

Chapter 58: Solomon's Prayer—His Wisdom

Commentary

Love of God and our neighbour. Solomon, by his great virtues, had made himself worthy of God's gifts and graces. He loved God above everything and served Him with a willing heart. Moreover he loved his people and was full of zeal for their good. He therefore prayed to God to give him the gift of wisdom to enable him to govern his people well and provide for their spiritual and temporal welfare.

His humility was most pleasing to God. He showed it by his words: "Thou hast made Thy servant king, who am but a child." In him were fulfilled the words: "To the meek God will give grace"(Prov. 3, 34).

Prayer for spiritual gifts. Solomon's prayer was pleasing to God, because firstly he made it with a humble heart; and secondly because he did not pray for riches or long life, but for far higher gifts. This shows us that we must not pray only for temporal blessings, such as health or a good harvest or peace and so forth, but above all for higher and more precious gifts, such as the forgiveness of sins, virtue, and especially for the grace to do our duty in our own state of life. In the "Our Father", the model-prayer taught us by our Lord, there are five petitions for spiritual gifts, and only two for temporal gifts, the fourth and the seventh, even these two being combined with spiritual petitions. Bear in mind our Lord's exhortation and promise: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (New Test. XXI).

The gift of wisdom. The first and highest of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the crown of all the others, is the gift of wisdom. God gave Solomon this gift in an extraordinary measure. Not only did he possess a knowledge of divine things, but he was versed in all human sciences, knowing the secrets of nature, the course of the stars, and the properties of beasts, plants &c. Moreover, he was gifted with the art of government; and the renown of his wisdom spread far and wide.

Envy, Lies and Mortal sin. The woman who accidentally smothered her baby, was a bad woman with no conscience. She envied the happiness of the other woman whose child was living, and would have liked the innocent baby to be killed in order that the other woman might be childless as well as herself. She also told the most barefaced lies in order to gain possession of the living child. The envious woman lied about a serious matter ; for her purpose was to rob a mother of her child ; and therefore her lie was a mortal sin. She sinned not only against the eighth Commandment, but also against the tenth and fifth Commandments; for in the first place she coveted the child which was its mother's dearest earthly possession, and then desired its death. All these sins proceeded from the hateful sin of envy.

Questions to be Answered Using the Commentary:

1. Why did Solomon pray for the gift of wisdom?

2. What did Solomon say that showed his humility?

3. What two things made Solomon's prayer for wisdom pleasing to God?

(1)

(2) _____

4. (a) Give two examples of *material* things we can pray for?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(b) Give two examples of *spiritual* things we can pray for?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(c) Which is it best to pray for?

5. Which is the first and the highest Gift of the Holy Ghost?

6. How did the wicked woman who smothered her baby in her sleep sin against the following Commandments:

The Eighth Commandment: _____

The Tenth Commandment: _____

The Fifth Commandment: _____

Chapter 59: The Building and Consecration of the Temple

Commentary

The Sanctity of Catholic churches. The Israelites had only one Temple: we have many churches. Although the Temple at Jerusalem was exceptionally beautiful and costly, the poorest Catholic chapel is far holier and richer, because in our churches the holy Sacraments are given to souls, and because, above all other reasons, our Lord Jesus Christ, with His Divinity and Humanity, is there present and, in the Mass, offers Himself for us to His Heavenly Father. As St. Chrysostom beautifully says : "If we could open the heaven of heavens, we should find nothing greater or more holy than that which reposes on our altars." We ought to have the utmost veneration for our churches, and visit them diligently and devoutly. King Solomon threw himself on his knees in the outer court of the Temple and raised his arms to God in prayer; and shall we be ashamed to kneel down before the Blessed Sacrament and devoutly clasp our hands?

The Consecration of churches. Our churches are solemnly consecrated. Thereby they are sanctified to be the property and dwelling place of God and the abode (dwelling place) of grace. In memory of its consecration or dedication, and as a thanksgiving for the benefits it has brought to us, it is usual to keep every year the feast of the dedication of a church. On that anniversary we have more cause than had the Israelites to say: "Praise the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever."

The Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. God was present to the Israelites in a visible cloud in the Temple ; and therefore the Temple was in very deed "a dwelling-place of God among men". Now, after God had become Man, would He have removed Himself further from us than He was from the Israelites ? Are we to have no dwelling-place of God in our midst? Is nothing to be left to us Christians but the bare memory of God made Man? No! It would be inconceivable that God, after His Incarnation, should be less approachable than He was before it! Jesus Christ would not leave us orphans; therefore He has remained with us, being present on our altars under the visible appearances of bread and wine in the Blessed Sacrament. There He is in the Tabernacle, His Eyes and His Heart beholding those who come to adore Him. If Jesus were not present in the Most Holy Sacrament, then those who lived under the Old Testament would have been better off than we who are living under the New Testament, and we should have to envy the Israelites with whom God was present in at least one Temple.

Questions to be Answered Using the Commentary:

1. Why is even the poorest Catholic chapel far holier and richer even than the Temple at Jerusalem which was beautiful and costly?

2. What is the purpose of celebrating the anniversary of the dedication of a church each year?

3. How is Jesus Christ still really present with us today?
