

Wednesday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 6:1-6.16-18): Jesus said to his disciples: “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

“When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

“Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them”

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Today, Jesus invites us to act always for the glory of God, to please the Father, as this is why we have been created for. This is how the Catechism of the Church confirms it: “God created everything for man, but man in turn was created to serve and love and to offer all creation back to him.” This is the meaning of our life and our honor: to be liked by the Father, to please God. This is the example Christ left with us. If only the Father could give for each one of us the same testimony as He gave for his Son in the moment of his baptism: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17).

Dishonesty of intention would be especially grave and ridiculous if happening in actions such as prayer, fasting or alms, as these are pious and charitable deeds, that is, deeds that —per se— are due to the virtue of religion or deeds we carry out for the love of God.

Therefore, “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father” (Mt 6:1). How could we please God if our first intention is trying to be seen in order to be praised by others? It is not that we have to hide from our fellow men so that they will not see us, but it is rather a question, in the first place, of directly addressing our good deeds to God. It does not matter, nor is it bad others may see us: on the contrary, we may give them example with the coherent testimony of our deeds.

But what it does matter —and a lot!— is that we can see God behind our deeds. We must, therefore, “carefully examine our true intentions in whatever we are doing, and see that we are not seeking our own interest, if we are really trying to serve the Lord” (St. Gregory the Great).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“If the tiniest fire of divine love has been lit in you, then do not rush to make a parade of it. Do not take it out into the icy blast. Keep the furnace door shut on it so that it does not die out.”
(Saint Charles Borromeo).

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“Any expression of penitence only have value in God's eyes if they are signs of sincerely repentant hearts. The true ‘reward’ is not the admiration of others but rather friendship with God.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Christ Jesus always did what was pleasing to the Father, and always lived in perfect communion with him. Likewise Christ's disciples are invited to live in the sight of the Father ‘who sees in secret,’ (Mt 6:6) in order to become ‘perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt 5:48).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 1693)