

14. March 2023

LENTEN ITINERARY

Day 21: "The grace of the sacraments"

1. The Holy Eucharist

In our spiritual journey, the holy sacraments of the Church deserve special attention, in particular the Holy Eucharist. It should be the high point of the Church's life and belong naturally to our beloved Catholic identity.

In the meditation the day before yesterday, I mentioned the term "Holy Mass worthily celebrated". Unfortunately, there are Holy Masses in the "Novus Ordo" that are marked by a subjective character, with interventions that are not part of the liturgy, with chants that do not correspond to the holiness of the event, etc...

In reality, one should avoid attending such Masses, because, due to the trivialisation, the lack of reverence and the extraneous elements, the soul is neither strengthened nor attracted to the mystery of faith, but rather remains on the periphery. It is therefore advisable - whenever possible - to participate in those Holy Masses which preserve sacredness. Even if it is a longer and more arduous journey to reach a church where it is celebrated in this way, it is worth it, because the greatest treasure we have received should be venerated with holy devotion and truly nourish our souls.

This is especially true of the Holy Masses of the traditional rite (Tridentine), which transmit the Catholic faith without liturgical experiments. Therefore, they can be recommended indiscriminately, because in them a holy reverence is present, the soul is strengthened in faith and can be inserted into the age-old tradition of how the Mass was celebrated over the centuries, being nourishment for many saints and generations of the faithful.

2. The sacrament of penance

Another sacrament of inestimable value is holy confession, the effect of which is of enormous depth. When the priest forgives our sins in the name of Jesus, our soul is healed and gains new strength. It experiences an encounter with God's mercy, and thus discovers more and more of God's Being. Far from being a mechanical process or

a mere psychological venting, holy confession is a life-giving encounter with our gracious Father in heaven. He not only raises the soul anew, but, having forgiven its guilt, He adorns it with the garment of grace and delights in it.

Thus the soul can go on its way with the serenity of knowing that it is forgiven, grateful for the unceasing love of the Heavenly Father, grateful for the loving sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, grateful to the Holy Spirit for revealing it to it and making it understand it more and more in His light.

Unfortunately, one must be warned today that one must approach the sacrament of confession with due seriousness. This includes contrition, i.e. repentance for the sin committed, as well as a firm resolve to change. It should also be added that sin should continue to be called by its name. The tendencies for the priest to give absolution without the penitent's repentance and purpose of amendment do not correspond to Catholic praxis.

Regularity in the reception of these sacraments also confers stability on our spiritual journey and constantly nourishes us. They are great spiritual aids and instruments which God gives us for the path of holiness. We should never neglect them, and we should go more frequently to the confessional. If, in addition to receiving forgiveness of sins, the confessor gives us good advice for our life with God, we will come out of it blessed and become capable of blessing others as well.

3. The sacrament of marriage

More and more people - unfortunately also Catholics - are no longer aware of the value of holy matrimony. They think that they can simply postpone the ecclesiastical wedding until they find a date on which all the external circumstances fit, but already before that they live together as spouses, with the corresponding intimate acts. This is wrong, and worse still would be to think that it is not necessary to marry at all.

The Church has a very high and positive view of marriage, because man and woman, in their union, are to reflect Christ's relationship with His Church (Eph 5:22-33). Therefore, exclusivity and indissolubility, openness to life and the search for the good of the other are basic components of marriage. Marriage lives by love and fidelity, and can be renewed and deepened ever more by the grace of God. Just as the Church must

love and be faithful to her Lord, so too must the spouses. This is why in the Old Testament the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel to God was often compared to adultery (cf. e.g. Hos 2:7).

Marriage and family are dear to God and are normal and desirable for most people. For some, however, the Lord calls them to a life of total dedication to the service of God and mankind, for which they must be completely free. Such a vocation is a great sign of God's love, and blessed are those who respond to this call.

A "marriage" between homosexual persons, as it is being sought to be established and legalised today in the civil sphere, is something that the Church cannot endorse, let alone bless. She is called to help people with such inclinations, so that they can lead a life in accordance with the Will of God.

Because of the indissolubility of marriage and the sacramental bond that arises between spouses "until death do us part", remarriage is only possible if the husband or wife dies, or if the nullity of the first marriage is established. With wise pastoral accompaniment, those whose life situation does not correspond to the objective norm should be cared for, showing them the ways to put it in order before God and the Church, so that they can receive the sacraments again.

From today's meditation, let us conclude that the holy sacraments are part of what St. Nicholas of Flüe pleads for in the second part of his prayer, when he says: *"My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you"*.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2022/03/22/>

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <http://en.elijamission.net/2021/03/09/>