

MONDAY OF THE SEVENTEENTH WEEK OF THE YEAR
PILGRIMAGE FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT LOUIS
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
LA CROSSE
JULY 28, 2014

Jer 13,1-11
Dt 32, 18-19. 20. 21
Mt 13, 31-35

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

Forgetfulness of God, stubborn failure to listen to the voice of God, and the service of false gods alienate man from his own deepest being and, therefore, lead to his corruption and eventual self-destruction. God created man as His intimate co-worker in the world. God created man to be as close to Him as a loincloth is to a man's flesh. When man drifts away from God and rejects God's commandments, he becomes unhappy and lost, he becomes "rotted, good for nothing,"¹ like the Prophet Jeremiah's loincloth removed from his body and hidden in the cleft of the rock by the River Parath. When we forget our origin in the immeasurable and unceasing love of God for us, and our destiny in His loving presence for all eternity, we become foolish, proudly rebelling against God's law, and vainly worshipping the false idols of money, pleasure, power, and pagan religions.²

The truth is that we find our true and lasting happiness by giving our hearts completely into the Heart of God which became flesh in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We only find sound direction and true happiness in our lives by placing our hearts completely within the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus. Only, when we rest our hearts in the Heart of Jesus, can they be purified of the sins of pride and rebellion, and be fortified with His pure and selfless love.

Our Lord uses parables to help us to grow in our knowledge of the great truth of His love for us and to help us to grow in our response of love to His love. The parable is the apt form for teaching mysteries which ultimately lie beyond our ability to comprehend fully, for the parable invites continual reflection, leading to an always deeper knowledge and love of the mystery. A mystery is an expression of God Himself and, therefore, can never be understood completely. Yet, the contemplation of the mystery draws us into a deeper knowledge and a more fervent love of God. The Gospel, quoting Psalm 78 [77], declared the providential role of the parable in Our Lord's

¹ Jer 13, 7.

² Cf. Dt 32, 18. 21.

teaching: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world.”³

In today’s Gospel, Our Lord uses two parables, “The Parable of the Mustard Seed” and “The Parable of the Leaven,” to teach us about the mystery of God’s love for us in the Church. He tells us that God’s love for us in the Church is like “a mustard seed,” which is the “smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants.”⁴ He also tells us that God’s love for us in the Church is like “yeast,” a small quantity of which is able to leaven a large amount of dough.⁵ The images of the mustard seed and of yeast invite us to trust in the power of God’s love for us as He dwells with us in the Church to provide a home for all men and to transform their lives more and more into the likeness of His only-begotten Son Whom He sent in our human flesh to free us from sin, to free us for love of Him and of our neighbor.

Both images also invite us to understand that our trust in Divine Providence, our confidence in the never-failing help of God’s grace, necessarily means also our complete cooperation with divine grace. We are to die to self, as the seed dies in the ground, in order to offer our life for Christ and for the multitude whom He desires to save. We are to lose ourselves, as the yeast loses itself in the dough, in the work of permeating the whole world with the truth and love of Christ our Savior.

If we view the history of the Church throughout the Christian centuries and view the situation of the Church in our own time, we see so many threats to her life, both from without and, even more sadly, from within. If Christ were not dwelling with us in the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we would most reasonably lose hope for the future of the Church and of her mission in the world. But, with Christ, we most reasonably trust that what may appear to be a small seed liable to destruction will, by God’s grace, become the “largest of plants” in which the many birds can come to dwell.⁶ What seems to be a small bit of yeast liable to corruption will, by God’s grace, transform the whole world. It only remains for us to cooperate with the divine grace at work in the Church for the salvation of all, for the salvation of the world.

You have come on pilgrimage to be reminded of the great mystery of God’s love at work in your hearts. In the words of the Vatican document, *The Shrine*, “[a] shrine is first of all a place of *memory*, the memory of God’s powerful activity in history, which is the origin of the People of the

³ Mt 13, 35. Cf. Ps 78 [77], 2.

⁴ Mt 13, 31-32.

⁵ Mt 13, 33.

⁶ Mt 13, 32.

Covenant and the faith of each believer.”⁷ Even as the building of the Temple in the Old Testament was the initiative of God, in order that He might manifest His faithful and enduring love of His children, so Christ is the gift of God the Father, the gift of His only-begotten Son. In the words of the Vatican document on the shrine, “Christ, the one sent by the Father, God made man for us, the eternal high priest (cf. Heb 7), is the new Temple, the awaited and promised Temple, the sanctuary of the new and eternal covenant (cf. Heb 8).”⁸ Our churches and chapels are truly the House of God (*Domus Dei*) because Christ makes sacramentally present His Sacrifice on Calvary on their altars and then remains sacramentally present. The Sacred Host reposed in their tabernacles is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a privileged place in which to contemplate, through the eyes of the Virgin Mary, the Mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, the Mystery of Faith, the Mystery of God’s immeasurable and unceasing love at work for us in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, His only-begotten Son. Here, Our Lady of Guadalupe draws our hearts to her heart, so that she may direct us, with maternal love, to give our hearts completely, one with her Immaculate Heart, into the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, God the Son and her Son. Here, Our Lady of Guadalupe teaches us the obedience to God’s will, the ever attentive listening to His voice and the renunciation of false idols, which is our only way to happiness and peace during the days of our earthly pilgrimage, and finally and perfectly at the destination of our pilgrimage, the Kingdom of Heaven.

Today, we witness a particularly beautiful manifestation of the reality of God’s faithful and enduring love in the First Holy Communion of Henry Cyr, son of Joseph and Kristina Cyr. First Holy Communion is the fullest expression of God’s love of us. In Holy Communion, God the Son made flesh, gives us Himself – His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – , as the Heavenly Food of our earthly pilgrimage and as the pledge of our future glory in the presence of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – together with the company of the angels and all the saints. May Henry’s First Holy Communion be the occasion for all of us to remember the day of our First Holy Communion and to remember how incomparable a gift from God is the Most Holy Eucharist.

⁷ Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *The Shrine: Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God*, 8 May 1999 (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1999), p. 12, no. 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15, no. 5.

Let us now lift up our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus opened for us in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Let us lift up to the Heart of Jesus all of the intentions which we have been asked to remember at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus our hearts will be healed of the forgetfulness of God and of the rebellion against His law. They will be inflamed with Divine Love, so that the tiny seed of the Church may become “the largest of plants” in which all men will find a place of rest and peace, so that the yeast of Christ’s truth and love may permeate and transform the whole world.

Heart of Jesus, sacred temple of God, have mercy on us!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us!

Saints Louis of France, Vincent de Paul and Rose Philippine Duchesne, pray for us!

Saint Juan Diego, pray for us!

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE