

Pentecost XII

Beloved, it is throughout the long season of Pentecost that the liturgy brings to our consideration the full implication of the life and witness of the Catholic Church. The Gospel readings throughout this long series of Sundays present, in almost every case, moral teachings of the Lord which express in one way or another, the call to conversion of life, and the generosity we must show to others. These readings are supported by their accompanying epistles, taken almost entirely from St. Paul or St. Peter. If you recall, for example, last week, St. Paul bore witness to the historical truth of the resurrection of Christ, and Paul's formation of what we believe, the earliest scriptural foundation of the Apostles' Creed.

In this we will find the spiritual wealth of what this holy season, now known simply as 'ordinary time,' has to offer: the Church's solemn worship places us before and within the ever-present, all pervasive first Mystery of the Holy Trinity; it then considers Christ-Incarnate, crucified and resurrected, and then Him as revealing: revealing all that is necessary to our salvation. To the vast company of the human race, He gives at witnesses and empowered as leaders and teachers, His apostles, whose lives, teachings, and martyrdom lay the foundation for the Church's work and ministry. Unceasingly she must continue to proclaim the one unchanging Christian truth: conversion from sin, conversion to God, love of neighbor for love of God—until Christ returns to judge the living and the dead.

This witness reaches a pinnacle in today's Mass: What is the inner power of Christ's own work? Why do miracles drive us to the spreading abroad of His name and glory? What drove the Apostles to the end that they would suffer so for the cause of the Lord? Why does the Church, in her authentic wisdom, never cease to carry out her work?

The answer, to the worldly, to the Jews who expected a political savior, is a letdown: 'many prophets and kings have desired to see the things you have seen, and hear the things you have heard.' 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.'

And the poignant, paradoxical conclusion of today's Gospel is the summit of Messianic teaching: who is neighbor to the man who has suffered misfortune? And the lawyer, forced by the evidence, gives answer to the Redeemer's question: The one who is the good neighbor is that man who shows mercy.

In this we see that it is love itself which is the foundation of our Christian faith and deepest truth of God's revelation. We must not let the modern pseudo-Gospel of social action cause us to ever minimize the central importance of love in the practice of our religion. The we bear for God both requires and impels

us to the love of others. Today's Gospel reminds us not only what our charity should be towards our neighbor-whether friend or foe-but more especially of that striking and wondrous charity which God has already shown us in the healing of our sin. And the Church, the abiding sacrament of God's love for all of us, continues that same ministry of love until the end of time. What is more, it is a ministry of glory because she, like her master, not only teaches but by the internal power of grace and sacraments, is able to perform the miracle of our forgiveness while spreading always further the divine life of God among men.

Beloved in Christ, it is for this reason that we listen attentively, not only to Jesus, but to His disciples. Today St. Paul reminds us that the letter kills but the spirit quickens. To be truly Christian, to be a traditional Catholic, means we are called to a genuine love: one that is Christ-centered and Christ-like. Let us imitate our God by a generous self-giving: let us forgive our enemies, and let us give of ourselves more fully, knowing that by doing as Christ did we are fulfilling the most fundamental precept of the new covenant. Our eyes have seen and our ears have heard. Let us pray to Christ and His mother that through a lifetime of devoted service to the Gospel, we might at length come to see and hear the wonders of heaven, where Love reigns in unveiled majesty unto all eternity.