

Doctrinal Homily Outline for the First Sunday of Advent

December 2, 2012—Lectionary: 3

Central Idea: We will always be ready to meet Christ our Judge if every day we are humbly making the effort to obey his commandments out of love

- First Reading: The prophet Jeremiah looks forward to a restoration of a secure Jewish state under God ruled by a just son of David. We Christians look forward to the complete establishment of the kingdom of God ruled by Christ the King, the just offspring of David.
- Responsorial Psalm: The Psalm reminds us that God our holy savior shows us *the way* to live in holiness and justice. If we humbly try to follow this way we will be happy in the friendship of God.
- Second Reading: St. Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ has instructed us how to love. Love is the way to be holy. Holiness is the way to be prepared for God's judgment.
- Gospel: Christ tells us he will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. He tells us that his disciples need not fear this judgment but can stand erect and look forward to it.
 - Christ commands us to stay alert. To be alert means always to be following Christ's instructions on how to love.
 - We will always be ready to meet Christ our Judge if every day we are humbly making the effort to obey his commandments out of love.
 - Occasional "random acts of kindness" are fine, but we need to live directed acts of love for God and neighbor.

Doctrine: The Theological virtue of Charity

- The Catechism has an especially rich section on the theological virtue of charity (1822-1829).
- Briefly, charity is the grace-inspired habit by which we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourself. This love has no limit. It keeps the moral law. It includes every person. It is very beautiful in itself and profoundly attractive to others. It orients all our actions. It means we live like children of God. It makes us very happy.

Practical Application: Acts of the virtue of religion; acts of love

- How do we love God above all things?
 - By obeying the commandments—Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15) and St. John reminds us, "[B]y this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says 'I know him' but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 Jn 2:3-4).
 - When we obey the moral law and the precepts of the Church, we not only show love for God, we also love our neighbor. For example, if we refrain from telling a lie, we honor God and do not harm our neighbor with this lie.

- By practicing the acts of religion: Thanksgiving, Reparation, Adoration, and Petition.
 - Thanksgiving is telling God *thank you* for all the good you possess.
 - Reparation is telling God you are *sorry* for your own offenses and for all the other evils in the world.
 - Adoration is *praising* God for his goodness and greatness.
 - Petition is *asking* God for what you, your family, and anyone else might need.
 - T.R.A.P. is a good method for spending time in prayer, devoting a few minutes to each act.
 - All the acts of religion are present in the Holy Mass, the perfect way to show love for God.
- How do we love our neighbor as ourself?
 - Charity is any thought, word, or deed directed at the true good of another.
 - The best “thought” we can direct at others is thinking about what they need and then asking God to grant it to them. This thought is all the better if it results also in words and actions toward the other’s true good.
 - Charity begins at home and spreads out from there like ripples on a pond.
 - If you are a child in a family, it begins with kind thoughts, words, and actions toward your brothers and sisters, then your parents, then grandparents and other relatives, then your friends and teachers and coaches, and so on.
 - If you are married, it is first your spouse and children, then your family of birth, your relatives, the people at work and those you serve through your work, your friends and fellow parishioners, people in need in your city, and so on.
- The more we practice real charity the less anxiety we will feel about being judged at the end of our lives. “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love” (1 Jn 4:18).

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