

Sexagesima Sunday: The Excellence of the Word of God

And when a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities unto Him, He spoke by a similitude. *The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it choked it. And other some fell upon good ground; and, being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundred fold. Saying these things, He cried out: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And His disciples asked Him what this parable might be, to whom He said: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the wayside are they that hear, then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest, believing, they should be saved. Now they upon the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and going their way are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground are they who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.*

The Gospel according to St Luke, VIII:4–15.

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will meditate during the whole of the week on which we are about to enter upon the gospel of tomorrow, which treats of the word of God; and in our next meditation we will consider: first, the excellence of this divine word; second, the ways in which God points it out to us. We will then make the resolution: first, to receive with great respect and lively gratitude the word of God, in what manner soever it may reach us, whether by public instructions, or by good books, or by good thoughts; second, after having listened to the divine word, to preserve it as a treasure in the bottom of our hearts and to conform our conduct to it. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the passage in the gospel which presents the Blessed Virgin to us as a model in this as well as everything else: "*Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart*" (Luke II:19).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Jesus Christ teaching us, by the parable of the seed, that which is most useful for us to know with regard to the word of God. Let us bless Him for this condescension, which, in order to bring within reach of the most humble minds the most sublime truths, lowers the elevation of its thoughts down to the most simple and most common comparisons.

EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD

St Ambrose, after having quoted the passage of the psalm, “*Thy Word is exceedingly refined*” (Ps. CXVIII:140), adds this beautiful commentary: Fire purifies by separating gold from rust; it lights, it heats. In the same way, the word of God purifies souls, enlightens the intelligence, warms the heart. First, it purifies. It renders the proud humble, the vain modest, the unchaste pure, the miser generous. How many sinners owe their conversion to it! How many lukewarm owe to it a better life! (Ps. CXVIII:8) Second, it enlightens. On one side it reveals to the soul the falsity of earthly pleasures, the nothingness of riches, the illusion of glory, and it rectifies the false judgments of our blind passions and of our corrupted senses; on the other side, it makes the pure light of faith shine before our eyes like the pillar in the desert—it guides our steps in the path of life (Ps. CXVIII:105); and a few pages of the catechism teach more to man of those things which it is most important for him to know than all the books of human wisdom (Ps. CXVIII:99). Third, it inflames. It kindles the fire of life in souls which are dead in sin, and makes charity burn where once passion burnt. Carried by an Augustine into England, by a Boniface into Germany, by a Xavier into India, by a St Dominic, a Vincent Ferrer, a Thomas of Villanova, a Borromeo, a St Francis de Sales, into diverse parts of the earth; by zealous pastors into thousands of Catholic parishes—everywhere it kindles the sacred fire in the heart. And here what reproaches have I not to address to myself? Through my fault, the holy word has not purified me; it has not freed my virtue from all alloy; the rust of a thousand little passions is still eating into my soul. What attachments soil me! What ill-regulated affections share my heart! Through my fault, the holy word has not enlightened me. Blinded by a life of habit and of routine, entirely human and natural, I cannot derive my judgment and my manner of looking at all things from my faith. Lastly, through my fault, it has not inflamed me; I am lukewarm, if not cold, in the service of God.

THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH GOD SPEAKS TO US

God, in His infinite goodness, has multiplied the channels through which to make His word reach our hearts: first, by oral instruction, whether given in Christian pulpits, or at the holy tribunal, or in the administration of the sacraments, or in the counsels which His providence gives us by diverse organs. How great goodness is there in this conduct of God towards us, and how much more He favours us than He does so many millions of men who are spread over the globe! He speaks to us, second, by the holy books and all the pious works which we can read. This kind of reading has converted thousands of sinners, and every day it feeds and perfects piety in souls. He speaks to us, third, by good thoughts, pious movements, salutary remorse, warnings, and the light His grace sheds on us; sometimes in prayer, at Holy Communion, in visits to the Blessed Sacrament; sometimes at even the most unexpected moments. Happy the souls who are sufficiently recollected to listen to this voice, and generous enough to obey it. He speaks to us, fourth, by the good examples He places before our eyes. Each good example is a sermon which teaches us, here, meekness, patience, devotion; there, reverence in church, assiduity in assisting at its offices, frequentation of the sacraments. What fruit do we derive from so many means of salvation?

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.