

Birkenhead, Sunday 7th May 2023

4th Sunday after Easter

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

This mass of the 4th Sunday after Easter looks like a long-timed preparation to the Feast of Pentecost. It is strange to hear such things, as our Lord has not yet come back to Heaven. The different excerpts of the Holy Scriptures chosen by the Church to compose this Sunday Mass, are all praising the Lord for the gifts we received through his Passion & Death, to echo the words of Jesus in the Gospel about his near-coming Ascension: “*Vado ad eum*,” “I go to him that sent me.”¹ And straight after, He adds: “And when [the Paraclete] is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment.”²

In truth,

“This mass manifests to us the true action of the Holy Ghost. In the Introit, the Alleluia is the central point. “Sing to the Lord the new canticle: Alleluia”. We are also told the reason for our singing: “He has done wonders”. These wonders that God manifests in the eyes of the world are the works of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost who makes unity of the faithful, mystical body of Christ; it is Him again who, on the stormy sea of life, anchors our hearts in heaven, where Christ has preceded us (Offertory). The Holy Ghost “comes down from above” and is the “perfect gift of the Father of lights”, making us men of light “in the midst of the dark shadows” of earthly life. We were “regenerated” at Easter by the divine “Word”, Christ. It was at this moment when the divine plant was placed in the garden of our heart. Now we must let the divine gardener, the Holy Ghost, act so that “our soul may be blessed” (Epistle.). This divine gardener is “the right hand of the Lord” (The Holy Ghost is often called, in the Holy Scriptures and the liturgy, the finger of God). The right hand of God creates victory, exaltation, life (Alleluia). That is why it is good for us that Christ goes away. At that time only, the victorious Paraclete will come, as our guide, our teacher who will make us penetrate ever more deeply into the doctrine of Christ. It is him also who will glorify Christ, the mystical Christ, on earth. This magnificent activity is exercised by the Holy Ghost in the Eucharist (Gospel).”³

Several texts of the mass are also used at other times in the liturgy. The 1st alleluia is heard as the offertory for the 2nd Sunday after Epiphany, and Maundy Thursday. The Offertory is the same text from the same 2nd Sunday after Epiphany. Even the melody of the Introit echoes the one from Low Sunday.

Those parallels show us that, although the Lord is saying he will leave us in a short time, we are now in the greater history of the church, all things being connected to each other. Our redemption has come, the Lord made everything possible for us. The liturgical year we are living

¹ Jn., XVI, 5.

² Jn., XVI, 8.

³ Dom Pius Parsh, [Le Guide dans l'année liturgique](#), 4th Sunday after Easter. Translated with www.deepl.com

is a constant repeat of the same things all along our short life, inviting us without a break to fidelity to what we received. We are reminded every time what the cost of our redemption was, and why we should only have thanksgiving and praise in our prayers.

Sometimes of course, we feel a bit low, abandoned, lost, but Jesus left us with the assurance that he will always remain with us in spirit, and for real, in his true presence in tabernacles.

Lets' praise the Lord for all His gifts, comforted by the words of the Apostle in the second Alleluia: "Knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him."⁴ This sentence from St Paul to the Romans can't receive any comments, as everything is said in few words. The Church places these words before our eyes this morning to celebrate Christ's triumph against death and sin, but also to sing a canticle of hope about the resurrection this Death promised to all faithful children of God.⁵

Since we received this promise of salvation, expectation and hope is our lot upon Earth. Let's face it, faithfully, comforted by this assurance, renewed everyday by this token of paradise, pre-taste of the joys of Heaven, that we received in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. It will help and assist us to work with patience for the Glory of God. The same virtue was preached by St Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, whom we used to read and excerpt of his sermons in the old version of the Breviary:

"By our patience God draweth us toward Himself, and keepeth us His Own. Patience doth soothe anger, bridle the tongue, govern the mind, keep peace, set rules of self-control, break the onset of lust, still the swelling of temper, put out the fire begotten of hatred, make the rich meek, and relieve the need of the poor patience doth guard in virgins their blessed wholeness in widows, their careful purity in such as be married, their single-hearted love one toward the other. Patience doth teach such as be successful to be lowly-minded such as be unfortunate, to be brave and all to be gentle when they are wronged and insulted. Patience maketh a man soon to forgive them that trespass against him, and if he have trespassed against any, long and humbly to ask his pardon. Patience doth fight down temptations, bear persecution, and endure unto the end in suffering, and in uplifting of our testimony. Patience is the moat that guardeth the stout foundations of the castle of our faith."⁶

Let's expect in confidence and patience the mercy and justice of the Lord, by letting with docility the Holy Ghost doing His holy work in us, and we will deserve the crown of glory.

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

⁴ Rm., VI, 9.

⁵ Dom Ludovic Baron, *L'expression du Chant grégorien*, T2. 4th Sunday after Easter.

⁶ St Cyprian. Exposition on the good of patience, in Roman Breviary, 4th Sunday after Easter, 6th Lesson at Matins.