

New Brighton, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

“Dóceas nos terréna despícere et amáre coeléstia.”

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

“You will teach us to disdain the things of earth and love those of heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

You probably heard, or read, several times across the Liturgical Year these words taken from the final prayer after communion of this second Sunday of Advent. Of course, there is no special time to ask this grace of detachment from the Lord. But it resounds in a particular way, as we prepare ourselves for the Lord’s coming during the Advent season.

If you look, even quickly to the crib where and when Jesus came upon earth, you will not see many things: no real modern comfort, no heating, except the breath of two animals, and a bit of straw to cut off the drafts, a wooden crib, instead of a nice cradle, ornated with festoons and ribbons. Poverty, silence and ignorance from the world.

Jesus came upon earth to teach us the way to Heaven, and this mission started from the day of His birth, at Christmas. This spirit of detachment from the world is also described throughout the readings of the Epistle and the Gospel, when both St Paul and St John the Baptist remind us about the necessity to look up towards our coming salvation, and by the same way, detach us from the world. It should lead our expectation, it should command our spiritual progression, it could change our life forever.

The reading of the Rule of St Benedict about detachment could help us to attain that purpose. The first step on the road to happiness is the escape from Mammon. Happy are the poor in spirit. I lose God, I lose the world, I lose myself, if I want only to clutch at things and use them for my own pleasure or profit. So I must, through God’s mercy, repent, turn back again, be re-born. I must be “stripped of all things.” I must learn the lesson of detachment.

Perhaps few things are more misunderstood than this idea of detachment. People sometimes think that it means not caring: it does but, as we have seen, only if you add that it means caring too. The detached man will care more for things than the avaricious and rapacious man; but he will care in a different way. He will not clutch and cling, in a self-worship; his possessions, his desires, his attachments, will not fetter his freedom and destroy his power of love, will not forever be an anxiety and an agitation of spirit. His is the prayer of the poet, “Teach us to care and not to care. Teach us to sit still,” and so he learns to be at peace.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Postcommunion.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.saintbenedict.com/catholic-resources/poverty-of-spirit/>

This detachment is the one preached by St John the Baptist in the desert, and the benefit we could immediately withdraw is God's fulfilment of His promise to be with us. Everything we could do would be enhanced by His Divine presence. He will increase our Faith to grow up in Hope, as says St Paul:

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

“This is the doctrine of the saints. Listen to what St. Catherine of Sienna said on her death bed. Feeling her end approaching, she gathered her spiritual family around her, and gave them her last instructions which have been collected by her confessor, the Blessed Raymund of Capua: ‘Her first and fundamental teaching was that he who enters into the service of God, ought necessarily, if he truly wishes to possess God, to root out from his heart all sensible affection, not only for persons but moreover for any creature whatever, and tend towards His Divine Creator in the simplicity of an undivided love. For the heart cannot be given entirely to God if it is not free from all other love, and if it does not open itself with a frankness exclusive of all reserve.’<sup>4</sup><sup>5</sup>

The Lord is calling us. He is inviting us to strip ourselves from any inordinate affection, to detach ourselves more and more from this world, to look like Him, as He is coming in this poor crib, only dressed in the Glory of Humility and Poverty in Spirit. As you know, this last virtue is the one usually begged when we meditate upon the third joyful mystery of our Rosary.

We may ask Our Queen in Heaven, whom we just celebrated through her Immaculate Conception, to obtain for us from Her Divine Son, this beautiful ornament for our soul. For sure, this will please Our Lord more than anything else, and following that path, our heart will be ready to welcome Our Lord in two weeks time.

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

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<sup>3</sup> Rm., XV, 13. Epistle.

<sup>4</sup> Life by Raymund of Capua.

<sup>5</sup> Dom Marmion, Christ ideal of the Monk, I - Seek God, 3.