

Homily for Saturday 11th Week of Ordinary Time
 2 Chronicles 24:17–25
 Psalm 89:4–5, 29–34
 Matthew 6:24–34

There is in Catholic Theology a doctrine known as Final Perseverance. This doctrine is based on the words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 24:13:

But he who endures to the end will be saved.

One dictionary describes final perseverance this way:

By final perseverance is meant an unwavering fixity of the will, and the word is used in theology to signify the fixed will of a just man to retain the robe of grace with which he is clothed, and not cast it from him by committing grievous sin¹

To retain the robe of grace with which he or she is clothed is harder to do than we may at first realize. To begin a new task is the easy part. To stay with a task to the end, is much harder. Nowhere is this more true than when it comes to living a life of daily and lifelong obedience and trust in relation to Jesus Christ.

King Joash is illustrative of this. He has been the character at the centre of our readings yesterday and today.

In yesterday's homily I was talking about King Joash. At the conclusion of my homily I said he was a king lived a Godly life and quoted these words from 2 Kings 12:

And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

However I did not tell the whole story. When it is joined with the verse that immediately follows the one I just quoted from Second Kings, I realized it would have helped Joash to know about the doctrine of final perseverance. 1 Kings 12:3 reads:

3 Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense on the high places.

The high places were altars to foreign idolatrous gods. And even though for more than forty years Joash sought to follow the Lord, because apostasy was still practiced in Judah, when the

¹ Thein, J. (1900). In *Ecclesiastical Dictionary: Containing, in Concise Form, Information upon Ecclesiastical, Biblical, Archæological, and Historical Subjects* (p. 549). New York; Cincinnati; Chicago: Benziger Brothers.

godly priest Jehoiada died, the man who had so closely instructed Joash, the king gave into the influence of ungodly men.

This is where we pick up in today's reading:

Now after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and did obeisance to the king; then the king listened to them. ¹⁸ They abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and served the sacred poles and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. ¹⁹ Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord; they testified against them, but they would not listen.

What is happening here? Those high places became central to the worship in Jerusalem and this man who had been so godly under the guidance of Jehoiada the priest, now caved to the pressure of godless council. Even when prophets were sent Joash would not listen. We are told about one of these prophets,

Then the spirit of God took possession of Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them, "Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has also forsaken you." ²¹ But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the Lord. ²² King Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. As he was dying, he said, "May the Lord see and avenge!"

What a change in Joash's heart. Interestingly the Book of Kings does not want to tell this part of the story but Chronicles, written after the return from Exile, is willing to bring into the light this very sorry episode.

Let me return to the words I quoted at the outset.

By final perseverance is meant an unwavering fixity of the will, and the word is used in theology to signify the fixed will of a just man to retain the robe of grace with which he is clothed, and not cast it from him by committing grievous sin²

Sadly Joash cast off the robe of grace by committing grievous sin. May we learn from this story that to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness is a daily decision that requires an unwavering fixity of will.

² Thein, J. (1900). In *Ecclesiastical Dictionary: Containing, in Concise Form, Information upon Ecclesiastical, Biblical, Archæological, and Historical Subjects* (p. 549). New York; Cincinnati; Chicago: Benziger Brothers.

On this day where we honour our Lady may we take to heart those words we say when we ask her:

Holy Mary Mother of God prayer for us now and at the hour of our death.

In this we are asking for the grace of Final Perseverance so that we can endure to the end and be saved.