

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Second, and most especially, on this day of rest (since we can get no other chance), we have the freedom and time to attend divine service. We come together to hear and use God's Word, and then to praise God, to sing and to pray [Colossians 3:16].

However, this keeping of the Sabbath, I point out, is not restricted to a certain time, as with the Jewish people. It does not have to be just on this or that day. For in itself no one day is better than another [Romans 14:5–6]. Instead, this should be done daily. However, since the masses of people cannot attend every day, there must be at least one day in the week set apart. From ancient times Sunday (the Lord's Day) has been appointed for this purpose. So we also should continue to do the same, in order that everything may be done in an orderly way [1 Corinthians 14:40] and no one may create disorder by starting unnecessary practices.

This is the simple meaning of the commandment: People must have holidays. Therefore, such observances should be devoted to hearing God's Word so that the special function of this day of rest should be the ministry of the Word for the young and the mass of poor people [Nehemiah 8:2–3, 8]. Yet the resting should not be strictly understood to forbid any work that comes up, which cannot be avoided.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

But if you say, "How can I come if I feel that I am not prepared?" Answer, "That is also my cause for hesitation, especially because of the old way under the pope." At that time we tortured ourselves to be so perfectly pure that God could not find the least blemish in us. For this reason we became so timid that we were all instantly thrown into fear and said to ourselves, "Alas! we are unworthy!" Then nature and reason begin to add up our unworthiness in comparison with the great and precious good. Then our good looks like a dark lantern in contrast with the bright sun, or like filth in comparison with precious stones. Because nature and reason see this, they refuse to approach and wait until they are prepared. They wait so long that one week trails into another, and half the year into the other. If you consider

how good and pure you are and labor to have no hesitations, you would never approach.

Therefore, we must make a distinction here between people. Those who are lewd and morally loose must be told to stay away [1 Corinthians 5:9–13]. They are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. But the others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and who desire to be godly, must not absent themselves. This is true even though otherwise they are feeble and full of infirmities. For St. Hilary also has said, "If anyone has not committed sin for which he can rightly be put out of the congregation and be considered no Christian, he ought not stay away from the Sacrament, lest he should deprive himself of life." No one will live so well that he will not have many daily weaknesses in flesh and blood.

Such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our Sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. We are not baptized because we are worthy and holy. Nor do we go to Confession because we are pure and without sin. On the contrary, we go because we are poor, miserable people. We go exactly because we are unworthy. This is true unless we are talking about someone who desires no grace and Absolution nor intends to change.

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