

Father Goffine's instructions for the 19th Sunday after Pentecost.

From the *Explanation of the Epistles and Gospels* by Father Leonard Goffine. Imprimatur: Rt. Rev. Joseph F. Mooney, V.G. September 28, 1918. (Copyright 1880):



INTROIT. I am the salvation of the people, saith the Lord: in whatever tribulation they shall cry to me, I will hear them: and I will be their Lord for ever. Attend, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. (Ps. LXXVII.) Glory &c.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH. Almighty and merciful God, graciously keep us from all things that are hurtful; that we, being set free both in mind and body, may with ready minds accomplish whatever is Thine. Thro'.

EPISTLE (Ephes. IV. 23-28.) Brethren, Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth. Wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry, and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your anger. Give not place to the devil. He that stole, let him now steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have something to give to him that suffereth need.

EXPLANATION. St. Paul admonishes the Ephesians to lay aside the old man, like a worn out garment, and put on the new man, that is, to renew their internal and external life. This renewal according to his teaching takes place, when we by a true repentance put away our vices, shun all lies, anger, injustice, &c., and adorn our soul with virtues, and zealously seek after Christian justice and perfection. We have, perhaps, already sought to change our manner of living, for which a jubilee or some other particular solemnity of the Church gave us occasion, and at that time, perhaps, purified our soul by a general confession, making the firm resolution to live for God, and work out our salvation, we appeared converted, and to have become other men: but how long did this conversion last? Ah, how soon did we fall back into the old, sinful ways. And why? Because we lived in too great, deceitful security. We thought everything accomplished by the general confession; we were satisfied, and omitted to employ the means of remaining in the state of grace. We did not thank God for the grace of conversion; we did not ask Him for the grace of perseverance; we frequented evil company, and did not avoid dangerous occasions; we indulged in idleness and pleasures as before. How can it appear strange, if such a conversion is fruitless? Ah, we should remain in wholesome fear even after the remission of our sins. (Ecclus. V. 5.) Even if we could say that we have done everything, nevertheless we cannot be certain, whether we be worthy of hatred or love. (Ecclus. IX. 1.) We should, therefore, work out our salvation according to the advice of St. Paul (Philipp. II. 12.) in fear and trembling, and thus not fall into the old life of sin, losing the hope of a new conversion.

GOSPEL. (Matt. XXII. 1-14.) At that time, Jesus spoke to the chief priests and the Pharisees in parables, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants, to call them that were invited to the marriage, and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited, Behold I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and

fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come ye to the marriage. But they neglected: and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise: and the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard, of it; he was angry: and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city. Then he saith to his servants: The marriage indeed is ready; but they, that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage. And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together, all that they found, both bad and good; and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see the guests; and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment: and he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

REMARK. This parable agrees in many respects with that for the second Sunday after Pentecost, and has the same meaning. See, therefore, the explanation of that gospel, as also of the feast of St. Catherine, to which may be added the following:

EXPLANATION. In this parable the king is our Heavenly Father who has espoused His only-begotten Son to the Church, and on this occasion prepares the most sumptuous marriage-feast by giving the evangelical doctrine, the holy Sacraments, and the heavenly joys. The servants sent to invite the guests are the prophets, apostles and disciples of Christ. Those invited are the Jews who despised the honor and grace of the divine King, destined for them, abused and killed His servants, and were, therefore, cast aside and with their city Jerusalem, destroyed by the armies of their enemies, as a just punishment; in their stead the heathens and all those nations were called, who were on the broad road to destruction, and who now occupy the places of the unfortunate Jews at the marriage feast of the Church, and shall also occupy them in heaven. In the Jews to whom Christ addressed this parable, is verified that many of them, nay, all are called, but few chosen, because they would not heed the invitation.

APPLICATION. We have the honor not only to be invited to this marriage-feast, but are in reality guests at it, because we are members of the Church of Christ by faith. "But the Christian," says St. Gregory, "who is a member of the Church by faith, but has not charity, is like to a man who comes to the marriage-feast without the wedding garment." With this garment which is charity, Christ was vested, when He came to celebrate the nuptials with His spouse, the Church, and by the bond of charity the Son of God also unites Himself with His elect. He clearly lets us know that charity is the wedding garment which should vest us. Those, therefore, who believe and are in the communion of the Church, but who do not preserve the grace of charity, are indeed in the wedding-chamber, but they are not adorned with the wedding garment. They are dead members of the Church, and shall not be admitted without this garment into the celestial marriage-feast in the triumphant Church, but rather be cast like that unfortunate guest into exterior darkness. This guest was silent, when asked by the king, why he had not the wedding garment. By this we see, that no one can excuse himself to God for not having charity, because every one can have it, if he asks it from God, and, as St. Augustine says, our heart is the workshop of charity, and every one who has a heart can practice it.

PRAYER. I thank Thee, O Jesus, that Thou didst call me to the marriage-feast in Thy Church; give me the wedding garment of charity that I may be present at the celestial marriage-feast, and not be cast into exterior darkness.

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING HELL

Cast him into the exterior darkness. (Matt, XXII. 13.)

What is hell?

Hell is that place where the damned must suffer eternal punishment.

Is there a hell?

Yes; reason, holy Scripture and the Church teach us that there is a hell. Reason tells us that there is a just God who will punish sin. It is evident that all sins are not punished in this world; there must, therefore, be a place, where every mortal sin, not atoned for by sorrow and penance, will be punished, and this place is - hell. All nations from the beginning of the world, even those who had not the light of revelation, believed this.

