

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. [Galatians 5:19–21]

Therefore, if you cannot discern this, at least believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself. Yes, St. Paul further concludes in Romans 7:18, “I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.” If St. Paul may speak this way about his flesh, we cannot assume to be better or more holy than him. But the fact that we do not feel our weakness just makes things worse. It is a sign that there is a leprous flesh in us that can’t feel anything. And yet, the leprosy rages and keeps spreading. As we have said, if you are quite dead to all sensibility, still believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you. In short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason you have to go to the Sacrament to seek help and a remedy.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

It is also useful that we form the habit of daily commending ourselves to God [Psalm 31:5], with soul and body, wife, children, servants, and all that we have, against every need that may arise. So also the blessing and thanksgiving at meals [Mark 8:6] and other prayers, morning and evening, have begun and remained in use [Exodus 29:38–43]. Likewise, children should continue to cross themselves when anything monstrous or terrible is seen or heard. They can shout, “Lord God, protect us!” “Help, dear Lord Jesus!” and such. Also, if anyone meets with unexpected good fortune, however trivial, he says, “God be praised and thanked!” or “God has bestowed this on me!” and so on, just as the children used to learn to fast and pray to St. Nicholas and other saints before. This would be more pleasing and acceptable to God than all monasticism and Carthusian acts of holiness.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

In the second place, you must know also that marriage is not only an honorable but also a necessary state. In general and in all conditions it is solemnly commanded by God that men and women, who were created for marriage, shall be found in this estate. Yet there are some exceptions (although few) whom God has especially set apart. They are not fit for the married estate. Or there are individuals whom He has released by a high, supernatural gift so that they can maintain chastity without this estate [Matthew 19:11–12]. For where nature has its course—since it is given by God—it is not possible to remain chaste without marriage [1 Corinthians 7]. For flesh and blood remain flesh and blood. The natural desire and excitement have their course without delay or hindrance, as everybody sees and feels. In order, therefore, that it may be easier in some degree to avoid in chastity, God has commanded the estate of marriage. In this way everyone may have his proper portion and be satisfied with it. Yet God’s grace is also required in order that the heart may be pure.

THE APOSTLES' CREED – THE FIRST ARTICLE

Now, all that we have, and whatever else is in heaven and upon the earth, is daily given, preserved, and kept for us by God. Therefore, it is clearly suggested and concluded that it is our duty to love, praise, and thank Him for these things without ceasing [1 Thessalonians 5:17–18]. In short, we should serve Him with all these things, as He demands and has taught in the Ten Commandments.

We could say much here, if we were to wander, about how few people believe this article. For we all pass over it, hear it, and say it. Yet we do not see or consider what the words teach us. For if we believed this teaching with the heart, we would also act according to it [James 2:14]. We would not strut about proudly, act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, honor, and such, of ourselves [James 4:13–16]. We would not act as though others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the wretched, perverse world. The world is drowned in blindness and abuses all the good things and God's gifts only for its own pride, greed, lust, and luxury. It never once thinks about God, so as to thank Him or acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator.

This article ought to humble and terrify us all, if we believed it. For we sin daily [Hebrews 3:12–13] with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and possessions, and with everything we have. This is especially true of those who fight against God's Word. Yet Christians have this advantage: they acknowledge that they are duty bound to serve God for all these things and to be obedient to Him.

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE FIFTH PETITION

But this should serve God's purpose of breaking our pride and keeping us humble. God has reserved this right for Himself: if anyone wants to boast of his godliness and despise others, that person is to think about himself and place this prayer before his eyes. He will find that he is no better than others [Romans 12:3] and that in God's presence all must tuck their tails and be glad that they can gain forgiveness. Let no one think that as long as he lives here he can reach

such a position that he will not need such forgiveness [1 John 1:8]. In short, if God does not forgive without stopping, we are lost.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

This is Baptism's true use among Christians, as signified by baptizing with water. Therefore, where this is not done, the old man is left unbridled. He continually becomes stronger. That is not using Baptism, but working against Baptism. For those who are without Christ cannot help but become worse daily, just as the proverb says, which expresses the truth "Worse and worse—the longer a vice lasts, the worse it gets." If a year ago someone was proud and greedy, then he is more proud and greedy this year. So the vice grows and increases with him from his youth up. A young child has no special vice. But when it grows up, it becomes unchaste and impure. When it reaches maturity, real vices begin to triumph. The longer the child lives, the more vices.

Therefore, the old man goes unrestrained in his nature if he is not stopped and suppressed by Baptism's power. On the other hand, where people have become Christians, the old man daily decreases until he finally perishes. That is truly being buried in Baptism and daily coming forth again. Therefore, the outward sign is appointed not only for a powerful effect, but also for an illustration. Therefore, where faith flourishes with its fruit, there it has no empty meaning, but the work «of mortifying the flesh» goes with it [Romans 8:13]. But where faith is lacking, it remains a mere unfruitful sign.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

But if you say, "What, then, shall I do if I cannot feel such distress or experience hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?" Answer, "For those who are of such a mind that they do not realize their condition I know no better counsel than that they put their hand into their shirt to check whether they have flesh and blood. And if you find that you do, then go, for your good, to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Hear what sort of a fruit your flesh is: