

# Quasimodo Geniti

## THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

This commandment, therefore, in its literal sense, does not apply to us Christians. It is entirely an outward matter, like other ordinances of the Old Testament. The ordinances were attached to particular customs, persons, times, and places, but now they have been made matters of freedom through Christ [Colossians 2:16–17].

The simpleminded need to grasp a Christian meaning about what God requires in this commandment. Note that we don't keep holy days for the sake of intelligent and learned Christians. (They have no need of holy days.) We keep them first of all for bodily causes and necessities, which nature teaches and requires. We keep them for the common people, manservants and maidservants, who have been attending to their work and trade the whole week. In this way they may withdraw in order to rest for a day and be refreshed.

## THE APOSTLES' CREED – THE THIRD ARTICLE

We further believe that in this Christian Church we have forgiveness of sin, which is wrought through the holy Sacraments and Absolution [Matthew 26:28; Mark 1:4; John 20:23] and through all kinds of comforting promises from the entire Gospel. Therefore, whatever ought to be preached about the Sacraments belongs here. In short, the whole Gospel and all the offices of Christianity belong here, which also must be preached and taught without ceasing. God's grace is secured through Christ [John 1:17], and sanctification is wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in the unity of the Christian Church. Yet because of our flesh, which we bear about with us, we are never without sin [Romans 7:23–24].

Everything, therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered toward this goal: we shall daily receive in the Church nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. So even though we have sins, the «grace of the» Holy Spirit does not allow them to harm us. For we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but «continuous, uninterrupted» forgiveness of sin. This is because God forgives us and because we forgive, bear with, and help one another [Gal. 6:1–2].

But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not found, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no holiness. Therefore, all who seek and wish to earn holiness not through the Gospel and forgiveness of sin, but by their works, have expelled and severed themselves from this Church [Galatians 5:4].

### THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

In the third place, since we have learned Baptism's great benefit and power, let us see further who is the person that receives what Baptism gives and profits. This is again most beautifully and clearly expressed in the words "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" [Mark 16:16]. That is, faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably the saving, divine water. Since these blessings are presented here and promised through the words in and with the water, they cannot be received in any other way than by believing them with the heart [Romans 10:9]. Without faith it profits nothing, even though Baptism is in itself a divine overwhelming treasure. Therefore, this single phrase, "Whoever believes," does so much. It excludes and repels all the works that we can do, when we suppose that we gain and merit salvation by our works. For it is determined that whatever is not faith does nothing or receives nothing [Hebrews 11:6].

### THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

Therefore also, it is useless talk when they say that Christ's body and blood are not given and shed for us in the Lord's Supper, so we could not have forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament. Although the work is done and the forgiveness of sins is secured by the cross [John 19:30], it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. How would we know about it otherwise, that such a thing was accomplished or was to be given to us, unless it were presented by preaching or the oral Word [Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:21]? How do they know about it? Or how can they receive and make the forgiveness their own, unless they lay hold of and believe the Scriptures and the Gospel? But now the entire Gospel and the article of the Creed—I believe in ... the holy Christian Church, ... the forgiveness of sins, and so on—are embodied by the Word in this Sacrament

and presented to us. Why, then, should we let this treasure be torn from the Sacrament when the fanatics must confess that these are the very words we hear everywhere in the Gospel? They cannot say that these words in the Sacrament are of no use, just as they dare not say that the entire Gospel or God's Word, apart from the Sacrament, is of no use.

### A BRIEF ADMONITION TO CONFESSION

So notice then, that Confession, as I have often said, consists of two parts. The first is my own work and action, when I lament my sins and desire comfort and refreshment for my soul. The other part is a work that God does when He declares me free of my sin through His Word placed in the mouth of a man. It is this splendid, noble, thing that makes Confession so lovely, so comforting. It used to be that we emphasized it only as our work; all that we were then concerned about was whether our act of confession was pure and perfect in every detail. We paid no attention to the second and most necessary part of Confession, nor did we proclaim it. We acted just as if Confession were nothing but a good work by which payment was to be made to God, so that if the confession was inadequate and not exactly correct in every detail, then the Absolution would not be valid and the sin unforgiven. By this the people were driven to the point where everyone had to despair of making so pure a Confession (an obvious impossibility) and where no one could feel at ease in his conscience or have confidence in his Absolution. So they not only rendered the precious Confession useless to us but also made it a bitter burden (Matthew 23:4) causing noticeable spiritual harm and ruin.