But clearer still is the existence of hell shown by holy Scripture: The pious Job, (X. 22.) speaks of a region of misery and darkness, where the shadows of death and no order, but where eternal terror dwells. The Prophet Isaias (XXX. 33.) says that hell is deep and wide, and that the fire burning in it, is like a stream of sulphur, ignited by the breath of the Lord. Our Saviour expressly says that those who have done evil, shall go to everlasting torment, (Matt. XXV. 46.) that they shall be tortured by everlasting fire. (Matt. XXV. 41.) He makes mention of hell, and says that an inextinguishable fire burns there, and a worm which never dies, plagues the wicked. (Mark IX. 42. 43; Matt. X. 28.) All the Fathers of the Church teach and testify to the same doctrine. St. Augustine, among many others, says: "The infinite wisdom of God tells us that there is a hell, and the illimitable power of God it is that punishes the damned in a wonderful, but real manner."

Wherein do the pains of hell consist?

Sacred Scripture and the Church teach concerning the pains, of the reprobate in hell, that the damned burn there in an inextinguishable fire. (Mark IX. 45.) The holy doctors of the Church say, that this fire is never extinguished, and its smoke ascends or rises from century to century, "I see this fire," says St. Gregory, "as if it were gifted with reason; it make a distinction between the guilty, and tortures the damned according to the nature of their sins." This fire burns, but never consumes its victims; it communicates, as Cassiodorus says, immortality to the reprobate and lets them suffer pain, which preserves them, like salt which penetrates the flesh and keeps it from corruption, as Jesus says: Every one shall be salted with fire. (Mark IX. 48.) This fire does not shine, it leaves the reprobate in darkness, (Matt. VIII. 12.) and with this fire a never dying worm continually torments the damned. This worm is not only a bad conscience, say the holy Fathers, but particularly the privation of the Beatific Vision. Eternally will the thought torment the damned: I have lost God, the only true and highest Good, I have lost Him through my fault, I have lost Him for a brief pleasure, I have lost Him forever. In hell eternity devours all time; and if after millions and millions of years a damned soul wailingly asks his companion in misery: What time is it? he receives the answer: Eternity.

Who would not fear hell, and avoid sin which incurs eternal punishment, when he reflects upon this! And yet there are many, upon whom the truth of the existence of a hell makes no impression, who even deny that there is such a place, and who say: God is love, He can have no pleasure in the torments of His creatures, He cannot eternally punish a sin which was committed in so short a time as is the life of man."

But those who speak thus, forget that God is just, that His love and mercy are indeed always ready to forgive the contrite and penitent, but that His justice must also be satisfied, when the sinner continually rejects the merciful love of God; they forget, that every grievous sin which man commits voluntarily and knowingly is an infinite, eternal insult, offered to God, which can only be atoned for by an eternal punishment. For the perverted and malicious will of a man, who dies in mortal sin, remains perverted and malicious forever, therefore he must also be punished eternally.

O my dear Christian, do not listen to such deceivers; for just on account of their sinful life, they fear hell and therefore they endeavor to free themselves from this fear by denying the existence of hell; but they cannot succeed; for Jesus, the Truth, has told us that there is a hell, and His word remains for all eternity. Endeavor rather by a pious life to escape hell, descend there in spirit frequently according to the advice of a saint, contemplate the torments of the damned, and let this reflection urge you to imitate Christ, who has promised the joys of heaven to all His faithful followers.

CONSOLING DOCTRINE ON THE JOYS OF HEAVEN

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. (Matt. XXII. 2.)

Heaven is compared by Christ to a marriage-feast because we will there enjoy all imaginable pleasures in the most perfect union with God. In what these joys consist, St. Paul could not describe, although he was wrapt into the third heaven and tasted these pleasures; he only said: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him. (I Cor. II. 9.) Holy Writ, indeed, gives us many descriptions of the celestial joys, by comparing heaven to a paradise of bliss, sometimes to a precious pearl, or a treasure which neither rust nor moth consumes, nor thieves steal; again it represents heaven under the picture of a kingdom, a throne, a crown, whereby we are raised to the highest honor; at another time to the picture of a city which is built of gold, precious stones and pearls, lighted by the splendor of God, filled with magnificence and glory, and where the inhabitants enjoy undisturbed peace and security. These are only images or similitudes, which are taken from the most beautiful, most precious, and magnificent things of the earth, to teach us that heaven is as beautiful and pleasant a place, as we can wish and represent to ourselves, and that all possible beauty, agreeableness and joy may be found there in the highest and most perfect manner, free from evil, anxiety, disgust and fear of losing them. In heaven we will possess God Himself, the source of all joy and bliss, and will enjoy His own happiness for all eternity. More is not needed to give us the highest conception of heaven.

Who would not willingly despise the vain, short and imperfect pleasures of this earth, whilst contemplating this indescribable bliss? Who would not willingly bear all the misfortunes and misery of this world, when considering that the more miserable we have been in this life the happier will we be hereafter. What would it avail us to have enjoyed all the pleasures of this world, if deprived of the pleasures of heaven in eternity!

ASPIRATION. How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord, of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God. (Ps. LXXXIII. 2-3.) How do I loathe the world, when I contemplate heaven.

(St. Ignatius Loyola.)

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