

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost 15 July 2018

“...if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the of flesh, you will live.” Rom. 8:12

Today’s Epistle (Romans 8:12-17) again, as in the previous two Sundays, emphasizes the struggle within all of us between the flesh and the spirit. Fr. Gabriel of St. Magdalen, O.C.D. in his book of meditations, *Divine Intimacy*, comments on today’s readings: **“...the life of the old man, a slave to sin and the passions, from which come the fruits of death and that of the new man, the servant, or better, the child of God, producing fruits of life: ‘...if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if, by the spirit, you mortify the deeds of the of flesh, you will live.’ Rom. 8:12** Baptism has begotten us to the life of the spirit, but it has not suppressed the life of the flesh in us; the new man must always struggle against the old man, the spiritual must fight against the corporeal. Baptismal grace does not excuse us from this battle, but it gives us the power to sustain it.” p. 732 Today’s Gospel (Luke 16:1-9) teaches us in the *Parable of the Unjust Steward*, in an indirect way, as Fr. Gabriel tells us, **“how to be wise in administering the great riches of our life of grace.”** p. 733 In the parable, the unjust steward who is to be dismissed from his position uses the master’s goods to advantage by favouring the master’s debtors so that they will favour him after he is dismissed. Jesus does not praise the conduct of the unjust steward, who is actually stealing from his master by giving away his goods, but he does praise his worldly prudence: **“The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you: ‘Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity; that when you shall fail, they may receive you into the everlasting dwellings.’”**

The battle of “the children of light”

This life is a struggle and only those who are willing to do violence to themselves will be victorious. Jesus said, **“...the kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent assault, and the violent have been seizing by force.”** Mt. 11:12 This struggle should not frighten us for St. Paul tells us of the graces given to the “children of light” who are made children of God by baptism: **“Now you have not received a spirit of bondage so as to be again in fear, but you have received a spirit of**

adoption as sons, by virtue of which we cry, Abba! Father!” Rom 8:15 Fr. Gabriel comments: **“Jesus exhorts the ‘children of light’ not to be less shrewd in providing for their eternal interests than the ‘children of darkness’ are in assuring for themselves the goods of the earth.”** p. 733 We too have received many gifts of supernatural grace from our heavenly Father: **“The Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God.”** Rom. 8:14-6 The Holy Spirit within us testifies that we are led by the Spirit of God and that He prays within us to the Father. The Holy Spirit arouses confidence within us of our great destiny: **“But if you are sons, we are heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ, provided, however, we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him.”** Rom. 8: 17 **“This is our great treasure: to be children of God, co-heirs with Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit.”** Fr. Gabriel, p. 733

“Charity covers a multitude of sins.” I Pt. 4:8

“The Parable of the Unjust Steward”

reminds us that we need to be even more clever than the “children of darkness” in using what has been given to us in the order of grace. Just as the unjust steward used the goods of his master to aid his cause, so too we should use the goods that God has given us in the order of grace to win for ourselves our eternal salvation. Fr. Gabriel reminds us of our spiritual treasures: **“We also, like the steward in the parable, have received from God a patrimony to administer, that is, our natural gifts, and more particularly, our supernatural gifts, and all the graces, holy inspirations, and promptings to good which God has bestowed on us. The hour of rendering an account will come for us too, and we shall have to admit that we have often been unfaithful in trafficking with the gifts of God, in making the treasures of grace fructify in our soul. How can we atone for infidelities? This is the moment to put into practice the teaching of the parable by which, as St. Augustine says, ‘God admonishes all of us to use our earthly goods to make friends for ourselves among the poor. They, in turn, becoming the friends of their benefactors, will be the cause of their admission into heaven.’** In other words, we must pay our debts to God by charity toward our neighbour, for Sacred Scripture tells us, **‘Charity covers a multitude of sins.’** I Pt. 4:8 This does not mean material charity alone, but also spiritual charity and not in great things only, but in little ones too—yes,

even in the very least things, such as a glass of water given for the love of God. These little acts of charity, which are always within our power, are the riches by which we pay our debts and put in order ‘our stewardship.’” Fr. Gabriel, p. 733-4

“Make an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer.” Lk. 16:2.

