

28 Low Sunday (First Sunday after Easter)

“Receive ye the Holy Ghost, Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” (Jn. 20: 22, 23)

It was on the very day of Our Lord’s Resurrection from the dead that, appearing to His Apostles, he gave the power of raising souls from spiritual death to life. He granted them one of the greatest gifts to be conferred on men – the Divine prerogative of “forgiving sins.” Before instituting the Sacrament of Penance, he said: “Peace be to you”. He states that the mission of the Apostles is identical with that bestowed on him by his heavenly Father. “As the Father hath sent me (namely to save that which was lost), I also send you! (that is, to apply the fruits of My redemption to the souls of men by reconciling them to God) ” Then, as the sign of the greatness of the power they were receiving, he breathed on them and said: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” (Jn. 20: 23)

By these words of today’s gospel, Our Lord has established in his Church a “tribunal” before which every sinner has to appear in order to obtain forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. The exercise of this power of forgiving sins is continued in the sacrament of Penance by the **true** successors of the Apostles.

The absolution of the priest is necessary for forgiveness of sins! By the unbroken succession of Holy orders, the power conferred by Jesus to his Apostles has been transmitted to the priests of today – who extend to us the divine forgiveness of our sins. Let us appreciate this great gift of God’s mercy by fruitful and worthy reception of the sacrament of Penance, which gives us the blessings of **spiritual resurrection** and **real peace** conferred by the risen Lord: “peace be to you!” “go in peace!”

The risen Saviour also gave the Apostles the faculty, not only to forgive, but also to retain sins, thereby showing that this power was to be exercised with discrimination (discernment), dependent upon the disposition of the sinner. Accordingly, the minister of Christ in the Sacrament of Penance is **not allowed** to give absolution, unless he judges there is real contrition on the part of the penitent; and were he to absolve a sinner who had no sorrow for his sins, the absolution would be null and void. Let us meditate, therefore, to-day on **contrition for sins**, a most necessary condition for pardon.

The meaning of contrition:

1 Contrition is a sorrow and detestation for past sin, with a purpose of sinning no

More. It does not mean, then, merely beginning of a new life, without sorrow for the past; nor does it involve a sensible feeling of sorrow but an act of the will.

2 Contrition include two elements: (i) sorrow for the past; (ii) a firm resolution of amendment for the future.

Hence contrition requires forgiveness of injuries and purpose of reparation and restitution, and of the avoidance of the occasions of sin.

3 Contrition is either perfect or imperfect (attrition), according as our sorrow springs from love of God, or from fear of punishment, hatred of sin, or of other supernatural motive.

If one's dispositions are such that he would continue to sin except for the fear of punishment, his contrition is **not sufficient** for pardon.

The qualities of contrition:

1 Contrition must be **interior**, i. e., it must come from the heart.

2 It must be **supernatural**, i. e., its motive must spring from something suggested by faith, such as love of God, loss of heaven, and the like; it must not be a merely natural sorrow based on fear of temporal loss or punishment.

3 It must be **universal**, extending at least to all mortal sins and at least to one of the venial sins confessed.

4 Contrition must be **sovereign**, i. e., the penitent must realize that sin, as being against God, is the greatest of all evils.

The importance and efficacy of contrition:

1 An act of perfect contrition obtains pardon for sins at once, even before they are confessed, because it proceeds from love of God, which can not co-exist with sin.² Perfect contrition, however, when there is question of mortal sins, must include the intention of confessing them, since Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance as the sole means of forgiving grievous sins.

Our second meditation to-day should be on the words of our risen Lord:

“Blessed are they that have not seen but have believed.”

When St. Thomas the Apostle fell upon his knees with a cry: “My Lord and My God!” Jesus gently rebuked him: “because thou hast seen me Thomas, thou hast believed; **blessed are they that have not seen and have believed!**”

At the elevation of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, we look upon the consecrated species of Host and Wine with the same words of St. Thomas: “My Lord and My God.” If this cry of faith comes from the depth of our soul – with sincerity and love – we shall rejoice hearing the words of Our Lord saying to us: “Blessed are they that have not seen but have believed!”

Yes, St. Thomas believed in the risen Lord more than all others now, and **he proved his strength of FAITH** – by bearing witness to it by preaching the Gospel in India, and by dying there a martyr for his divine Master!

If our repetition of his words: “My Lord and My God” is sincere and earnest, then **we too should prove the strength of our faith** in the **real presence** of the risen Lord living with us in the Most Blessed Sacrament – by our generosity in prayer and adoration, love and service, and mortification and sacrifices – for the conversion of poor sinners and for the salvation and sanctification of souls! It leads us to:

Catholic Action:

Real faith in the risen Lord cannot remain idle – it always **leads to action**. It leads us to practice “**Traditional Catholic Lay Apostolate**” and to the practice of “**Traditional Catholic Priesthood**”.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, is the **perfect example** of the spiritual and apostolic life of these Lay Apostles. She

- (1) led the life common to all here on earth,
- (2) was filled with family concerns and tasks,
- (3) But she was always **intimately united with her Son** and
in an entirely unique way **cooperated in the Saviour’s work of Salvation!**

Having now been assumed into heaven with her motherly love she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage and remain involved in dangers and difficulties until they are led into the happy Fatherland.

All Catholic Christians should therefore,

- (1) fervently venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen of the Apostles,
- (2) commend their life and apostolate to her motherly care, and
- (3) practice devotion of reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and propagate the “**Marian Crusade of Reparation**” as shown by Our Lady of Fatima and prophesized by St. Louis De Montfort.