

The Nineteen Sunday after Trinity

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE FIFTH PETITION

Besides, we have the devil at our back. He attacks us from every side and fights—as we have heard—against all the previous petitions. So it is not possible to stand firm at all times in such a constant conflict.

There is here again great need for us to call upon God and to pray, “Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses.” It is not as though He did not forgive sin without and even before our prayer. (He has given us the Gospel, in which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought about it [Romans 5:8].) But the purpose of this prayer is that we may recognize and receive such forgiveness. 89 The flesh in which we daily live is of such a nature that it neither trusts nor believes God [Romans 7:14–18]. It is ever active in evil lusts and devices, so that we sin daily in word and deed [Genesis 6:5], by what we do and fail to do [James 2:15–16]. By this the conscience is thrown into unrest, so that it is afraid of God's wrath and displeasure. So it loses the comfort and confidence derived from the Gospel. Therefore, it is always necessary that we run here and receive consolation to comfort the conscience again.

INFANT BAPTISM

I say, if you did not believe then, believe now and say this: The Baptism certainly was right. But I, unfortunately, did not receive it aright. I myself also, and all who are baptized, must say this before God, “I come here in my faith and in that of others. Yet I cannot rest in this, that I believe, and that many people pray for me. But in this I rest, that Baptism is Your Word and command. It is just like when I go to the Sacrament trusting not in my faith, but in Christ's Word. Whether I am strong or weak, I commit that to God. But I know this, that He asks me to go, to eat and to drink, and so on, and He gives me His body and blood [Matthew 26:26–28]. That will not deceive me or prove false to me.”

So we do likewise in infant Baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith [Luke 17:2; Ephesians 2:8]. But we do not baptize it for that

reason, but solely because of God's command. Why? Because we know that God does not lie [Titus 1:2]. I and my neighbor and, in short, all people, may err and deceive. But God's Word cannot err...

Therefore, let it be decided that Baptism always remains true and retains its full essence. This is true even though a single person should be baptized, and he, in addition, should not truly believe. For God's ordinance and Word cannot be made inconsistent or be changed by people. But these people, the fanatics, are so blind that they do not see God's Word and command. They think about Baptism and those who administer it just like they think about water in the brook or in pots, or like any common person. Because they do not see faith or obedience in infants, they conclude that infant Baptisms are to be considered invalid. Here lurks a concealed rebellious devil, who would like to tear the crown from authority's head and then trample it underfoot [Matthew 7:6]. And in addition, he would like to pervert and reduce to nothing all God's works and ordinances. Therefore, we must be watchful and well armed [2 Corinthians 10:4]. We must not allow ourselves to be directed or turned away from the Word, in order that we may not think of Baptism as a mere empty sign, like the fanatic's dream [Jeremiah 23:25].

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

Here He offers to us the entire treasure that He has brought for us from heaven. With the greatest kindness He invites us to receive it also in other places, like when He says in St. Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is surely a sin and a shame that He so cordially and faithfully summons and encourages us to receive our highest and greatest good, yet we act so distantly toward it. We permit so long a time to pass «without partaking of the Sacrament» that we grow quite cold and hardened, so that we have no longing or love for it. We must never think of the Sacrament as something harmful from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy that grants salvation and comfort. It will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved.

Why, then, do we act as if the Sacrament were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?

A BRIEF EXHORTATION TO CONFESSION

To sum it up, we want to have nothing to do with coercion. However, if someone does not listen to or follow our preaching and its warning, we will have nothing to do with him [1 Corinthians 5:11], nor may he have any share in the Gospel. If you were a Christian, then you ought to be happy to run more than a hundred miles to Confession and not let yourself be urged to come. You should rather come and compel us to give you the opportunity. For in this matter the compulsion must be the other way around: we must act under orders, you must come into freedom. We pressure no one, but we let ourselves be pressured, just as we let people compel us to preach to administer the Sacrament.