

FOR THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Gospel: Saint Matthew 6: 24-33

On Abandonment to Providence

67.1 First Point

It is to you especially that Jesus Christ addresses these words of today's Gospel: Seek first the kingdom of God.⁴⁴⁰ In fact, you should not have come to this house except to seek here the reign of God, first for yourself, and second for those whose instruction God has entrusted to you. Here you should seek only to establish within your soul this reign of God both in this life and in the next.

For this present life you should not be concerned about anything except to make God reign in your heart by his grace and by the fullness of his love. It is for him that you should be living; it is the life of God himself that ought to be the life of your soul.

You nourish the life of your soul with God's life by occupying yourself with his holy presence as much as you are able. What characterizes the life of the saints is their continual attention to God; this should also be true of souls consecrated to God, who seek only to do his holy will, to love him, and cause him to be loved by others.

This should be your entire preoccupation on earth; to accomplish this should be the goal of all your work. Hence, help those whom you teach to look upon sin as a shameful sickness which infects their souls and makes them unworthy to draw near to God and appear before him. Inspire them with love for virtue, impress upon them sentiments of piety, and see to it that God does not cease to reign in them, because then they will have nothing to do with sin, or at least they will avoid serious sins which cause death to the soul.

Often recall to mind the purpose of your vocation, and let this arouse you to do your part to establish and maintain the kingdom of God in the hearts of your students. Do you reflect that one of your best ways to procure such an advantage is first to make God reign in your students in such a way that they no longer act or have any inclination except by him?

67.2 Second Point

In order to focus your attention only on how to make God reign in yourself and in the souls of those whom you instruct, it is important not to be taken up with the needs of your body, because these two kinds of things do not go well together at all; preoccupation with external things destroys in a soul the care for those things that refer to God and his service.

This is why Jesus Christ, when he was entrusting the salvation of the world and the establishment of his kingdom on earth to his Apostles, recommends in the same Gospel that they not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what are we to wear? Such concerns are proper only to pagans⁴⁴¹, Insofar as they are so much disturbed by such things, they show that they have no faith.

To give them a convincing proof of this he says, Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns. Consider also the lilies of the field. They do not work, neither do they spin; nevertheless, not even Solomon in all his glory was ever clothed like them.⁴⁴²

Have you, then, so little faith as to fear that, if you accomplish your duty and devote yourselves entirely to bring about God's reign in your hearts and in the hearts of others, God would allow you to lack something necessary for you to live and be clothed?

67.3 Third Point

Jesus Christ assures you that it is God himself who will take charge of providing your food and your support. Your heavenly Father, he says, knows that you need all these things.⁴⁴³ He is the one who feeds the birds of the sky; are you not far more valuable than they? Are you not far dearer to him than birds?⁴⁴⁴

If God, he adds, takes care to clothe the grass of the field, which is under foot today and will be cut down tomorrow, with how much more care will he not clothe you, O man of little faith!⁴⁴⁵

Be convinced, concludes Jesus Christ, that if you truly seek the kingdom of God and his justice, all these things will be given to you besides,⁴⁴⁶ because it is God himself who takes responsibility for the care to provide for you. As Saint Paul says, You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain.⁴⁴⁷

If, then, you devote yourselves to work in the harvest of souls,⁴⁴⁸ how can you fear that the One who employs you in this task as his coworkers⁴⁴⁹ will refuse you the food you need to do his work? The more you abandon yourselves to God for what concerns your temporal needs, the more care he will take to provide for you.

If, on the contrary, you want to provide for yourselves in these matters, God will leave you the concern to do so, and it could often happen that you will be in want; God will want to punish you for your lack of faith and your distrust.

Do, then, what David says: Turn your thought to God, and place all your trust in him, and he himself will feed you.⁴⁵⁰

440 Mt 6:33

441 Mt 6:31-32

442 Mt 6:26, 28-29

443 Mt 6:32

444 Mt 6:26

445 Mt 6:30

446 Mt 6:33

447 1 Cor 9:8

448 Mt 9:37-38

449 1 Cor 3:9

450 Ps 55:23