

New Brighton, Sunday 15th October 2023

20th Sunday after Pentecost

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

“The world is drawing towards its end; like the Ruler's son, it begins to die. Tormented by the fever of the passions, which have been excited in Capharnaum, the city of business and pleasure, it is too weak to go itself to the Physician who could cure it. It is for its father, for the pastors, who, by baptism, gave it the life of grace, and govern the Christian people as rulers of holy Church, it is for them to go to Jesus, and beseech him to restore the sick man to health.”¹

With these few words, 150 years ago it seems that Dom Guéranger described in a prophecy our world of today, while he was commenting upon today's Gospel, written 200 years ago. As we know, the truth taught with the Gospels remains forever, no matter the time it would be proclaimed. In like manner, a French author of the end of the 19th century used to say: *Quand je veux savoir les dernières nouvelles, je lis Saint Paul*² “When I want to hear about the latest news, I read Saint Paul”.

Each time we read the Gospel, the Life of our Saviour, we are listening to his teaching, and we are transported to a tiny country of Minor Asia, where He was delivering the Truth to be known and believed in order to go to Heaven.

The healing of the son of the ruler is a renewed invitation to come and entrust with a real faith to God all our life with all its pains and joys, trials and issues, success and difficulties. St Paul himself urges us to do so in his epistle to the Ephesians:

“See how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”³

The world is evil, as many time said by the Lord. Don't trust it, it will only bring you sadness and despair, although it is offering a false appearance of joy and abundance. If you follow the world, you will soon become like the son of the ruler, sick to death with fever.

“Let us note that sin is precisely signified by fever, and that every sinner is a true fever sufferer. Just as a fever sufferer undergoes the alternation of heat and cold with shivering, so the sinner experiences at times the ardour of greed through the disordered love of ephemeral goods, that is the heat of the soul; and at other times the trembling of fear, that is the coldness of the soul. According to Saint Augustine (*in Ps. 79*), all sins produce a double effect in man, fear and greed. Fear makes us shun anything that upsets our flesh; greed makes us desire everything that flatters it.”⁴

¹ Dom Guéranger, *Liturgical Year*, 20th Sunday after Pentecost.

² Léon Bloy, *Journal*.

³ Eph., V, 15. 20th Sunday after Pentecost.

⁴ Ludolph of Saxony, *Life of Jesus Christ*, T3, chp. LXIII, on Jn., IV, 43-54.

This is the terrible situation of the sinner who ignore all the invites to conversion, because it seems to hard to start. The sinner prefers to remain in this constant unhappiness mixed with a tiny satisfaction of himself and his derelict passions, than to change his life forever, slightly suffer in this life for a constant, perpetual and eternal happiness in heaven.

These small but no really comfortable moments of our life, when we are submitted to temptations and trials are necessary to obtain the perfection of holiness God is excepting us to.

“Uncertainty, anguish, disgust, are a very bitter remedies necessary to the health of your soul. There is only one road that leads to Jesus, namely that of Calvary; and whosoever will not follow Jesus upon this road must give up the thought of divine union. “If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me””⁵

Let us start today this long and painful road of conversion, which leads to the glorious heaven. It is a great contrary to the hedonistic life the world is inviting you to, but the joy it will give you will be far more durable and better than any of its fake and random pleasures.

“Lord Jesus, you came down from Judea to Galilee, that is to say from heaven where the Angels praise you and adore you, in this world where everything changes and passes away, here I am before you, weak as I am, seduced by the charms of earthly things, close to death, weighed down by the weight of dangerous temptations. Ah, have mercy on me, so that I do not perish by spiritual, temporal or eternal death, by losing the life of the soul, that of the body and that of glory. May your sovereign word and my humble confession, accompanied by fasting and prayer, supported by pious exercises and virtuous examples, help me to be delivered from the fever of concupiscence and the sickness of sin, so that with the efficacious help of your grace I may not succumb to any unbridled passion.”⁶

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

⁵ Dom Marmion, *Union with God*, the spirit of detachment.

⁶ Ludolph of Saxony, *Life of Jesus Christ*, T3, chp. LXIII, final prayer, on Jn., IV, 43-54.