

## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Gospel: John 16: 23-30

The necessity of prayer

### 36.1 First Point

Ask, and you shall receive.<sup>247</sup> By these words in today's Gospel, Jesus Christ wishes to make known to us that since we need to receive his graces, we must ask him for them; also, that since God wants to give us his graces, he has provided us with a sure means to obtain them, namely, prayer.

This is all the easier for us since God is always present to us, and whenever we wish to do so we can turn to him. This led Saint Augustine, in order to make clear to us how easy it is for us to do good, to tell us, "If you are powerless to act, whether because of your weakness, or the violence of temptation, or for any other reason, you must turn to prayer, which will infallibly give you the power to accomplish what is beyond your natural strength."

When you find the practice of virtue difficult, you must strive to make it become easy by applying yourself to prayer. Have recourse to prayer promptly, recalling to mind the words of Jesus Christ, Ask, and you shall receive.

### 36.2 Second Point

What should especially lead you to pray is the weakness to which sin has reduced you, a weakness which makes you incapable of accomplishing any supernatural good. Since we become weaker every day by falling into new sins daily, we also have a much greater need for God's help every day.

Prayer, says Saint Chrysostom, is a divine medicine which drives out of our hearts all the malice it finds there and fills them with all justice. This is why, if we wish to deliver ourselves from sin completely, we cannot do anything better than to devote ourselves to prayer.

In fact, no matter how many sins a person who loves prayer commits, he still has, even in the midst of a very great disordered life, a quick and easy recourse, which is prayer, in order to obtain the grace of repentance and pardon.

Ask God, then, to give you a pure heart that has an aversion and horror not only for the most grievous sins, but also for whatever can stain your conscience and make you displeasing to God.

### 36.3 Third Point

We are so subject to temptation that, as Job says, our life is a constant temptation.<sup>248</sup> This made Saint Peter say that the demon our enemy, like a roaring lion, is always roaming around us seeking endlessly some way to devour us.<sup>249</sup> It is prayer that puts us in a position to resist him.

Jesus Christ even says of the demon of impurity that he cannot be put to flight save by prayer and fasting.<sup>250</sup> He puts prayer before fasting to teach us that although mortification is most necessary to vanquish the unclean spirit, it is even more important for us to arm ourselves with prayer when we are assailed.

When you feel yourself attacked by the tempting spirit, do not stop praying until you have driven him completely away.

247 Jn 16:24  
248 Jb 7:1

249 1 Pt 5:8  
250 Mt 17:21