

Birkenhead, Sunday 5th November 2023

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

“Dicit Dóminus: redúcam captivitátem vestram de cunctis locis.”¹

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

“The Lord says: I will bring back your captivity from all places.”

Since we are still mourning in this vale of tears, we use for this set of masses which conclude the liturgical year, the same words the Prophet Jeremiah preached to the poor people in their Babylonian exile. Suffering from such a loss, the one of the Eden garden and the vision of God, the light of the divine consolation and peace is a beacon of hope which guide our soul in its journey back to God. While the Chosen People was away from the Holy Land, and moved to Babylon, they were submitted to a great deal of suffering and trials, which the man of God, Jeremiah tried to soften with his inspired words. God doesn't allow miseries to happen to us, unless they are for our purification, and expiation of our past sins. They are this part of the Redemption He wants us to take upon our shoulders.²

God wants for us peace and happiness with him. The words of the Introit are this consolation He wants to share with us, probably on Earth if we need it, definitely in Heaven, if we achieve our vocation to become saints. “You have favored, O Lord, Your land; You have restored the well-being of Jacob.”³

“May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, and also whatever good you do, or evil you endure, be cause for the remission of your sins, the increase of grace and the reward of life everlasting. Amen.”⁴

Every time you are receiving the sacramental absolution, the priest, minister of God, invokes upon you the divine grace, for all the good you will do and miseries you endure, to be a token of the promise for eternity.

Any kind of sufferings, if well accepted and carried out, participates of this spirit of atonement, and deeply please our Redeemer, because we are in communion with Him, while He suffers for us upon the cross.

As we are all running for the crown, let's choose the best and most precious one. Not for our glory, but because it will shine better for the glory of God. Amongst various sufferings, the crucible of obedience is most probably the one which will cost us much, and therefore will be the most rewarding.

“We see how St. Benedict leads the soul to the spirit of self-surrender. For him this is not a negative state of immobility or mistaken indifference. To

¹ Jer., XXIX, 14. 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, Introit.

² Dom Ludovic Baron, L'expression du Chant grégorien, XXIII^e Dimanche après la Pentecôte.

³ Ps., LXXXIV, 2. 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, Introit.

⁴ Rituale Romanum, Sacrament of Penance, complementary words for the Absolution.

arrive at holy abandonment, the soul labours to put away a crowd of obstacles, then to keep itself faithfully in this fundamental disposition of humility and of submission in regard to grace; it accepts all the Divine Will, even in things most contrary to its tastes, even those that make it suffer the most; but, this done, the soul has fulfilled its task, it no longer looks to anyone except God for what is necessary to enable it to come to Him, and it looks to Him with invincible confidence and unshaken faith in His word, in His power in His goodness, and in the merits of Christ. This state of abandonment is the purest and sweetest fruit of the practice of humility and obedience, upon which the holy Patriarch has rounded our inner life.”⁵

Since we gave everything we had in ourselves, especially on our profession or ordination day, nothing belong anymore to ourselves, and it would be acting like a thief to even try to take it back. God is making us gifts without the idea to take them back. Why should we be unfaithful to Him, and do to Him what he will never do to us. This is why having the spirit of obedience, and pouring ourselves in its crucible is supported by other virtues, and nothing less than the theological ones of Faith and Hope.

“Born of faith, religious obedience is sustained by hope. [...] What is the role of hope in the exercise of obedience? To render us full of confidence in God's help, especially in triumphing over the obstacles and difficulties that may be foreseen and encountered in the execution of the task commanded. [...]

He gives us, with confidence, that virtue of patience without which obedience is not perfect. ‘The sign that thou hast this virtue of obedience,’ said the Heavenly Father to St. Catherine, ‘is patience; impatience makes known that thou hast it not... Disobedience has a sister given to her by self-love and this is impatience... Patience and obedience are inseparable; whoever is not patient has, by this very fact, the proof that obedience does not dwell in his heart.’

Obedience quickened by supernatural confidence, infallibly draws down help from on high.”⁶

Let’s not despair because of our own unworthiness. Yes, we are frail, failing and fainting at each step of our walk towards Heaven. By God doesn’t want us to lose our way, and provides us with all the necessary means to assure us a quiet pace, giving us the stick of His Grace, the shoes of Faith, and a beacon of Hope to light us the Way. He will bring back our captivity from all places.

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

⁵ Dom Columba Marmion, Christ, Ideal of the Monk. XVI, Spirit of abandonment to God, II.

⁶ Dom Columba Marmion, Christ, Ideal of the Monk. XII, Bonum Obedientiae, VIII.