

New Brighton, Sunday 3rd March 2024

3rd Sunday in Lent

“At that time, Jesus was casting out a devil¹.”

“Be imitators of God, as very dear children and walk in love².”

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

The reading of the Gospel which is brought to our attention for this third Sunday in Lent seems particularly accurate, as we are slowly moving up toward the great feast of Easter. It is a delicate way that the church uses to remind us about the mandatory yearly confession, at Easter time. Next week, with the miracle of the multiplication of the breads, we will be reminded of the other Eastertide obligation: our yearly reception of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist

For those who receive the Sacrament of Penance more regularly, it is a reminder of the effects this sacrament produces in our soul. When we do things regularly, they do create a habit, which can become automatic and mechanical, and make us forget sometimes about the reality we try to humbly receive. We may also forget that this regular confession should be followed by real change and amendment, but unfortunately our weakness and forgetfulness go over our good deeds that we express at the time we say our act of contrition.

“The extreme condescension of Jesus towards sinners cannot serve as a motive for remaining in sin or falling into sin again after having been set free from it. “Shall we continue in sin” says St. Paul, “that grace may abound? God forbid. For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein”³?”

When we do not try our best to make proper amendments to our life after receiving the divine forgiveness, the state of our soul is in great danger to be submitted to the power of the devil, again. Jesus already warned us about it, as we can read in today’s Gospel:

“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he roams through waterless places in search of rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house which I left.’ And when he has come to it, he finds the place swept. Then he goes and takes seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first⁴.”

Being reminded of the necessity of confession was needed in this penitential season. Being reminded about the necessity to amend our life after receiving it should therefore change it until its end. St Paul gave us the direction to follow:

¹ Lk., XI, 14.

² Eph., V, 1.

³ Dom Marmion, Christ in his mysteries, Chp. XI, Some aspects of the public life of Jesus, V.

⁴ Lk., XI, 24-25.

“Be imitators of God, as very dear children and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and delivered Himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odour⁵.”

Since we receive the privilege to become children of God, we went from darkness of paganism of heresy, to the light of the Faith. The sin of our life has been destroyed, cancelled, annihilated by the power of the grace of God. Why would we choose it again, and get back to it?

“We, therefore, were Light; how comes it that we are now darkness? The beautiful likeness to our Heavenly Father, which was once upon us, is perhaps quite gone! But, thanks to Divine Mercy, we may recover it. Let us do so, by again renouncing Satan and his idols. Let our repentance and penance restore within us that Light, whose fruit consists in all goodness, justice, and truth.”⁶

Jesus’s bounty and mercy is without measure for the repentant sinner, even if he comes again and again with the same faults, but with a real, true sorrow. He knows our weakness. Let’s therefore not desperate if we don’t see any or only very little signs of amendment.

“However numerous be the falls of a soul, we ought never to despair of it. “How often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him”? Peter asked Our Lord. “Seventy times seven times”⁷, Jesus replied, meaning by this that there should be no limit to our forgiveness. Here on earth, this inexhaustible measure towards repentance is that of God Himself.”⁸

How then, should we avoid this misfortune to fall again: prayer and penance are for sure the right way. Choose God in any occasion: “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters⁹.”

“What makes us fall back into the power of Satan, and forget our duty to our God, is that we do not frankly declare ourselves for Jesus, when occasions require us to do so. We try to be on both sides, we have recourse to subterfuge, we temporize: this takes away our energy; God no longer gives us the abundant graces we received when we were loyal and generous; our relapse is all but certain. Therefore, let us be boldly and unmistakably with Christ. He that is a soldier of Jesus, should be proud of his title¹⁰!”

Stay with Christ, He will stay with you!

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

⁵ Eph., V, 1-2.

⁶ Dom Guéranger, Liturgical Year, 3rd Sunday in Lent.

⁷ Mt., XVIII, 21-22.

⁸ Dom Marmion, Christ in his mysteries, Chp. XI, Some aspects of the public life of Jesus, V.

⁹ Lk., XI, 23.

¹⁰ Dom Guéranger, Liturgical Year, 3rd Sunday in Lent.