

Birkenhead, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2023

## 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

“Deign, O Lord, to rescue me; let all be put to shame and confusion who seek to snatch away my life.”<sup>1</sup>

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

If we truly listen this verse from Psalm 39, which is used today as the offertory antiphon, when could read it in two ways. The first is an urging prayer to ask for the Lord’s protection and forgiveness at the time of the danger. The second is taken from the quiet confidence in the Lord, inherited from the readings of the epistle and the Gospel. It is also comforted through the Gregorian melody of the antiphon, which could be qualified as one of the most peaceful of the year. We cannot read a single expression of any trouble, or any plea from the chant. It is a fully abandoned soul who is praying in full confidence to be heard and answered: why should she worry?

Don Marmion can help us to find out this peace of mind, with one of his numerous advice regarding obedience:

“The virtue which will lead you to the acquisition of all the others is the spirit of submission. Keep yourself in the spirit of submission to God. Often unite yourself to the sentiment of obedience that the heart of Jesus had towards His Father, above all in prayer and Holy Communion. Submit yourself not only to God’s commands, but to every good pleasure, to the events which He permits, to all that He arranges for you. This virtue of submission will lead you to true abandon.”<sup>2</sup>

Do not feel disheartened with the difficulties of practicing such level of abandon and submission. The grace of the Lord is always given to a loving heart who desire to follow Him in perfection. Do not feel discouraged at the sight of your sins and faults, past or present, because “where sin abounded, grace did more abound,”<sup>3</sup> as says St Paul to the Romans.

“The care and diligence we should have in our affairs are quite different from solicitude, anxiety and eagerness. The Angels are concerned about our salvation and they obtain it with diligence but they do not have solicitude, anxiety or eagerness. Care and diligence flow from their charity but solicitude, anxiety and eagerness would be entirely contrary to their happiness. For care and diligence may be accompanied by peace and tranquillity of spirit but not solicitude or anxiety and much less eagerness. Be careful and diligent, Philothea, in all your affairs of which you are in charge, since God who entrusted them to

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. XXXIX, 14-15. 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, Offertory.

<sup>2</sup> Dom Marmion, Union with God, Part 4, Chap. 3 the self surrender of love.

<sup>3</sup> Rm. V, 20.

you desires that you take great care of them. But if it is possible, be not solicitous or anxious about them that is, do not undertake them with restlessness, anxiety and eagerness. Do not be eager at work because every kind of eagerness disturbs reason and judgement. It even prevents us from doing well the very things of which we are too eager.”<sup>4</sup>

This long quotation from the introduction to the devout life seems to perfectly match with our topic this morning. St Francis de Sales gently invites her spiritual daughter to deal with her business with the same gentleness the Angels have to serve God.

This spirit of abandon is never done by laziness, and no care for our spiritual welfare. Let’s listen again to Don Marmion who revealed us the secret about this true confidence into the Lord:

“Indeed holy abandonment is one of the purest and most absolute forms of love; it is the height of love; it is love giving to God, unreservedly, our whole being, with all its energies and activities in order that we may be a veritable holocaust to God: when the spirit of abandonment to God animates a monk's whole life, that monk has attained holiness. What in fact is holiness? It is substantially the conformity of all our being to God; it is the amen said by the whole being and its faculties to all the rights of God; it is the fiat full of love, whereby the whole creature responds, unceasingly and unfalteringly, to all the Divine Will; and that which causes us to say this amen, to utter this fiat, that which surrenders, in a perfect donation, the whole being to God is the spirit of abandonment, a spirit which is the sum total of faith, confidence and love.”<sup>5</sup>

With confidence, let’s place our life into the hands of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only One who can fulfil all our desires, which is to firstly and lastly accomplish His divine Will. We can conclude our prayer today with the words of St Paul himself, who gives us the final answer that should be ours forever:

“Now, to Him Who is able to accomplish all things in a measure far beyond what we ask or conceive, in keeping with the power that is at work in us - to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus down through all the ages of time without end.”<sup>6</sup>

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

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<sup>4</sup> St Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chap. 10, Managing our affairs with great care but without eagerness or anxiety.

<sup>5</sup> Dom Marmion, Christ, Ideal of the Monk, Chap. XVI.

<sup>6</sup> Eph., III, 20-21, 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, Epistle.