

Homily For Tuesday of the 27th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM & 7:00 PM Mass - October 15, 2019

Romans 1:16-25 "Claiming wisdom, they became fools, exchanging the glory of God for images."

Psalms 19:1-4 "The heavens proclaim the glory of God."

Luke 11:37-41 ". "

The Way of Perfection

Introduction

Perfection in the spiritual life is a path, not an accomplishment. This is the approach Teresa of Avila would offer to you and I if she was our spiritual director or friend. In fact, the saints are waiting for us to ask them to be our friend. They would do anything for us, for our salvation. St. Teresa of Avila, or St. Teresa of Jesus, is the best of candidates for our friendship and we should not be ashamed or afraid to ask her. Even St. Therese of Lisieux chose her as her patroness. Not only did the Church declare her a saint, but also the first woman Doctor of the Church, along with Catherine of Sienna, and joined later by St. Therese herself.

St. Teresa of Jesus

How wonderful it would be to spend time reflecting on how this wonderful saint learned to trust God to shape her so that she could become, like St. Paul, not ashamed to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel, Jesus Christ.

As a girl and a young woman, Teresa recognized her own vanity. She describes herself like this: "Everyone was very pleased with me, for the Lord gave me the grace to be pleasing wherever I went, and so I was much loved." She saw that people, including her confessors, were drawn to her. While not directly declaring this a defect, she recognized this gift as spiritually dangerous. The seductive and vain desire to be appreciated was a temptation she had to overcome.

And yet we see this same vain young woman entering on to a path of spiritual purification such that later she was to receive an intimate vision from God. He showed her a most beautiful globe of crystal in the shape of a castle, with seven

rooms. The seventh, in the center was occupied by the King of glory, resplendent with the most exquisite brilliancy, which shone through and adorned the remaining rooms. The nearer these rooms were to the centre, the more they received that wondrous light. Teresa came to understand this as the path of perfection, the movement towards that brilliant light. She also saw that everything outside the crystal was a mass of darkness and impurity. There was no in between.

Romans

St. Paul explains how that darkness takes hold. It is an attraction to created things such that they are worshipped instead of - in place of - the one who created them. We can know God through nature he says. In fact, that is essentially the purpose of all of creation. I don't see how anyone could describe it better than in the Psalm response today: "The heavens proclaim the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." So everything that we see and experience has as its purpose to reflect the light of God's glory.

But we must not worship that same created nature or our minds will become senseless and our ability to see truth will be darkened. That was Teresa's vision. Everything outside of the great mansion where the King of Glory lives is "a mass of darkness and impurity."

Persistence in sin has damaging effects on the human faculties. The mind gradually darkens to a point of intellectual blindness, and the heart gradually hardens and grows cold to the love and laws of God.

Luke

Jesus himself identifies this loss of the path of perfection. Poor Pharisees. I always feel sorry for them. They really do want to be holy. Yet they constantly fall under condemnation by Jesus for their foolishness because they think that created behaviours will take the place of conversion of heart to God.

Jesus does not condemn their outward holiness, but only that they don't let it penetrate to the heart: "You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?"

Call to Action

But how will we know when we are just cleaning the outside of the cup, going for the appearance of holiness, but leaving the inside of the cup filthy. St. Teresa understood what Jesus was asking of the Pharisee. She says, "It is unspeakably foolish to care to learn nothing of our nature except that we possess bodies, and only to realize vaguely that we have souls."

Ultimately, one of the great questions for us when we hear Paul talk to the Christians at Rome, and when we hear Jesus address the Pharisee, and when we turn to St. Teresa to ask her help on our path to perfection, is how can I avoid being a senseless fool and have only darkness around us and in us.

Jesus is proclaiming today this same path of perfection, this very present means to avoid foolishness. It is himself, who is the source of light. Nothing else will provide this light.

"O God, who through your Spirit raised up Saint Teresa of Jesus to show the Church the way to seek perfection, grant that we may always be nourished by the food of her heavenly teaching and fired with longing for true holiness."