

20th Sunday After Pentecost 22 October 2017

“Unless you see signs and wonders, you do not believe.” Jn. 4:48

Today’s readings remind us that, as long as we are committed to serving as the beloved spouses of the Son of God, we will have spiritual warfare with the forces of evil from hell. The devil knows that he cannot overcome God, therefore, he will vent his anger on souls especially dear to God in order to deny God the love that they would give to Him for all eternity. For this he tempts man in his weakness in order to cause him to lose his faith and fall into sin. This is why, in today’s *Epistle (Eph. 5: 15-21)*, St. Paul enjoins his disciples to take care to keep their hearts pure in these evil days: ***“See to it therefore, brethren, that you walk with care: not as unwise but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”*** Eph. 5:15-6 We see a similar message in today’s *Gospel (Jn. 4:46-51)*, where, according to Dom Prosper Gueranger in his book, *The Liturgical Year Vol. 11*, ***“The world is drawing towards its end; like the ruler’s son, it begins to die. Tormented by fever of the passions which have been excited in Capharnaum, the city of business and pleasure, it is too weak to go itself to the Physician who could cure it. It is for its father—for the pastors, who by Baptism, gave it the life of grace, and who govern the Christian people as rulers of holy Church—to go to Jesus, and beseech Him to restore the sick man to health. St. John begins this account by mentioning the place where they were to find Jesus: it was at Cana, the city of the marriage feast, where He first manifested His power (cf. Jn. 4:11) in the banquet hall; it is in heaven that the Man-God abides, now that He has quitted our earth, where He has left the disciples deprived of the Bridegroom (cf. Mt. 9:15), and having to pass a certain period of time in the field of penance. Capharnaum signifies the field of penance, and of consolation, which penance brings with it. Such was this earth intended to be when man was driven from Eden; such was the consolation, to which, during this life, the sinner was to aspire; and, because of his having pretended to turn this field of penance into a new paradise, the world is now to be destroyed. Man has exchanged the life-giving delights of Eden for the pleasures which kill the soul, and ruin the***

body, and draw down the divine vengeance.”
Gueranger, p. 432-433

Supernatural Light in Dark Days

The ***“days of evil”*** to which St. Paul refers and the pleasures of sin to which St. John alludes at Capharnaum are the days when the devil will use all his cunning to defeat the children of light and destroy their faith. Dom Gueranger comments on the attack which will come to the Church in these times which seem so much like our times today: ***“Supernatural light will, in those days not only have to withstand the attacks of the children of darkness, who will put forward their false doctrines; it will, moreover, be minimized and falsified by the very children of light yielding on the question of principles; it will be endangered by the hesitations, and the human prudence of those who are called far-seeing men. Many will practically ignore the master-truth, that the Church never can be overwhelmed by any created power. If they remember that our Lord has promised to uphold His Church even to the end of the world (cf. Mt. 28:20), they will still believe that they do a great service to the good cause by making certain politically clever concessions, not weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Those future worldly-wise people will forget that our Lord needs no shrewd schemes to help Him to keep His promise; they will entirely overlook this most elementary consideration, that the co-operation which Jesus deigns to accept at the hands of His servants in the defence of the rights of His Church, never could consist in the disguising of those grand truths which constitute the power and beauty of the bride. They will forget the apostle’s maxim, laid down in his Epistle to the Romans, that to conform oneself to this world, to attempt an impossible adaptation of the Gospel to a world that is unchristianized, is not the means for proving what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God (cf. Rom. 12:2). So that it will be a thing of great and rare merit, in many an occurrence of those unhappy times, merely to understand what is the will of God, as our Epistle expresses it.”*** Gueranger, p. 426-7 St. Paul tells us what the will of God is: ***“Therefore, do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery; but be filled with Spirit...”*** Eph. 5: 17-8.

Sick at Capharnaum

Traditional interpretation of the Gospel holds that the people ~~those~~ who are sick at Capharnaum are those who have partaken of sinful pleasures. The bodily sickness is only an indication of the greater sickness in the soul. This is why the father has to go to Jesus for his ailing son. Cornelius a Lapide in his *Commentary on St. John's Gospel* comments: **"Tropologically (morally), the ruler, or the little king, is the mind of every man; the sick son is the will, which is weak in choosing the good; the servants are senses and bodily members; the heat of fever is the desire and love of earthly things; the chill of fever is the fear of them,...Christ heals them; He should therefore be approached and called upon, to restore the complete rule of the mind and to make a king out of this 'little king,'..."** a Lapide, p. 170. Only Jesus Christ can forgive us of our sins, which have caused our sickness. However, the Official in St. John's Gospel needs to have his faith developed, as he does not believe that Jesus can cure him from a distance: **"Sir, come down before my child dies."** Jn. 4:49 He wants to see the sign, his son's cure, but he does not have the faith to believe that Jesus can do it without being present in Capharnaum which is a journey of several hours from Cana. This is why Jesus wants to see his faith improve: **"Unless you see signs and wonders you do not believe."** Jn. 4:48

