

From the Fathers

From a Homily by Saint Augustine (354-430)

A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit

Let us never assume that if we live good lives we will be without sin; our lives should be praised only when we continue to beg for pardon. But men are hopeless creatures, and the less they concentrate on their own sins, the more interested they become in the sins of others. They seek to criticise, not to correct. Unable to excuse themselves, they are ready to accuse others. This was not the way that David showed us how to pray and make amends to God, when he said: I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. He did not concentrate on others' sins; he turned his thoughts on himself. He did not merely stroke the surface, but he plunged inside and went deep down within himself. He did not spare himself, and therefore was not impudent in asking to be spared. We should be displeased with ourselves when we commit sin, for sin is displeasing to God. Sinful though we are, let us at least be like God in this, that we are displeased at what displeases him. In some measure then you will be in harmony with God's will, because you find displeasing in yourself what is abhorrent to your Creator.

Elements of the Mass: Entrance of the Priest

Our participation in the Body of Christ, his Church, is most fully manifest when we gather in Eucharistic Assembly. Whenever the Sacrifice of Christ in all its redeeming power is re-presented by the Priest, then the fulness of the Church is revealed. We really are the Church of Christ when we do faithfully and joyfully what God created the Church to do, set forth the Eucharistic Mystery to the world. That is why, at the beginning of Mass, when the Priest enters, the first thing he does is to kiss the altar, and then to cense it. When he kisses the altar he is recalling himself, and reminding others, that his first love is the privilege given to him of offering this sacrifice 'for the praise and glory of God's name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.' Such a simple thing as kissing the altar at the place where the sacrifice will be offered puts all of us in mind of the purpose of the priest's ministry, to make Christ present there for the sake of Christ's people. And immediately the altar is blessed with incense. The altar is both altar and throne: *altar* because it is a place where the once-for-all offering of right-worship by the Son to the Father is re-presented; and *throne* in that it is a place where the King of Kings will come to dwell in sacramental fullness in the gifts of his Body and Blood, for the feeding of his people. In both these things – kiss and censing – the priest honours the altar on behalf of all, and makes it ready.

9th July 2023

Fifth Sunday after Trinity

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



In today's Gospel the Lord speaks – as he often does – in a paradox. He says, 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest'. Nothing paradoxical in this statement so far. But then he goes on to say, 'Take my yoke upon you...' The Saviour is saying to those who are weighed down by burdens (i.e. you and me) that in order to find rest we must take upon us a yoke. But what is a yoke if it is not a burden? Is the Lord adding to our burden? The key which unlocks this paradox is in the choice of the word 'yoke'. What is a yoke but something that binds together two beasts of burden in order to lighten the burden on each. An ox yoked to another ox shares the weight of the plough; one beast of burden has its burden lightened by another standing beside it, walking with it. What burdens your soul? What weighs you down – be honest with yourself about this. Almost invariably, what weighs us down and causes us to stumble is our belief in ourselves, our own sense of self-sufficiency (and all of the sorrow that flows from reliance on the ego). The Lord is saying to you in today's Gospel that you must surrender the weight of your self-reliance. It is your ego that weighs you down and holds you back. Surrender yourself anew to Christ – the one who lives wholly for another and not himself – for it is he who has already taken upon himself the greatest burden, the weight of the sin of the world – the weight of your personal sin – when he bore it stumblingly to Golgotha. Bearing our own crosses in this world is only possible because he who bore the cross for us, carries the weight of our burden too. He walks beside us, holding us up by the power of his divine love, leading us home.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 11: 25-30