Dom Prosper Gueranger in his book, *The Liturgical Year Vol. II* comments on the meaning of “*The Parable of Unjust Steward*” as an allegory of all of sinners. “The rich man, then, of our Gospel is Jesus, who in His sacred Humanity, united to the Word, is heir of all things (cf. Heb. 1:2 & 3:8), and, as such, all things of the most High God, created and uncreated, finite and infinite, belong to Him...” Gueranger, p.209. We are the unjust stewards who have squandered the goods and talents which our master, Jesus Christ, has given us. He owns all that we have and all the resources of the world. We are only stewards of them. Now that we have misused the goods of this world for our selfish ends with our sins, we need to make up to God for our sins. Like the *Unjust Steward* who went to his master’s creditors, we need to go to all who need our charity and give them of our goods (which really belong to God in the first place) and help them so that they will be our witnesses before God when we come to be judged. This is what is behind the meaning of the scriptural text, “*Charity covers a multitude of sins.*” I Pt. 4:8 Dom Gueranger comments on the need to give alms: “Alms, whether corporal or spiritual, secure us powerful friends for that awful day of our death and judgment.” Gueranger, p. 212 We too need creditors for when we have to render an account of our lives: “*Make an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer.*” Lk. 16:2. These are the words that Jesus will ask us at the end of our lives when we have to give an account of what we have done with His riches that He has given us. What have we done with all the riches, talents and time which God has given us?

“...and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust in that which is greater.” Lk. 16:10

There is another important meaning to this parable which is not included in today’s Gospel. Jesus had begun this series of parables, “*The Lost Sheep,*” “*The Prodigal Son,*” and “*The Unjust Steward,*” after the Pharisees and Scribes had murmured about Him: “*This man welcomes*

sinners and eats with them.” Lk. 15:2 In addition to the meaning of the parables that He had come to call sinners, He wanted the Scribes and Pharisees, like the unjust Steward, to realize that they were unfaithful in their roles as leaders of the people. Dom Gueranger comments on the intention of the Church: “...if we would understand the whole intention of the Church in her choice of the present Gospel—we must listen to St. Jerome....Let us first listen to the words of the Scripture which the saint quotes (they immediately follow those of the Gospel): ‘*He that is faithful in that which is least; is faithful in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust in that which is greater. If, then, ye have not been faithful in the unjust mammon, who will trust you with that which is true.*’” Lk. 16:10-4 These words, says St. Jerome, were said in the presence of the scribes and Pharisees; they felt that the parable was intended for them; and they derided the divine preacher. The one that was ‘unjust in that which is little’ is the jealous Jew, who, in the limited possession of the present life, refuses to his fellow-men the use of those goods which were created for all. If, then, you avaricious scribes are convicted of mal-administration in the management of temporal riches, how can you expect to have confided to you the true, the eternal, riches of the divine word, and the teaching of the Gentiles...” Gueranger, p. 213 We may add here that there are many of the powerful elites, who are cheating and stealing the goods of this world and which they think belong to them, that they too will have to render an account of their stewardship some day to God, the just judge. “*Make an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer.*” Lk. 16:2.

Thank God for all of His Blessings

Fr. Gabriel, quoting St. Augustine, reminds us how we are to live our spiritual life with love and gratitude to God for all His gifts to us: “Oh! How much I owe You, my Lord God, who redeemed me at so great a price! Oh! How much I ought to love, bless, praise, honour, and glorify You who have loved me so much! I shall give praise to Your Name, O God, who made me capable of receiving the great glory of being Your son. I owe to You all I have, all that is of use for my life, all that I know and love. Who possesses anything that is not Yours? Bestow your gifts on me, O Lord our God, so that made rich by You, I may serve and please You, and every day

return thanks to You for all that Your mercy has done for me. I cannot serve You or please You without making use of your gifts to me.” (cf. St. Augustine). Fr. Gabriel, p. 734-5