

Homily: 21st Sunday: Cycle C: 2022: Is 66: 18-21; Ps. 117; Heb 12: 5-7, 11-13; Lk 13: 22-30

“The Discipline of the Lord and Growth in Holiness”

Today we are called by the Lord to grow in union with Him now, so He doesn't say to us someday after we die, like in the Gospel today, *“I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers.”* Jesus says in another place in the Gospel of John, *“If you love me, you will keep my Commandments.”* Christian obedience means having a “listening heart” because we love the One we are listening to: God; and we want to show our love for Him by putting His Commandments and His teachings as made known to us through the Catholic Church into daily practice. Additionally we love the Catholic Church because we love God, who loves the Church since Jesus gave birth to Her on the Cross, as blood and water flowed from His wounded side, and sent His Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday to protect and guide Her into all truth. She is His spiritual Bride, founded by Jesus Himself, who is beautiful only because of Her Bridegroom: Christ. And no amount of sin committed by her individual members can change this reality: the Catholic faith is true and beautiful, and it shows us the path to Heaven through holy obedience to it. God helps us to learn **this holy obedience**, which is **the key** to our eternal salvation. But how?

1. **By disciplining us like a good Father.** We hear in the letter to the Hebrews today, *“My Son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reproved by Him; for whom the Lord loves, He disciplines; He scourges every son He acknowledges.”* That is a somber dose of spiritual reality! **God doesn't give us everything we WANT spiritually; otherwise, we become like little “spoiled spiritual brats”; rather He gives us what we NEED to help us truly grow in HOLINESS!** We can see this dynamic play out in our prayer life. When we pray, do we just pray for what we want or do we defer to God? Consequently when we pray, it's ok to continue to pray for what we think is best for us, for our families, for whoever we are praying for, or for whatever good cause: *the Church, the missions, the souls in Purgatory, pro-life work, for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, conversion of hardened sinners, etc.* - but then ALWAYS add: *“Not my will but Your will be done O' Lord.”* And then don't get

mad when the Lord doesn't answer our prayers exactly the way we WANT! He knows best! Do we trust Him and defer to Him in all things?

2. **By His Divine Providence**, which is His all encompassing care for His Creation and all of us as individual human beings made in His image and called to grow into His likeness. We hear again in the letter to the Hebrews, *“Endure you trials as ‘discipline’; God treats you as sons. For what ‘son’ is there whom his father does not discipline? As Fr. Reginald Garrigou- Lagrange points out in His classic work, **The 3 ages of the Interior Life**, “in His Providence God will, at times, send or permit afflictions to come to individuals, to families, and to nations, so that they may come to know themselves better, to find out by experience their own limitations, to discover and correct their faults, to aspire to a higher good, and to enlist a more perfect help on reaching that end, which is the life of holiness.”* Think of the Covid pandemic, think of all the afflictions of life that come our way, it is to remind us that to persevere in the “Christian Way” we must not rely on our own strength, but on the strength that Christ alone provides esp. through the gift of our Catholic faith and the grace of the Sacraments.
3. **By our free cooperation** with the discipline of the Lord, and through the aid of His grace, we grow in obedience and humility which leads to growth in holiness. To be holy as the One (God) we love is Holy! Once again to quote from the letter to the Hebrews today, *“At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it. So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet that what is lame may not be disjointed but healed.”* The discipline of the Lord is meant to heal us, ultimately. The trials and tribulations that come our way, if embraced in humility, docility, and love, will enable us to cooperate in the Divine process of undoing the damage our sins cause to the moral and spiritual order God set up for our well- being, and to offer for the conversion of all the hardened sinners in the world, per our Lady of Fatima.
Remember we are never tried beyond our strength; although it may seem like we are at times. NEVER FORGET the grace is always there to embrace

any Cross or suffering which comes our way. And if we offer it up in love, in union with Christ, we will grow in holiness and help other souls to the glory of God; it will then be a holy discipline - instead of a destructive stumbling block. But we need to get in the daily spiritual habit of **consciously** offering our trials, tribulations and the discipline of the Lord we experience **in reparation** for our sins and those of the whole world; it doesn't just happen by spiritual osmosis. It takes a conscious daily effort- our Blessed Mother will help us a lot in that regard if we turn to her daily and pray the Rosary. And add to those daily disciplines or chastisements of the Lord, the noble spiritual practices of **prayer, fasting and almsgiving** and we then see **the narrow path** which will lead us to salvation - if only we don't disdain "the discipline of the Lord", but see it for what it truly is: **a spiritual gift from a loving Father who is looking out for our eternal well-being though Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.** God bless you.

Recommended reading: The 3 Ages of the Interior Life by Fr. Reginald Garrigou- Lagrange; 2 Vols; TAN BOOKS. This is the best summary of the Catholic spiritual life in print. Please buy a copy: to read, reflect upon, and slowly go through; it will change your life. If you have any questions in this regard feel free to contact me at ricopadre@hotmail.com.