

20th Sunday after Pentecost, 2007

“See therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly: not as unwise, but as wise.”
(Ephesians 5. 15–16)

Chapter five of St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians is full of exhortations to virtuous life. And it is addressed to us to-day by the same Holy Spirit. Attend, now, especially to what follows: “Wherefore become not unwise, but understand what is the will of God.” And so we are admonished to look where we are going; to be aware of the danger of pitfalls: always to watch and pray. To know the way to follow — and our Saviour Himself told us: “I am the way, the Truth and the Life.” In other words we must seek to know God in Christ Who is the revelation of the Father. God made us — first, that we might know Him. To be “wise” supposes a knowledge of God and of his law which “is the work of divine Wisdom ... the rules of conduct that lead to the promised beatitude” which is eternal happiness in His glorious presence. This is most important; and we get to know God through Christ in his life and teaching as handed down to His Apostles; and through them to the Church; which ever continues to expand upon our knowledge of God and the way to love and serve Him.



It does not matter how often we tell God that we love Him, or tell Christ that we love Him; we cannot love what we do not know. Remember those words of St Paul: “Redeem the time, because the days are evil.” We must take full advantage of every moment time that God grants us, and treasure our span of life here below so as to avoid the evils that surround us. Remember we inherited the weakness of Adam, our first parent; a weakness which is rooted in the great sin of Lucifer, the brightest of the angels, the Light-bearer. Pride in his own glorious beauty so possessed him that on the news of the Incarnation, God the Son becoming man, Lucifer said, “I will not serve.”

Adam and Eve were warned not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They did eat of it — and what was their sin? We will be as God; the world is our world; our bodies belong to us. And, these days, what do we constantly hear thundered into our ears; and what do we see placarded on the printed media? “Save our planet!” And we are told what actions to take to control the climate.

Then we have those sorry people who call themselves “lovers of the earth”. And for many years now we witness that confrontation with God by a growing number of individuals who proclaim: “My body is my own, and I can do what I like with it; even if it means destroying God given life of the newly conceived.” Do we wonder at the hundreds of young people committing suicide; here in Ireland more than three hundred a year; a number which worldwide is multiplied by the thousand? Then there is the growing demand to have the right to choose for oneself the day and time to die with dignity. How true it is that the days are evil. In the liturgical year of the Church, the time after Pentecost is the longest, sometimes stretching to 27 Sundays; and the vestments are Green, a colour that signifies hope, for it signifies life. And on so many Sundays during this time, the Church asks us to pray for the grace to despise the things of this earth and to seek the things of heaven; that by following the way of God’s promises, we may be made sharers in His heavenly treasures. We must, then, know “the Way”. And we get to know Him through His teaching — and we find His teaching chiefly in the Inspired Word of God. The person of God the Son is present in the Bible from the beginning — we are reminded by St John: “Without Him was made nothing that was made.” And immediately after Adam's fall, God addresses the devil: “I will place enmity between thee and the Woman, between her seed and thy seed... an thou shalt lie in wait for her heel, and she shall crush thy head.” Thus, already we meet the blessed Virgin and Christ as the Son of man. In reading the bible prayerfully we must always be aware of the presence of God in His living Word, and of Jesus Christ Himself.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us: “The desire for God is written in the human heart because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to Himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for ... The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to Truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his Creator.” So from the very moment of conception the new human being is “invited to converse with God”. What then of the newly baptised infant — the soul glorious in a share of unspoiled divine life. What converse must be taking place between that beautiful sinless soul and God!

We must then seek Jesus Christ wherever He is to be found. Yes! To seek Him in places that have been consecrated by His living presence down the centuries. From Sunday to Sunday — how often do spend time alone with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist? Are we drawn to know the person of Jesus at the school of Mary, through the Rosary? Thursday last was the anniversary of the Council of Ephesus, at which the doctrine was solemnly defined that Mary was Mother of God. It was Pope Pius XI who decreed that the feast of the divine Motherhood of Mary be celebrated annually throughout the Church on October 11th. To quote from a homily of Pope St Leo: “A

royal Virgin of the race of David is chosen to bear the Holy Child, the divine and human Son whom she conceived first in her soul rather than in her body¹; singularly prepared to be the tabernacle of the Most High; Jesus Christ our Lord came to our lowly earth, descending from His heavenly throne and yet not leaving His Father's glory, born in a new order, by a new birth. In a new order: He who is invisible in His own nature is made visible in ours; the incomprehensible willed to be comprehended.”

It is at the school of His virgin Mother that we may learn to know the blessed fruit of her womb, in all the mysteries of His life on earth, prayerfully given to us in the Holy Rosary. Our heavenly Mother will help all willing hearts to pray the rosary with great spiritual profit; if they confide in her. Let us with faith, humbly ask her for the great favour so to know her divine Son, Jesus; and so to love Him, that we may finally say with St Theresa of Lisieux: “I am an echo of the Heart of Christ.”

¹ This because she was full of grace — and in her were restored all the perfections lost to Eve by original sin.