

The Faith of Our Fathers

Here on earth there will always be inequality. But today's Gospel teaches us that in the kingdom of heaven, all are treated equally. And so Jesus says, "I will give as much to one as to the other." The reason? No one has ever succeeded in earning the kingdom of heaven, and because of that you are under obligation to no one. We are all the same in our sin and death. And so we receive the same grace. Always the kingdom comes by grace to whoever God desires to give it. (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

Christ who wishes to show by this parable how it actually is in the kingdom of heaven, or in Christendom upon the earth; that God here directs and works wonderfully by making the first last and the last first. And all is spoken to humble those who are great that they should trust in nothing but the goodness and mercy of God. And on the other hand that those who are nothing should not despair, but trust in the goodness of God just as the others do. (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

When God declares that "the first will be last," He takes away all your presumptions and forbids you to exalt yourself, even above a whore, even if you were Abraham, David, Peter or Paul. But when He says, "the last will be first," He bids you cast off despair and not to regard yourself unfavorably even in comparison with the saints, even though you were Pilate, Herod, Sodom and Gomorrah. For just as we have no reason at all for presumption, so also we have no reason for despair. In this way, then, all merits are set aside and God's goodness alone is praised. (Blessed Martin Luther) ❧❧❧

For *Septuagesima*. These excerpts are intended as meditative pieces for the Day's pericopes. They have been edited and abridged for style, sense and space.

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It is always foolish to question to goodness of God. There might be some reason for loud complaint if He did not give what He owed, but not when He gives what He does not owe. When we question or grumble about the Lord's goodness, He replies, "Is your eye evil because I am good?" We are quick to answer by pointing to our good works, prayers and faith. So Our Lord again answers us: "The last will be the first, and the first last." In this way, He humiliates us so that we look not at ourselves, but at His goodness and kindness. For only through Him are we, whose boasting puts us last, made first and greatest and worthy of His kingdom. (St. Gregory the Great) ❧❧❧

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