

Homily for October 15, 2022

Saturday 28th Week of Ordinary Time
Memorial St Theresa of Jesus

In this passage, Jesus invites us to acknowledge him before others. The prerequisite for publicly acknowledging Jesus is knowing and loving him. When we have encountered Jesus and allowed him to fill our souls with his loving presence, we can't help but acknowledge him before others. His love radiates outward, and this "acknowledgment" takes the form of corporal or spiritual works of mercy, evangelization, apostolic projects in the Church or society. Are others able to see in us the joy and peace that comes from our intimate relationship with Christ? Are the good works we accomplish offered to Jesus for his glory?

"Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven." Angels are pure, intelligent spirits able to completely understand God's will the instant it is presented to them. When Lucifer and the other angels refused to serve God as Man, they understood that they were deciding to live an existence separate from God for all eternity. Their choice was made with full knowledge in their free will. Our human intelligence involves a growth in the understanding of God. When we come to believe Jesus died for our sins, it is the refusal to repent of our sins, receive God's mercy, and live as Christian disciples and children of God that places us at risk of the unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In his encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (Lord and Giver of Life), St. John Paul II explained,

"If Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the next, it is because this 'non-forgiveness' is linked, as to its cause, to 'non-repentance,' in other words to the radical refusal to be converted." It is the human free will declaring, "I will not serve."

We mortal human beings may not possess the supreme intelligence of the angels, but this gives us no excuse to remain ignorant of God. Jesus has made every provision for us in this life and for our eternal salvation. He received the punishment due to our sin, which opened Heaven so we can enter. He established his Church and the sacraments to teach us about him, and to nourish and heal us along the way. He gave us the Holy Spirit through Baptism so we can receive all the gifts and help we need to stay on Heaven's path. In every moment of our lives, we have nothing to fear if we place our trust in Jesus before we speak or act. He tells us, "When they take you before synagogues and before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how or what your defense will be or about what you are to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say."

St Theresa of Avila whose memorial we celebrate today said:

"Accustom yourself continually to make many acts of love, for they enkindle and melt the soul."