

Preston, Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2025

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

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

Yesterday, for the Saturday of the second week in Lent, we read the parable of the prodigal son, who came back to his Father, begging for the forgiveness of his sins. Today, the Gospel presents us with Jesus casting out of a devil from a mute man. Twice in a row, the gospel of the masses reminds us about the necessity of the sacrament of Penance, and the importance of its regularity.

Penance is made of four parts, as we all know. Contrition, when we thoroughly review the past days (or months for the less regular) in the examination of conscience. We see our faults, and we also see how deeply they offended our dear Lord and Redeemer. We see how these sins have separated us from his love, most of the time by cooling down the Charity in our soul, sometimes, unfortunately, in removing and killing this life of charity through mortal sin.

The second part in confession, when we willingly humiliate ourselves before another man who has been ordained a priest and made by God the instrument to judge and give His divine forgiveness. This humiliation is a necessary part to obtain the pardon. We offended the Lord who is absolute perfection. Acknowledging our miseries and faults is the least we can do, because anything we could do would not be enough to repair the offense we made to his supreme and divine majesty.

The priest, after listening and giving some advice to help you preserving the future, and avoid falling again, give the absolution. In a mysterious way, only known by God, the sins you confessed are washed off your soul, and you are restored in the innocence of your baptism. Charity is made anew in your heart; graces are numerously poured upon you. But, if your are now cleansed, another part remains to be accomplished, and unfortunately, our weaken nature often forget about it.

The fourth and last part of confession is reparation. We deeply offended the Lord. Moved by our sorrow and contrition, He forgave us with endless mercy and bounty. We have now a duty to repair the offense, and this duty is constitutive of the sacrament of penance. One part is mandatory and is given to you by the priest. Another part is taken by Christ upon the Cross. But the remaining rests with you, in living a life of penance, sacrifice and mortification, as an expiation for your past sins. It would be this part that we would have to expiate in purgatory, if we do not suffer enough on earth, while we still can.

Lent is a privileged moment to remember all the teaching of the Church about sin, forgiveness and expiation. Through our wilful acts of penance and mortification,

“man rises up against himself to avenge God’s rights which he has trampled under foot. By his sins, he rose up against God, he opposed his will to the all- holy will of God; by his acts of penance he unites himself to God in His hatred of sin and to His justice that demands the expiation of it. The soul then sees sin by faith through the eyes of God. ‘I have sinned’, it says, ‘I have

committed an act of which I cannot measure all the malice, but that is so terrible, and so much violates God's rights, His justice, His holiness and love, that only the death of the Man-God could expiate it'. Then moved with sorrow, the soul says to God: 'O my God, I detest my sin, I long to avenge Thy rights by penance, I would rather die than offend Thee again'. That is the spirit of penance that urges and inclines the soul to make acts of expiation<sup>1</sup>."

But what would be the immediate benefit of this penance. First amongst all, the joy of accomplishing God's demand. Secondly, a joy and honour to be associated with Jesus's sufferings. This joy and peace that the sacrament is wonderfully expressed in today communion antiphon, and especially its Gregorian melody.

"The sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest in which she puts her young - Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God! Happy they who dwell in Your house! continually they praise You<sup>2</sup>."

The text tells us about the joy and the rest of the little birds, at peace in God's creation. The melody makes us fly peacefully with them, to rest in God. As the mother bird made a nest where its little chicks can rest and warm up, the Lord provide a haven of joy and peace for his Children who devoutly make penance and turn towards him, not only it time of need when they are fallen, but at all times, to praise him and sing canticles to Him. Later, if you listen carefully the Gregorian singing, the long note upon the *reponat* shows this confidence, and the desire of the soul for a rest in his divine presence. This divine presence is real in the tabernacle, but we can benefit from it only if the sanctifying grace is living in us. Let's not miss this opportunity to enjoy God's presence and peace in our soul. Let's make ourselves at peace with Him through a careful conversion, contrition and confession, and then, like the little dove, we would quickly fly towards Him where we will remain for the rest of our days.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Dom Marmion, Christ, life of the soul, Chp. IV, The sacrament and the virtue of penance, III.

<sup>2</sup> Ps., 83, 4-5.