

Birkenhead, Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## Septuagesima

“Even so the last shall be first, and the first last”<sup>1</sup>

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

Because it is not enough to leave everything, but to persevere always and never grow weary, the Lord added the following words to preserve from torpor those who began with zeal: “Even so the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matth. xix, 30). For many rise and fall from one state to another, sometimes better, sometimes worse; there are some who were fervent then cool down, and there are some who were cold and suddenly burst into flames. There are some who start out with an extraordinary élan on the road to of perfection, so as to surpass the others by a great number of excellent works; but little by little they slacken off and come to a standstill in the progression of virtue, or even they even slip and finally fall into the abyss of vice, because they have allowed the fire of divine love to weaken and be extinguished in their souls. Some others, on the other hand, who had started out late and half-heartedly to do good, then devote themselves to it with such ardour that their actions win over those who seemed those who seemed to have gone before them.<sup>2</sup>

The parable we are offered to meditate on this Septuagesima Sunday is an invitation to never discourage ourselves, even when looking at the apparent level of sanctity of the others. We are all working into the vineyard, but not all of us started the same day, from the same background. We all have different stories who brought us here today. Instead of comparing, each other, which may create the same jealousy the between the servants of the vineyard, let’s see that we are all concurring towards the same end.

“Run as to obtain it. And everyone in a contest abstains from all things - and they indeed to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable.”<sup>3</sup>

Today we are beginning the long journey to Easter. Our Holy Mother the Church chose these excerpts of the Sacred Scriptures to stimulate our desire, to invite us for an increase of sanctity. We are in a competition, as said St Paul, but, at the difference of a worldly race, when only one, the best, receive the crown, we can all receive it, providing our efforts and penances. These are obtained and supported through our work in the vineyard.

“For many are called, but few are chosen.”<sup>4</sup>

Our unique worry should not be to check whether our sister nearby is getting more or less than us, but that we both obtain the crown, according to our merits.

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<sup>1</sup> Mt, XX, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ludoph of Saxony, Life of Jesus Christ, Vol 4, XIV.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. IX, 24-25.

<sup>4</sup> Mt., XX, 16

“I do you no injustice [...] I choose to give to this last even as to you”<sup>5</sup>

Jealousy is a terrible evil weed, we ought to remove from the vineyard of our soul.

At every time and in every age, God calls people to grace and glory, because there are always those who reform their conduct and deserve reward; for sincere repentance is never too late. Let us suppose a man addressing this warning or reproach to himself reproach: "You have already reached your ninth hour, why do you remain idle? You are now approaching your eleventh hour, why stop? What are you waiting for? It's still time to work out your salvation; the man who wants to serve God will be mercifully admitted, even at the last hour."<sup>6</sup>

Let's work into our vineyard, into the vineyard of the church, accepting and supporting all which is sent to us, so that we may, at last, receive our denarius.

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

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<sup>5</sup> Mt., XX, 13-14.

<sup>6</sup> Ludolph of Saxony, Life of Jesus Christ, Vol 4, XIV.