

Preston, Sunday 10th August 2025

9th Sunday after Pentecost

“Grant that they may ask for what pleases You so that You may fulfil their desires¹.”

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

We should think more often to what could happen to us after this life. The Holy Scriptures are giving us today a triple reminder, if not a warning, about the necessity of our conversion. One in the lessons of Matins, one in the Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, and one in the Gospel. Conversion? You may rightfully tell me: we’re already catholic, and practicing. Jesus would reply: and what would you more do to lighten my burden? Would you please carry it with me towards My Calvary?

The tears of Jesus that we adore this morning from the story of the Gospel are moving our own hearts to tears also. So many graces poured upon us, and so small and short replies from humanity. We were made worthy of receiving all His benefit, and we never properly answered to such boundless Divine Love.

But, instead of lamenting upon the miseries of her members, the Church, through the chant of the Introit, proclaims her confidence in God, showing us the way of a redemption, through a sacrifice of perpetual Hope and Charity: “Behold, God is my helper, the Lord sustains my life².”

Yes, we betrayed Him, yes, we were unable to do anything for Him,... up to now. Now is a new time, set up for us, when we should truly come back to Him, when our life must become an unending praise of His Bounties and Mercies. You may oppose to me the difficulties of this earthly life, the temptation of the devils, the distractions in prayers, whatever excuse all of us are inventing to hide our frailty, and sometimes our malice. But St Paul, after warning us about the sins of our fathers in the desert of Sinai, reassures us saying:

“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it³.”

We believe and we know that God is faithful in his promises. Why doubting about it, when we feel a heavier burden than the one we’re used to? Arise, and trust Him with a greater Faith, following the example Our Lady gave us. We’ll celebrate Her Assumption later this week, mystery by which the Son chose to honour His Mother, giving her in anticipation all the rewards of the saints, because of Her special union with Him during Her life on earth. She believed and She trusted, in the darkness of the Faith, and She was saved and crowned forever.

“Our Lady's life gives us an example of that. She went through days of real agony when Jesus stayed behind in the Temple without telling her. Jesus

¹ 9th Sunday after Pentecost, collect.

² Ps., 53, 6. 9th Sunday after Pentecost, Introit.

³ 1 Cor., 10, 13.

gone, gone without a word! He had said nothing and had left her. It seemed to her that she no longer understood Him. That, her inner torture, was her worst suffering. Why had her Son abandoned her? Could God the Father have recalled Him and was that the sword of sorrow foretold by Simeon?

When she found Him, His answer appeared harsh: 'How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business⁴?' Yes, she knew it. But she did not think that her Son would busy Himself about God's glory without her. She said nothing, she did not understand, but she felt cruel anguish and went through a mysterious trial. Was she repulsed by God and by her Son?

Such trials are necessary for us. Through faith it is that we advance towards God. We must not hope that we shall continue to feel Jesus near in all our exercises of piety, that we shall sensibly enjoy His presence in communion, and that grace will continue to support us almost visibly. From us also, one day, Jesus goes. And the whole of our life is changed. The divine intimacy ceases. Prayer grows tiresome. Communion seems to produce no result. The tabernacle is empty. Penance is repugnant and discouraging. Formerly, I was drawn to divine things: now, I do not even feel the desire of God. Everything pulls me down. In the past my heart burned as I ran forward eagerly towards God; now I lag, my spirit is cold, not an act of love rises from my unfeeling heart.

Such moments are decisive in the spiritual life. The soul is at an important turning-point. It is essential to keep united in heart with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We must first notice in Mary's case that when Jesus went from her, the Holy Ghost continued to sanctify her, and that those three days of anguish lifted her to an immense height. Sometimes it is the same with us. But we must not forget that what is called spiritual dryness may be a punishment inflicted by God's mercy. We can lose Jesus through our own fault. The just sometimes lose Jesus for their perfecting. Sinners lose Him because they have driven Him away. Others lose Him because, though their love is not dead, it has slackened and grown tepid. You must first humble yourself: has not Jesus left you because of your pride, your self-complacency, your cowardice about penance, your dissipation, your looking for human consolation and sensible friendship, your rejection of grace? It is hard to judge whence the absence of Jesus comes: almost always we are to some extent at fault. God wants our whole heart. But these punishments that God's mercy inflicts on our luke-warmness are a sign of His great love for our souls and a mark of our vocation to holiness.

'Learn from Mary to see Jesus,' says Origen. We must not remain inactive in that state, nor resign ourselves to God's absence. Our Lady desired ardently to find Jesus: she sought Him until she found Him⁵."

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

⁴ Lk., 2, 49

⁵ MV Bernadot, OP, *Our Lady in our life*, Chp. 5.