

New Brighton, Sunday 21st April 2024

3rd Sunday after Easter

“Your sorrow shall be turned into joy¹.”

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

These words of Jesus are excerpted from his long speech to his apostles after the Last Supper. It took four chapters to St John to report it in full, and gives us the last words of Jesus, his last will, before the immense and intense sufferings of His Holy Passion. In the same speech, Jesus called us no longer servants, but friends. Today, he is telling us about the time we have to spend on earth to earn our place in Heaven.

Jesus insists today about our joys, and especially about our sorrows, that we had, we have, and we will encounter all along this journey. He encourages us to not abandon at the first difficulties, not letting things go, if uneasiness appears. It is our lot, it is His desire, that we unite ourselves to Him all along. As per our payment for our effort and support, he promises us an eternity of happiness.

“If a trustworthy person, powerful enough to do what he says, were to promise to turn all the stones we bring him into gold, how eagerly would we gather the largest stones we could find, and as many as we could! Well, the Almighty Lord, who is the infallible truth, assures us that sorrows will turn into consolations for us, if we bear them patiently for his sake; we must therefore suffer all tribulations and trials, even the most numerous and considerable, very willingly, in order to increase our merits and rewards. Also, to show that felicity will be proportionate to the preceding affliction, Jesus Christ does not simply say: After your sorrow you will rejoice; but he does say: Your sorrow will be changed into joy².”

As we often repeat in the acts of Faith and Hope, we believe that Jesus is trustworthy, and we will never be deceived in His Word. He is the absolute perfection and he never needs to change, and so he can be trusted to always be faithful. All of God’s attributes are in harmony; none of them contradict another; they all work together. None of them disappears or changes. God is always perfect, always holy, and always faithful.

In comparison, we are weak and unfaithful, as our numerous sins and failures demonstrate every day. But with God helps, following St Paul’s words, it is in these failures, that God is great: “power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me³.”

“God can always draw good from our miseries, and when you have been unfaithful and have failed in confidence and abandon to His holy will, if you

¹ Jn., XVI, 20. 3rd Sunday after Easter, Gospel.

² Ludolph of Saxony, Life of Jesus Christ, Vol. 6, chp. 57. Translated with www.DeepL.com

³ 2 Cor., XII, 19.

humble yourself deeply, you will lose nothing but, on the contrary, you will advance in virtue and in the love of God.

If everything happened to you just as you could wish, if you were always in robust health, if all your exercises of devotion were performed to your satisfaction, if you had no doubts or uncertainties for the future, etc., with your character you would quickly become full of self-sufficiency and secret pride; and instead of exciting the bounty of the Father of Mercies and of drawing down His compassion on His poor weak creature, you would be an abomination in God's eyes. 'Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord!' You must therefore set to work. Our Lord loves you, He sees into the depths of your soul, even into recesses hidden from yourself, and He knows what you need; leave Him to act, and don't try to make Our Lord follow your way of seeing things, but follow His in all simplicity.

Uncertainty, anguish, disgust are very bitter remedies necessary to the health of your soul. There is only one road that leads to Jesus, namely that of Calvary; and whosoever will not follow Jesus upon this road must give up the thought of divine union. If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.⁴

Let's remember the conclusive words that we often hear from the priest at the end of our confession:

“May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, **whatever good you do and suffering you endure**, heal your sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life⁵.”

Following the invocation of Jesus, Mary and the saints, the priest, on God's behalf, encourages you to persevere in whatever good you do and suffering you endure. These tribulations of life are building up for you an eternal rewarding crown in Heaven. It is only through this prism, that we can understand all our sorrows in this world. God is faithful, He will turn them into an everlasting joy!

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

⁴ Dom Marmion, Union with God, III, 2, the spirit of detachment.

⁵ Roman Ritual.