

New Brighton, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2023

## Quinquagesima Sunday

### *1<sup>st</sup> Solemn High Mass Canon Henry*

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that have been written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and scourged and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death.”<sup>1</sup>

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Cher monsieur le Chanoine,  
dear Canon,  
dear brethren

Today, in this church of Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Philomena, in a colder weather than your Provence origin, you are offering a solemn high mass of thanksgiving for the Sacrament of Priesthood you received two weeks ago at Gricigliano. Thanksgiving for the most beautiful gift you may ever receive: being configured to Christ the High Priest. Unmerited, unwanted, but call by Jesus to serve him forever.

As we are nearly entering Lenten season in the next days, this gift is for you an opportunity to renew your attachment to him, now that, being His Priest, you may live with Him the ascension to the Calvary, for your first Easter as a Priest, and forever in eternity.

The Gospel of this Sunday of Quinquagesima is giving you, and all of us, a last call before entering our Lenten penances. Jesus clearly announced His Passion and death to his apostles. Although they didn't get straight the meanings of these words, they continued to follow Him. Jesus took his disciples apart to make such announcement, as He wishes to take us apart with Him to make this penitential journey.

This announcement should fill us with both joy and sorrow. Joy, because Jesus chose us to come along with Him. Sorrow, because of our sins, we will put Him to death. This bitter mixture of feelings is the one fulfilling our soul this morning. For the last time before long on a Sunday, we enjoy the sight of the flowers, the sound of the organ music, and the deacon and subdeacon are using their vestments of joy, dalmatic and tunic, before changing them for the penitential folded chasubles.

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<sup>1</sup> Lk., XVIII, 31-33.

Joy because of the announcement of the redemption, Sorrow, because of all the sufferings it caused to our Redeemer, and we abandoned Him at that time, leaving Him alone with His enemies.

“Betrayed by one of His apostles, abandoned by the others, denied by their chief, Christ Jesus becomes an object of mockery and outrage in the hands of valets. Behold Him, the Almighty God, struck with blows, His adorable Face, which is the joy of the Saints, covered with spittle. He is scourged, a crown of thorns is pressed upon His Head, a purple mantle is flung in derision over His shoulders, a reed is placed in His hand; then the soldiers bend the knee before Him in insolent mockery. What an abyss of ignominy for one before Whom the angels tremble! Contemplate Him, the Master of the Universe, treated as a malefactor, and an impostor, placed on a level with an infamous robber whom the rabble prefers before Him! Behold Him, outlawed, condemned, fastened to the cross between two thieves; enduring the agony of the nails being dug in His hands and feet and the torture of thirst! He sees the people He has laden with benefits wag their heads in scorn; He hears the malicious sarcasms of His enemies: “He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Him come down from the cross and then, but only then, we will believe in Him”. Contemplate that picture of the sufferings of Christ traced long before, by the prophet Isaias: “There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him. Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him as it were a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins...”<sup>2</sup>

This long quotation from the spiritual conferences of Dom Marmion depicts us the image of our Redeemer, as He was giving himself in oblation to His Eternal Father.

We abandoned Him at that time, but in His merciful bounty, He’s giving us another chance to be united with Him. We should be sorrowful because we left Him on the very day. We should be also joyful because He’s inviting us to come again and walk alongside Him for this journey.

Jesus gave himself entirely to the Father, to his Mission as redeemer, to offer us a perfect example to follow, and never withdraw our oblation towards the father. What we intent to give forever in a moment of gracious generosity, was offered to the Lord. We should never try to take it back.

“Once a soul has thus given herself out of love, nothing said stays her, neither sufferings, nor difficulties, nor all that troubles us, for “where love is, labour is absent.”<sup>3</sup> Try then to give yourself to Christ in this way without reserve,

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<sup>2</sup> Dom Marmion, Christ, Life of the Soul, Part II, Chap. III *Delicta quis intelligit?*, I.

<sup>3</sup> St Augustine, Confessions.

for good and out of love. Then all will go on well; Your life will be extremely pleasing to God and very meritorious.”<sup>4</sup>

As the Lord gave himself for us, let’s offer ourselves to him, in a act of perfect love and Charity, as the Apostle is urging us in his letter to the Corinthians. Charity and Love of God will help us growing with God.<sup>5</sup> Its achievement is starting today, and will be completed only when we’ll be in Heaven. Until then, it’s our call to receive it, to let ourselves being transformed, transfigured by the grace of God, to start today to make ourselves saint.

This Lenten journey is starting soon.

May it be fruitful!

May it be more and more united to Jesus!

May it make yourself entirely dedicated to God!

May you become a saint at the end of it!

“I pray for you that you may become a real saint. A real saint gives more glory to God and saves more souls than a thousand of ordinary souls.”<sup>6</sup>

“May God bless you and take you all to Himself.”<sup>7</sup>

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Dom Marmion, Union with God, Chap. II, letter about 1920.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor., XIII, 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> Dom Marmion, Union with God, Chap. III, letter of the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1904.

<sup>7</sup> Dom Marmion, Union with God, Chap. III, letter of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1907.