

FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Gospel: Saint Matthew 24: 15-35

Sin and disregard for the Rule in a community
is the abomination of desolation in the holy place

77.1 First Point

In today's Gospel Jesus Christ says that when the abomination of desolation will be in the holy place, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.⁵⁰⁵ No one can question that a community is a holy place, and we can without doubt say of a community where God is faithfully served what Jacob says in Genesis, that the Lord is truly in this place and this place is the house of God and the gate of heaven.⁵⁰⁶

In fact, if we consider its institution and its purpose, we can say of it what is said of the temple built by Solomon, that God has chosen this dwelling and he himself has sanctified it, so that his name may be blessed there forever.⁵⁰⁷ This is true since his name is so often invoked there, and since those who dwell there are together there, or should be, only to save themselves through the sanctification of their souls. It is in this way that this place is the gate of heaven, because it enables us to take the path leading to heaven and prepares us to enter it.

This is the first purpose you should have had when you entered this community and what ought to keep you here. It is for this end that we live withdrawn from the world and why we commit ourselves to all kinds of exercises of piety. How little sense you would have had if you had come here with any other purpose, since, as the Royal Prophet says, it is very proper and even just that holiness be found in the Lord's house.⁵⁰⁸ For he is infinitely holy, and it is altogether right that those who live there should be holy by sharing his own holiness.

Have you come to this house as to the house of the Lord? Did you come here in order to sanctify yourself? Is the main effort you make in this house to take the means to become holy? Often reflect on what Saint Eucherius, Bishop of Lyons, says, that living in a holy house is the source either of a sovereign perfection or an absolute damnation.

77.2 Second Point

We might certainly say to several who live in community what, on entering the temple, Jesus Christ says in the Gospel to those who were buying and selling, that his house is a house of prayer, and that they are making it a den of thieves,⁵⁰⁹ for though people ought to enter a religious community only to apply themselves to prayer and other exercises of piety, they neglect all these holy actions and fill their minds with external and secular things, take on the spirit of the world, then fall into disregard for the Rule; unless they change their ways, they often end up committing serious sins. Of such persons it can truly be said that they are bringing the abomination of desolation into the holy place.⁵¹⁰

Indeed, is it not an abomination to find that disregard for the Rule and sin is in a house in which the Spirit of God should be the only guide, and where persons, who ought to breathe only God and think only of pleasing him because they have consecrated themselves to his service, neglect him or abandon him entirely out of boredom, in order to satisfy their inclinations or even their passions. What desolation does this not bring about in a community, since there is no union or peace where God is not found.

Those who behave this way are really thieves,⁵¹¹ to use Our Lord's expression in the Gospel, because they steal the bread they eat and occupy the place of others who would live according to the spirit and rules of this community. Take care not to fall into such an evil.

77.3 Third Point

Notwithstanding the disregard for the Rule in communities, God always keeps in them faithful servants who preserve their spirit. He always reserves there to himself for that purpose some who, as he told Elias, do not bend their knee before Baal,⁵¹² that is they are on their guard against the spirit of the world, and they observe their rules and the practices of their community as well as they can.

These are the ones who still maintain the fear of the Lord, and they are the reason why God does not destroy this community as he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, which would have been spared the terrible effects of his anger if he had found in them ten just persons,⁵¹³ as he told Abraham.

These are the persons in today's Gospel that Jesus Christ tells to flee to the mountains,⁵¹⁴ that is, to avoid the company of the others in order not to share in their disregard for the Rule, and not to be led astray by the contagion of their bad example. They must rise up to God by prayer.

Pray God to preserve his Holy Spirit always in your community, and often say to him with David: Do not reject us, my God, from your presence, and to not take your Holy Spirit from us.⁵¹⁵

505 Mt 24:15-16
506 Gn 28:17
507 2 Chr 7:16
508 Ps 93:5
509 Lk 19:46

510 Mt 24:15
511 Lk 19:46
512 1 Kgs 19:18
513 Gn 18:32
514 Mt 24:16

515 Ps 51:13