of heaven in their difficult calling; particularly on the Ember-days implore God, that He may send pious and zealous priests; and if, perhaps, you know a bad priest, do not despise his high dignity which is indelibly imprinted on him, have compassion on him, pray for him, and consider that Jesus has, said of such: "All things whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not." (Matt. XXIII. 3.)

1. See the Instruction on Sacrifice on the fifth Sunday after Pentecost, and on Rational Worship on the first Sunday after Epiphany.