

12 Third Sunday After Epiphany

“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel” (Mt. 8: 1 - 13)

Our Lord came down after his sermon on the mount, healed a leper at the foot of the hill, and started on his way towards Capharnaum. As he approached the town there came to him messengers, begging that he would come and heal the servant of a Roman Centurion. This Roman officer had command over one hundred soldiers in the military base at Capharnaum, and although a gentile, was a devout proselyte, and had built a synagogue for the Jews. So great was his faith in Our Lord that when he heard the Saviour was coming to cure his servant, he came out and told Jesus not to inconvenience himself by going all the way to the house of the sick man, but only to say the word and the servant would be well.

This Roman centurion could see the power which Jesus Christ had over life and death, over sickness and health, in the same way as upon his own authority over the soldiers under him. This admirable faith of the Roman centurion, so highly praised by Our Lord himself, has been considered throughout the centuries as model for all true believers.

1. A short catechism on the theological virtue of Faith

The meaning of faith:

Faith is a **supernatural, theological virtue** by which, relying on the authority of God, we firmly believe whatever God has revealed and the Church proposes for our belief.

Faith is called a **virtue** because it is a habit inclining us to God; it is **supernatural** because it is not acquired by our own efforts, but is infused into our souls by God in Baptism; it is termed **theological**, because it has God for its immediate object; its motive is the authority of God, because only God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, is the author of the truths of faith.

God reveals his truths, not directly to every one of us, but through his infallible Church. It is **to his apostles** that Jesus said: “all power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations To observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Mt. 28: 16 - 19; Rom. 10: 17)

Scripture tradition – being the containers of **divine truths**, are to be interpreted in matters of faith with an authoritative interpreter, authorized by the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

The Church proposes the teachings God’s revelations to us mainly in the **Apostle’s Creed** composed by the twelve Apostles by the inspiration of Our Lady, and in the **definitions** of the Popes and Councils by divine inspiration, invoking the power of infallibility.

The truths absolutely necessary to be known by all are: (1) that there is a God; (2) that there is a future life of reward or punishment (Heb. 11: 6 ff); (3) the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, and of the incarnation and redemption (Jn. 14:6; 17: 33). Anyone ignorant of these essential truths cannot be absolved in the confessional. Parents should instruct their children in these important doctrines from their earliest years.

Truths that all are bound to know are: (1) the Articles of the Creed; (2) the commandments; (3) the Sacraments at least those a person needs to receive; (4) the Lord’s prayer, Hail Mary and the acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition etc.

The necessity of faith:

Faith is necessary (1) for salvation (Heb. 11: 6), for it is the root and foundation to please God. “Without faith it is Impossible to please God.” (Heb. 11:6) (2) to perform works meritorious to attain life eternal (suffering persecution). (3) to make acts of professing our faith publicly before men to perform our ministry in the Church. A person is bound to profess his faith publicly whenever God’s glory or our neighbour’s good requires it. “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven.” (Mt. 5:16) (4) to fight against **infidelity** (total rejection of Christian religion), to fight against **apostacy** (choosing a false religion), and to fight against **heresy** (denial of an article of faith).

2. “Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof”

The Church has found no words more fitting than those of the centurion for the soul approaching the coming of the saviour in Holy Communion: “Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.”

Yes, the dwelling place of Christ must be free from all sin! St. Augustine says: “the world was unworthy to receive the Son of God immediately from the hands of God

the Father.” The only one truly worthy to receive Jesus Christ was his Immaculate Mother – the Blessed Virgin Mary! “Hence Mary the worthiest person was necessary”, says St. Louis De Montfort, “Mary was necessary for the Holy Ghost to realize his fecundity in producing Jesus Christ in her and through her.” (T D No. 20)

Thanks to the most holy Mary, the Son of God came into the world. And thanks to the passion and death of Jesus Christ, man became worthy of his dwelling place through the Sacrament of Baptism. When a man believes in Jesus Christ and receives the grace merited by his passion and death, he is cleansed from original sin, and becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity. What a marvelous power our Lord enacts in the soul of one who believes!

But alas, how great is the difference between our heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary! When we reflect upon this fact, we must confess with the centurion: “Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.” Because, though we receive sanctifying grace through Baptism, and our soul becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, we are still fallible and are free to make ourselves unworthy again by actual sin.

Passion is so deeply rooted in our nature that, unless it is ruled with a firm hand, it may destroy and disfigure – like leprosy – the beauty of our soul and body.

Any man that wishes to become member of Christ, must first cleanse himself from the vices of passion and impurity. We must be clean in thoughts, words and actions. No attachment to the sin of impurity can be allowed to grow up in the soul, and everything that fosters such attachments must be cut off. For example, immodesty in dress, alcoholic drinks and drugs, bad friends, bad books and bad videos.

The effect of leprosy in the body gives us a tangible impression of the effect of mortal sin in the soul. Therefore, do not remain in the state of mortal sin. Approach the Sacrament of penance and cry for God’s mercy and forgiveness: “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

Yes, if you make your confession with perfect contrition and with a firm resolution not to sin anymore, then Our Lord will tell you: “I will; be thou made clean.” Jesus Christ is powerful not only to forgive sins, but also to eradicate sinful habits!