
Low Sunday, 2008

“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.”

(1 John 5:4)

The living word of God, in this scripture, is telling us plainly that our faith is born of God. We all know that Faith, here referred to, is not mere belief, but that as Christ proclaimed to Peter: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God... Blessed art thou Simon bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven.” So He says to each one of us upon whom the same grace has been freely bestowed to believe that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And it is that gift of faith which, if we live it, will give us victory over the world that hates Christ and His Church; and we shall rejoice in the victory over sin and death which is a partaking in His glorious resurrection. Notice especially and take to heart the closing words of today’s Epistle: “He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself.” How do we measure up to this powerful saying? Are we awake to the testimony of God within us? Do we see the plan of God in the simplest happenings of our own time?



There is a new authentic edition of *The Life of Little Nellie of Holy God*. The true story of a child, four years old, who spent the last few months of her life with the Good Shepherd Sisters at Sunday’s Well, Cork City. Her great desire to receive “Holy God” was granted by the bishop, and she received Him first at the Christmas midnight Mass; and then a further thirty-one times before her death at the age of four and a half years. When the Holy Father Pope Pius X heard about little Nellie, he exclaimed: “There! That is the sign for which I have been waiting.” Following this He lowered the age at which children could receive Holy Communion. The Vicar of Christ was moved to grant so great a privilege from this simple incident — yes! It was God the Holy Ghost working withal. From that time on every child at six years of age would be able to receive the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. Certainly by the age of seven all Catholic children should have made first Confession and made their first Holy Communion —received “Holy God”. It has been the teaching of all the Popes since that time.

The graces and divine gifts of Baptism need to be nourished by the building up of sanctifying grace in the soul. And the importance of first Confession, and a regular confession thereafter, brings about a building up of spiritual defences against the Evil One. This is very necessary in the times in which we live. The evils which have inundated this country over the past forty or more years are there for all to see. To think of the number of suicides, among young people, during a year. To think of five schoolboys making a suicide pact and taking their own lives over a period of five

weeks in the North of Ireland should shock us into a realisation that the gift of faith needs to be fostered and nourished. Only recently in the West, a brother and sister committed suicide within ten weeks of each other. There are similar reports from many parts of this country. And there are other evils too. Children from the earliest age need to build up the grace of God in their souls by living in union with Jesus; as St Peter says to us, “that thereby you may grow unto salvation; if so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet.” And we read in a homily of St Jerome:

After His resurrection Jesus is seen and adored on a mountain in Galilee. Granted some doubt, but their doubt builds up our faith. Then He shows Himself more clearly to Thomas, displaying the wound of the lance in His side and His nail-gouged hands. “And Jesus drew near and spoke to them saying, ‘All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth.’ All power is given to Him who shortly before was crucified, who lay dead in the tomb, who then rose again. In heaven and on earth all power is given to Him. Previously He had reigned in Heaven; now through faith in the hearts of His redeemed He reigns also upon earth.”

Children have a special place in the Heart of our King and in His Kingdom which is within us.

The special Preface of Easter speaks of *hac potissimum die*, “this most powerful day”, which in days gone by was referred to as “the Great Sunday”. You know that for the Jews from sun-down on Good Friday to sundown on Holy Saturday was the “Great Sabbath Day”; and so for Christians the day of Christ’s resurrection became the “Great Day of the Lord.” That is why today is known as “Low Sunday”; the day on which all the newly baptised went to Mass in their white robes, which they laid aside after that. But the light of the spiritual gifts they received in Baptism lived on, and through the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist made them living members of Christ’s Kingdom on earth.

The Church rejoiced in celebrating the most powerful day of Christ’s resurrection with great ceremony throughout eight full days; being one with the Angels and the souls in heaven and in purgatory; chief among these is of course our Blessed Mother — what a privilege is ours that we can partake in the rejoicing of her Immaculate Heart during this holy season. May all our children be brought to a knowledge and love of the Mother of Jesus, our heavenly Mother; introduce them to the praying of five decades of her Rosary every day; teach them to sing hymns in her honour for the love of her divine Son, then indeed we shall all share in the wonderful gifts of graces she bestows upon us for the love of that same Son.