

Birkenhead, Sunday 22th October 2023

21st Sunday after Pentecost

“Serve nequam, omne débitum dimísi tibi, quóniam rogásti me : nonne ergo opórtuit et te miseréri consérvi tui, sicut et ego tui misértus sum?”¹

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

“Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: Shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?”

What are we on earth for? To search the Kingdom of God and its Glory. The parable of today’s Gospel reminds us about the account we will have to give at the end of our life, and it’s never too earlier to get ready for it. We have our entire life to be dedicated to this task.

Every day, we should wake up and ask ourselves this question: how am I going to face my Lord God the day I’ll die? Several options might be presented by our gardian angel, or by the devils who constantly surround us, “as roaring lions, goeth about seeking whom they may devour.”²

The first option is the sinner’s one, who is punished and doomed, in the Gospel we just read. He is the one who ignore the practice of Charity, begs mercy for himself, but denies the others to benefit from it. He is the jealous one, who constantly seeks for himself, trying to steal other’s happiness and goods. He is the angry one, who always put himself mad, if something is not given to him straight away when he desires it. He is the one who, instead of living the life of the seven virtues and seven gifts, prefers to live the life of the seven capital sins. May God spare us to be or become one of these. Be scared to hear one day for yourselves the terrible condemnation the servant heard today: “Thou wicked servant!”³, or similar thing we may read at other places in the Gospel, such as “Depart from me, you cursed.”⁴

The second option is no better than the first one. It is the one who, while he is doing good things on earth, seeks his own glory, and try to receive honours from the people, instead of giving them back to the Lord who is accomplishing them through him. Beware to be or become that second kind of sinners, who performs goods, but transforms them in evil, because they are keeping them for themselves. We may learn how to receive such honnours from this little story taken from the life of St jean-Marie Vianney, as he was just awarded the mozetta of honorary canon of the cathedral, and the highest French order of merit, the cross of *la Légion d’honneur*.

“A little later, alluding to that mozetta and that cross, a priest chaffed him mildly: “Monsieur le Cure, all the authorities on earth honour you: God will surely not fail to honour you in heaven.”

¹ Mt., XVIII, 32-33; 21st Sunday after Pentecost.

² 1 Pet V, 8; Compline, short lesson.

³ Mt., XVIII, 32.

⁴ Mt., XXV, 41.

“That is what fills me with fear,” replied the saint in a grave tone of voice: “what if, when death comes and I present myself with these baubles, God were to say to me: “Begone: you have had your reward?””⁵

The last option we may choose, is the one of the saints, and just introduced with the act of humility of St Jean-Marie Vianney. That is: nothing good we do is ours but God’s. Give Him the glory now, and if we deserve it, we will receive a reward in the future.

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”⁶

Only the practice of charity, thought humility will deserve us that blessed word. At the contrary of the sinner, who prefers the seven capital sins, the true son of God practice the seven virtues, and let himself be moved over himself by the blowing spirit of the seven gifts.

“To correct yourself of vanity, of the desire to please men, of self-consciousness, the best means is:

1.-To do everything directly to please God. The more you look at God, the less you will look at yourself;

2.-To thank God, Who is the source of all good, for all the good you do, for your successes, etc.

3.-Not to be astonished, nor troubled, when you happen to fall into imperfections, but to ask forgiveness and, immediately, *sursum corda*.”⁷

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

⁵ Msgr Trochu, St. Jean-Marie-Baptiste Vianney (1786-1859) according to the Acts of the process of canonization and numerous hitherto unpublished documents, chpt. XX.

⁶ Mt. XXV, 34.

⁷ Dom Marmion, Union with God.