

Septuagesima Sunday: God Calls Upon us to Serve Him

Jesus spoke this parable to His disciples: The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the marketplace idle. And he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just. And they went their way. And, again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more; and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house, saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering said to one of them: Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen?

The Gospel according to St Matthew, xx:1-16.

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will consecrate this week to meditations upon the gospel of Septuagesima Sunday, and tomorrow we will study the first words of it: "*Go you also into my vineyard*" (Matt. xx:4). We shall learn thereby: first, that God obliges us to serve Him; second, how God wills that we should serve Him. We will then make the resolution: first, to employ every moment in doing what our conscience may prompt us to do in order to please God; second, often to examine ourselves and ask whether what we do in regard to such or such a thing, our reading, our repasts, our visits, are indeed done for God and for love of Him. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of the Apostle: "*Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God*" (I Cor. x:31).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore God imposing upon all the precept of serving Him: go to my vineyard. Let us receive this precept with submission and love; let us offer ourselves to God, to be forever His devoted servants; and let us render Him homage as to our master.

GOD OBLIGES US TO SERVE HIM

To serve God is to employ our existence in doing what is pleasing to Him, and this obligation results from our belonging to Him wholly. He alone created us, He formed our members, He united them together so as to form of them a body; He alone it was who animated this body by uniting with it a soul, endowed with the faculties of knowing, of willing, and of loving. He alone, consequently, is our master; we are His property, His creature, His work, and we do not belong to ourselves. Now if the basis of our being belongs to God, all our acts ought equally to belong to Him, for the double reason that the revenues of a capital belong to the proprietor of the capital, and that God, in creating us, could not create us for any other end than that of serving Him, because there is no other end worthy of Him (Prov. xvi:4). Therefore to seek ourselves or to seek the creature in whatever way we may is to commit a theft upon the essential domain of God. Therefore we ought not to live, to act, to speak, to think, except for God not to use our feet except in order to go where He wills, or our hands except to do what He wills; our eyes, except to look at what He wills; our mind, except to think what He wills; our heart, except to love what He wills; our health, our strength, our time, except to employ them in what He wills; for all these things are His, and ought to serve only for what He wills. Therefore, whether I am in one condition or another, in suffering or enjoyment, in riches or in poverty, I have not the right to say anything against it. God is the master (I Sam. iii:18). He can do with what belongs to Him as He pleases, and I ought always to find what He wills to be good. Oh, how does this truth confound me! for, alas! I think more of myself than I do of God, I work more for myself than for God, I love myself more than I love God. I forget that He is my end, that I ought to live only for Him; and as though I were myself my own end, I refer everything to myself, my comfort, my taste, my will. In thus turning myself away from my end, I compromise my salvation, my eternity. It is incumbent on me instantly to change my manner of life.

HOW GOD WILLS THAT WE SHOULD SERVE HIM

God wills that we should give up ourselves to Him *wholly*, to Him *alone*, to Him *always*, to Him *by esteem and love*. First, to Him *wholly*; for since we have everything from Him, our body and our soul, and our faculties with all their acts, and our existence, together with every moment of which it is composed, we ought to give Him all; and in giving Him all we only give Him what belongs to Him already; to give Him the very least thing less than that would not satisfy Him (St Prosper). Second, to Him *alone*; for no one else having contributed to our being, except as the instrument of His will, I ought to serve Him alone, that is to say, with a constant and invariable intention, upright and pure, of pleasing Him alone, without having respect to anyone else or to myself. To give to another the least portion of my heart or of my time would be the crime of the servant who, having in his hands the property of his master and the administration of his revenues, were to retain a portion of it for his own use or for that of his friends; for the acts of my body or my soul are as the products or the revenues of my substance which belongs entirely to God. Third, to Him *always*; for all my moments belong to Him essentially; if He were to cease for a single moment to sustain me, I should fall into the abyss of nothingness; if He were to cease to concert with me as regards action, speech or thought, I could not move, speak or act. Therefore, every day and at every moment of the day and of the

night I ought to be Thine, O my God, always endeavouring to please Thee; and to steal a single moment for myself, or for the creature, would be to injure Thy rights; it would be to usurp what belongs to Thee. Fourth, I ought to give myself to God *by esteem and by love*; that is to say, that even if I were expecting nothing from God, I ought still to be wholly His, because He has created me and He preserves me through love which is wholly gratuitous, not only without interest, but often even against the interests of His glory which I offend. I ought therefore to forget myself in order to seek God alone in everything, and to do nothing except from love to Him. It is the first lesson of the catechism, contained in these words: God has created us in order to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him; such is the firm rock on which ought to be raised the edifice of all religion and of all perfection; and it was with these thoughts present to him that Abraham found courage to quit his country, to sacrifice Isaac, and to lead a perfect life, and that Job found patience and resignation in the midst of the greatest calamities. It is for us to derive the same profit from them. Woe to us if we do not! Yes, my God, I take my stand; I am determined frankly, generously, entirely, to serve Thee; I desire nothing but that in the whole world, and I desire it with my whole heart, free from any interested views and from any human respect. I leave Thee my heart, and I yield it up entirely to Thy love; I devote it to Thy designs; I abandon it to Thy guidance; I will carefully avoid the least faults, and I will do all the good possible with all the perfection of which I am capable; that is to say, promptly and without delay, fully and without any mixture in it of my own will, purely and without any other object than that of pleasing Thee, constantly and without becoming tired or wearied, or ceasing until I have finished what Thou willest of me.

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay an above.