

**Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
8 October 2017**

“... that you lack no grace, while awaiting the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
I Cor. 1: 7

Dom Prosper Gueranger in his book on the liturgy, *The Liturgical Life Vol. II*, tells us that today's readings contain a most important truth of the Second Coming of Christ. This truth filled the early Church with both hopeful joy and fearful anxiety: **“The last coming of the Son of Man is no longer far off! The approach of that final event, which is to put the Church in full possession of her divine Spouse, redoubles her hopes; but the last judgment, which is also to pronounce the eternal perdition of so great a number of her children, mingles fear with her desire; and these two sentiments of hers will henceforth be continually brought forward in the holy liturgy. It is evident that expectation has been, so to say, an essential characteristic of her existence... This explains how it is that the apostles, the interpreters of the Church's aspirations, are continually recurring to the subject of the near approach of our Lord's coming. St. Paul has just been telling us, and that twice over in the same breath, that the Christian is who waiteth for the *manifestation* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the day of His coming... ‘The Lord delayeth not His promise, as some imagine; but dealeth patiently, for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence; and the elements shall be melted with heat; and the earth, and the works which are in it, shall be burnt up...”** Gueranger, p. 396-8 This is why St. Paul in today's Epistle (I Cor. 1:4-7) wants us always to be ready: ***“... that you lack no grace, while awaiting the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** I Cor. 1: 7 This is also why the Church includes in today's Gospel (Mt. 9:1-8) Jesus' miraculous cure of the paralytic whose bodily paralysis reveals the more important sickness of his soul: ***“Take courage, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.”*** Mt. 9:2 Only with the forgiveness of sins could the members of the early Church ever hope for eternal salvation at the Second Coming of Jesus.

“...he made an evening sacrifice to the Lord.”

These words of today's Offertory Antiphon show how the preceding Epistle corresponds to the Gospel (Mt. 9:1-8). The Scribes and Pharisees have become evil in their role as the teachers of the Mosaic Law and have not taught the people truthfully. Quoting the Abbot Rupert, Dom Gueranger comments on their false teachings: **“Let him not imitate those men, who unworthily sat on the chair of Moses; but let him follow the example of Moses himself, who in the Offertory and its verses, presents the heads of the Church with such a model of perfection. Pastors of souls ought, on no account to be ignorant of the reason why they are placed higher than other men: it is not so much that they may govern others, as that they may serve them.”** (Rupert, *Div. Off.*, xii. 18) Although they were his successors, the Scribes and Pharisees lack the true spirit of Moses. This is why they reject Jesus and refuse to see how His miraculous cure of the paralytic is a sign that He is God and can forgive sins.

“Thy sins are forgiven thee...” Mt. 9: 2

The Church placed today's Gospel on the forgiveness of sins in the Sunday following the Ember Days of September because this was the time for the ordination of priests who are the ministers of reconciliation. Only the hard-hearted Pharisees could find fault with Jesus in the tender account of this miracle in which He cures a paralytic: ***“And behold, they brought to him a paralytic lying on a pallet. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, ‘Take courage, son; thy sins are forgiven thee.’ And behold, some of the Scribes said within themselves, ‘This man blasphemes.’ And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you harbour evil thoughts in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has the power on earth to forgive sins’*** Mt. 9:2-3 (In St. Luke's Gospel (cf. Lk.5:18-26), the paralytic is let down from the rooftop by his four friends.) In his commentary on this passage, Dom Gueranger says: **“From the very beginning of Christianity, heretics had risen up denying that the Church had the power, which her divine Head gave her, of remitting sin. Such false teachings would irretrievably condemn to spiritual death an immense number of Christians, who, unhappily, had fallen after their Baptism, but who, according to Catholic dogma, might be restored to grace by the sacrament of Penance. With**

what energy, then would our mother Church defend the remedy which gives life to her children! She uttered her anathemas upon, and drove from her communion, those Pharisees of the new law, who, like their Jewish predecessors, refused to acknowledge the infinite mercy and universality of the great mystery of the Redemption....The outward cure of the paralytic was both the image and the proof of the cure of his soul, which previously had been in a state of moral paralysis; but he himself represented another sufferer, viz., the human race, which for ages had been victim to the palsy of sin. Our Lord had already left the earth, when the faith of the apostles achieved this, their first prodigy, of bringing to the Church the world grown old in its infirmity. Finding that the human race was docile to the teaching of the divine messengers, and was already an imitator of their faith, the Church spoke as a mother, and said: 'Be of good heart, son! Thy sins are forgiven thee!' At once, to the astonishment of the philosophers and sceptics, and to the confusion of hell, the world rose up from its long and deep humiliation; and, to prove how thoroughly his strength had been restored to him, he was seen carrying on his shoulders, by the labour of penance and the mastery over his passions, the bed of his old exhaustion and feebleness, on which pride, lust, and covetousness had so long held him. From that time forward, complying with the word of Jesus, which was also said to him by the Church, he has been going on towards his house, which is heaven, where eternal joy awaits him! And the angels, beholding such a spectacle of conversion and holiness (cf. Lk. 5:26), are in amazement, and sing glory to God, who gave such power to men." Gueranger, p. 404-5 How grateful we should be to God for forgiving our sins!

"...that you lack no grace, while awaiting the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ." I Cor. 4:7

Fr. Gabriel of St. Magdalen, OCD in his book of meditations, *Divine Intimacy*, sums up the great blessings which come from Jesus Christ: "Yes, every grace, every gift comes to us from Jesus, and through them our person and our life are sanctified. By means of sanctifying grace, He sanctifies our soul; through the infused virtues, He sanctifies our faculties; and by actual grace, He sanctifies our activity, enabling us to act supernaturally. Yet even this does not satisfy his liberality: He is not content with setting us on the road to God, supernaturalized by grace and

the virtues, but He wishes to substitute His divine way of acting for our human way; therefore, He enriches us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which make us capable of being moved by God Himself. All this is the gift of Jesus to us, the fruit of His Passion....It seems as if Jesus, the true Son of God, is not jealous of His divinity or His prerogatives, but seeks every possible means to make us share by grace what He possesses by nature. How true it is that the characteristic of love is to give oneself and to place those one loves on a plane of equality with oneself!" Fr. Gabriel, p. 944-5 How true are the words of St. Paul in today's Epistle: "*... that you lack no grace, while awaiting the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" I Cor. 1: 7

First Friday, 6 October 2017

Now is a good time to continue (or begin) the devotion to the "Nine First Fridays" of the Month. The Sacred Heart of Jesus promised to St. Margaret Mary: "**I promise thee in the excessive mercy of My Heart that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who communicate on the First Friday in nine consecutive months, the grace of final penitence; they shall not die in My disgrace nor without receiving the Sacraments; My Divine heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.**" There is no better way to honour the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus than doing the "Nine First Fridays" every month.

First Saturday, 7 October 2017

Our Lady told Sr. Lucia in 1925 "...I promise to assist at the hour of death, with all the graces necessary for salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months go to confession and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me." If only we would do what Our Lady asks, we would be assured of eternal salvation. Our Lady promises us all the graces necessary for our salvation if we keep *The Five First Saturdays!* Just think that when you are about to die the Blessed Virgin Mary will be there with you to help you get to heaven! "**Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen**" How many times have you said these words in your lifetime?