

**“You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.”**

***Rom 8:9***

After all the excitement of Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, of Corpus Christi and First Communions, and of the feast of Ss Peter & Paul, the readings and prayers of today’s Mass take us back to basics. They remind us of what matters, and of the things that we need to concentrate on daily.

The First Reading is familiar to us from Advent, yet with its imagery of the Messiah riding on a donkey we immediately think of Palm Sunday and the Passion and death of Our Lord. The Second Reading reminds us that we are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit. In other words, we have left behind us the things of this world and, so long as we have been to Confession recently and are in a state of grace, then the Spirit of God dwells within us. The result of Our Lord coming to us, riding on a donkey, and dying for our sins, and our then receiving His grace in the Sacraments, is that we are become adopted sons and daughters of God. As God’s children, we must look to our heavenly Father with all the trust and confidence that a child should have when he looks up to his dad to protect and provide for him.

The innocence of being like little children before the face of our God is not the naïvety born of a lack of experience or of gullibility. Rather, it is the hope born of faith, and a belief in the pure goodness of our Father in heaven, a Father who neither deceives nor can be deceived (*Dei Filius* 3: DS 3008), and who intends for us what is good for us. We can *trust* Him. This is not to say that He will always do what we want Him to do, or that He will magically take away our trials and tribulations. No ordinary dad can do that, and our heavenly Father will not usually do that either. But what it *does* mean is that if we approach

our God with a child's simplicity of heart, we may yet find a Father's reassurance, and experience that peace that comes to us when we begin to see things as God sees them.

But for us to arrive at such a state of childlikeness we must heed what St Paul has already told us, that we are no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit.

So dramatically opposed are the ways of this world compared to the ways of God that it is worth repeating this again and again. To be in the Spirit of God, to have God dwelling within us in the form of His sanctifying grace – given to us in the Sacraments – means we must have turned away from the things of this world. And the more emphatically we turn away from the things of this world, the more profound our childlikeness may become, and the deeper may be our trust in our heavenly Father. But for *this* to happen we must work hard at nurturing a life of virtue. Simply coming to Mass each Sunday is not enough. Certainly, that is a start: no one can properly call himself a Catholic unless he is coming to worship the Lord our God week by week as He commanded us to do. But that, alone, will not render us childlike, and will not, on its own, place us in that state of peaceful trust that so many seek, and that God would see us possessed of.

What are these virtues we must practise so diligently? First, we must practise the three theological virtues of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* by which we deepen our understanding of God and of the things of God; we must anchor our souls in heaven through the reception of the Sacraments, especially Confession and Holy Communion; and we must then give to God and to our neighbour the love which we, in turn, have been given.

Next, we must practise the four cardinal virtues: of *prudence*, by which we make practical judgements about what we should and should not do in the light of God's Truth; of *justice*, by which we give to God and to our neighbour what we owe them; of *fortitude*, by which we strengthen our resolve, with the help of grace, to stand firm in the ways of God and not fall prey to temptation or complacency, or become indifferent; and of *temperance*, by

which we keep our desires and natural inclinations under control, instead of allowing them to control us.

And finally, we need to practise the moral virtues: that is, we need to behave properly towards God and our neighbour, according to the teachings of the Ten Commandments and of the Beatitudes.

Practising these virtues requires that we learn more about them, and learn how we should apply them in our lives, so read, or watch, or listen to good Catholic podcasts. Go out of your way to find out how to live as a good Catholic should live. You cannot get to heaven just by coming to Mass and listening to the sermon! You have to be pro-active in the work of your own salvation, and find out things for yourselves, and then kneel down in prayer before Almighty God.

Do these things, and becoming childlike in heart in this life you may yet attain to the glory of heaven in the next.