"Lord, come down before my son dies." Jn. 4:49

With these words, the Official pleads with Jesus for a miracle. Jesus is willing to do it for him even though his faith is not perfect: **"Go thy way, thy son lives." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and departed.**" Jn. 4:50-1 On his return home, the Official meets his servants who tell him that his son got better at the seventh hour which was the exact time that Jesus told him: **that "Thy son lives"** Because of this miracle, he and his family as well as his servants believed in Jesus Christ. **"And he himself believed and his whole household."** Jn. 4: 53 No doubt, Jesus saw that the Official took Jesus' word as truth and so He rewarded him not only with the miracle cure but also with a stronger faith for himself and his whole household. In commenting on this passage, St. Bede, the Venerable tells us: **"From this we may understand that there are degrees of faith, as well as other virtues. There is the beginning, the increase, and the perfection of faith. This man's**

faith had its beginning when he asked for his son's safety; its increase when he believed the word of the Lord saying, 'Thy son liveth,' Jn. 4:50; it was perfected by the announcement of his servants." The son was cured at the symbolic seventh hour: **"...He was healed at the seventh hour: 1. Because, as Origen says, seven is the symbol of the Sabbath, and of rest in which is health. 2. Because the same number is the symbol of the seven-fold Holy Spirit, in whom is all salvation. 3. Because, as Alcuin says, sins are remitted through the seven-fold Spirit. For seven, which is divided into three and four, signifies the Holy Trinity ruling in the four corners of the world."** a Lapide, p. 170-1

"...but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost..."

St. Paul reveals a most important formula for enhancing the amount of faith in a soul in today's Epistle: **"...but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...."** Eph. 5:18-20. When a soul fails to praise and thank God, he will lose his faith: **"And so they are without excuse, seeing that, although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless minds have been darkened."** Rom. 1: 20-21. Today, as Dom Gueranger revealed, there are many who are in great darkness both within and outside the Church. They think that they know better than the Church. They fail to realize that the Church is preserved from error as Dom Gueranger commented: **"Those future worldly-wise people will forget that our Lord needs no shrewd schemes to help Him to keep His promise;Many will practically ignore the master-truth, that the Church never can be overwhelmed by any created power."** Gueranger, p. 426 How many today have lost their faith by listening to the Devil who tries to deceive men into thinking that they know better than the Church. They devise all kinds of innovative ideas which oppose the Catholic teachings of the Church. St Paul reminds us that the punishment for such souls who do not glorify God and thank Him is that they will become vain in their reasonings, and their senseless minds will become darkened. (cf. Rom. 1:21)

Addendum

Cardinal Ratzinger on the Abrogation of the Latin Mass

(Quoted in Luigi Villa, "*Paul VI, Beatified?*")

"...Tragic error was committed by Paul VI with the prohibition of the use of Pius V's Missal and the approval of the 'new' Missal, which would break away from the liturgical tradition of the Church." ("My Life," p. 105-15) "And he pursued: (p. 111-112)

"... I was astonished for the prohibition of the ancient Missal, since such a thing had never occurred in the entire history of the liturgy. The impression was given that there was nothing to it. Pius V had established the previous Missal in 1570, in adherence to the Council of Trent; and thus it was normal that, when four hundred years and a new Council had come to pass, a new Pope would publish a new missal. But that historical truth is quite another. Pius V had limited himself to re-elaborate the Roman Missal in use, as it had always been the case in the living course of history. Like him several of his successors had re-elaborated that missal, without ever placing a missal in conflict with another. It was always a dramatic process of historical growth and purification in which however the continuity was never severed. A missal of Pius V, created by him does not exist. There is only the re-elaboration ordered, as a stage of a long process of historical growth. The new, after the Council of Trent, took on a different nature: the storm of the Protestant Reformation had taken place, above all in the modality of the liturgical 'reform'... so much so that the boundaries between what was still Catholic, and what Catholic was no longer, were hard to delineate. In that confused situation, made possible by the lack of a unitary liturgical normative and by the liturgical pluralism inherited from the Middle Ages, the Pope decided that the 'Roman Missal,' the liturgical text of the city of Rome, being positively Catholic, must be introduced wherever no reference to a liturgy that would not be at least two hundred years old could be made. Wherever such a liturgy was at hand, the previous liturgy could be maintained, given that its Catholic character could be deemed safe." Ratzinger, "*My Life*," p. 111-2 (Villa, p. 244-5.)