

A Devotion on GOD's Forgiveness of Sin

I. PSALM 50:11-14.

¹¹ Turn away thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

¹² Create a clean heart in me, O GOD: and renew a right spirit within... [me].

¹³ Cast me not away from Thy... [Presence]; and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me.

¹⁴ Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit. ¹

II. Embracing The Ritual But Not The SPIRIT

I once had a Christian friend whom I worked with in politics. Now my friend was about 15 years older than me. He himself was divorced. He was raising his granddaughter with the help of other family, but most of the work was on his shoulders. His own daughter was a single mom who had given up custody of the child to him and was not presently in the picture.

My friend faithfully went to Church every Sunday with his granddaughter. He seemed an earnestly Religious and Spiritual man to me. Whenever we gathered, we took turns in opening up our meetings with prayer.

In the course of our striving together to make our community a better place to live through our local government, one day I felt frustrated. One day I was feeling particularly frustrated, that our work in politics was not bearing much good fruit. "Jose, maybe we would make more of a mark for the better in our town if we were equally active through The Church?" To my utter shock, my friend replied, "Oh, I don't believe any of that stuff. I'm an atheist. I just go to Church for the sake of my granddaughter!"

I was utterly shocked, that my friend – whom I thought I knew – had only an external Religious observance, but had no inward Spirituality towards GOD or The Church. This shook me deeply. I began to look at my own Religious and Spiritual life.

¹ 2, DRA, PSALM 50:11-14.

I was externally very Religious. But did I have the Spirituality towards GOD and The Church that The Lord calls me to? Did I at times just offer external sacrifice – for the sake of my own family and myself – but not the inner sacrifice of a contrite heart and broken spirit? I had to confess that, at times, I did, and at other times, I didn't.

III. What Sacrifices Does GOD Want From Man?

What sacrifice is acceptable to GOD? When King David was confronted by the prophet Nathan for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, he then murdered her husband Uriah, sinning against the people over whom he was placed to govern and against GOD Himself.²

In PSALM 51, we read of David's response: a total surrender before The LORD; a heartfelt lament in his spirit for his sins; a humble confession and repentance before GOD. David recognized that outward religious ritual, devoid of internal spiritual humility and confession, is not acceptable to GOD. So King David he writes further

PSALM 51:3-4,18-19

³ Have mercy on me, O GOD, according to Thy great Mercy. And according to the multitude of Thy tender Mercies blot out my iniquity.

⁴ Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

¹⁸ [O GOD,] ...if Thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would indeed have given it: with burnt offerings Thou wilt not be delighted.

¹⁹ A sacrifice to GOD is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O GOD, Thou wilt not despise.³

² 1, NAB, PSALM 51:1.

³ 2, DRA, PSALM 50:3-4,18-19.

III. If We Confess Our Sins, He is Faithful

Does GOD then not desire our external Religious sacrifices? Surely He does, for He commands it! But "...The mere offering of the ritual sacrifice apart from good dispositions [deep within us] is not acceptable to GOD."⁴

Pope Benedict has said that our acceptable "...sacrifice consists in our becoming totally receptive and letting ourselves be completely taken over by GOD – letting Him act on us."⁵ We must be willing to be acted upon within ourselves by The Spirit of The living GOD, so that we may know and receive His covenantal Love and Mercy. As Saint John writes:

I JOHN 1:8-9:

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and The Truth is not in us.

⁹ [But] If we confess our sins, ...He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. ⁶

GOD calls us to come before Him with total openness and radical dependence. Be fully convicted of our sins and be humbled. Kneel before The Throne of The Most High inwardly as well as outwardly. Trust in His Grace and Mercy. For then may we be made clean. For then we shall rejoice in the joy of our salvation!

⁴ 3, NAB Notes, PSALM 51:18.

⁵ 4, Catholic Herald, "Magnificat." July 2009, Volume 11, Number 5, p 249, Quote from Pope Benedict XVI. "Friday 17th 2009, Mass. Friday of The Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time."

⁶ 2, DRA, I JOHN 1:8-9.

IV. A Leason Learned

So what does this mean for me? I have come to learn that, while my external Religious form is important for many good reasons, if it is not an expression of my internal Spirituality that offers up a contrite heart and humble spirit before The Lord, my Religiosity is not acceptable to GOD!

By GOD's Grace, my active and external Religious life is becoming more and more an outpouring of my innermost Spiritual life! I do not obey and serve because first I am commanded to. I obey and serve first because I joyfully desire to do so! To obey and serve The LORD and The Church is the central joy of my soul and my life.

May our life journeys as servants of Faith always be that of first an internal Spirituality acceptable to GOD, that our external Religious practices may be a true expression of who we are as joyfully dependant servants of The King of the universe!

V. A Prayer

The LORD be with you!
And also with you!
Let us come before The LORD in prayer
Each according to his and her own Tradition.

“Grant me Grace,
O merciful GOD,
To desire ardently
All that is pleasing to Thee,
To examine it prudently,
To acknowledge it truthfully,
And to accomplish it perfectly,
For the praise and glory
Of Thy [holy] Name.
Amen!”⁷

Let us go forth to love and serve The LORD!
Thanks be to GOD!

⁷ 5, Catholic Family Prayer Book, p 183. “A Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas.”

VI. REFERENCES

1. "New American Bible." Bible Works 6. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
2. "Douay-Rheims American Edition (1899)" Bible. Bible Works 6. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
3. "NAB Notes." Bible Works 6. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
4. "Magnificat." The Catholic Herald, Ltd. Yonkers, New York.
5. "Catholic Family Prayer Book." Jacquelyn Lindsey, Editor. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, Indiana. 2001.