

21C 2019 SML
LK 13:22-30

One of the most curious anomalies of all time is when man achieves greatest control over nature, he has the least control over himself. The greatest boast of our age is our dominion over the universe. We have:

- ✓ harnessed the waterfalls,
- ✓ made the wind a source of energy,
- ✓ and dug deep and squeezed from the earth the secret of its age.

Yet, despite man being master over nature, there was never a time when man was less a master of himself. He is equipped like a veritable giant when it comes to controlling the forces of nature, but is as weak as the spineless when it comes to controlling himself.

If, indeed, this life is a vale of character making and involves conflict with that which drags us away from our ideals, then it behooves us to realize that the truest conquest is self-conquest, that true progress more properly consists in mastering our own impulses and desires, than in mastering the universe. But this conquest of self cannot be attained except

by is mortification. Mortification means dying to live for the love of God.

First of all, it means dying to live. Recall the tremendous emphasis which Our Blessed Lord placed upon “mortification,” and mortification is a word you never hear any more in today’s milk and cookies Christianity:

- ✓ Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat, but if it dies, it bears much fruit
- ✓ Remove the wooden beam in your eye first
- ✓ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me
- ✓ If any man comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple
- ✓ If your hand causes you to sin cut it off
- ✓ If your foot causes you to sin cut it off
- ✓ If your eye causes you to sin pluck it out
- ✓ Whoever saves his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it
- ✓ the last will be first and the first will be last,

- ✓ And in today's gospel, strive to enter through the narrow gate.

These warnings sound strange because so many live by the assumption that since this is the only life we know, we might as well eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. 1COR 15:32b Mortification is dismissed with an easy wave of the hand as if it belongs to the past and not our modern day life of ease and so out of sorts with modern day milk and cookies Christianity that would have nothing to do with carrying a cross as did Our Blessed Lord. The law of mortification is dying to live and it cannot be ignored by anyone who knows the meaning and the purpose of life and the real meaning and purpose of following Jesus Christ.

If a man is to enter into the higher life of Christ, if man is to enjoy communion with Christ, so as to have the blood of God running in his veins and the spirit of God throbbing in his soul, he must die to himself. And he must be born again. Unless a man is born to that life of God by a death to the lower life of himself, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, Jesus comes first.

Milk and cookies Christianity, Christianity without a cross is not Christianity at all. And hence the law of Calvary is the law of every Christian:

- ✓ Unless there is the Cross there will never be the resurrection;
- ✓ Unless there is defeat of Calvary there will never be the victory of Easter;
- ✓ Unless there are nails there will never be the glorious wounds;
- ✓ Unless there is the undivided garment, there will never be the robe of the Resurrection;
- ✓ Unless there is the crown of thorns there will never be the halo of light;
- ✓ Unless there is the descent into the grave there will never be the Ascension.

We are wrong to think that Our Blessed Lord might have saved us in some less costly way than emptying His Precious Blood from the Chalice of His Body. If only He were a teacher of ethics, if only He were a moral reformer, then he might speak of tenderness, purity and kindness while sitting in the town square, or on a porch somewhere. But He was more than a teacher. He was a High Priest who would not create a new

world, but invigorate the world He already created by dying the disgrace of Good Friday in order to live the life of Easter Sunday. And since we are servants not above our Master, how can we expect to avoid the law of Calvary?

Mortification means not only dying to live. Mortification also embraces “the why,” which is love, for the difference between hardship, suffering or pain, and sacrifice is love. Love is the soul of sacrifice. How do we best show our love for another? Sacrifice!

- ✓ A mother keeps vigil over the beside of her chronically sick child; the girls at the office call it a hardship but the mother calls it love
- ✓ The fireman rushes into the school and suffers first degree burns to rescue the student left behind; onlookers call it suffering but the fireman calls it love
- ✓ Our Blessed Lord emptied Himself of His heavenly glory and suffers death on the cross; we call it pain and sacrifice but He calls it love. No greater love does a man have than to lay down his life for his friends.

Like other Sauls made Pauls by their intense love of Our Blessed Lord, there floats up like incense from their hearts of fire the words:

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The world which begins with pleasure instead of ending with it perhaps can never understand why such an intense love of Our Blessed Lord should ever make souls want to die to live, and still be happy in their death. But then, neither can the world ever understand why the only recorded time Our Blessed Lord ever sang was when He went out into the black, cruel Holy Thursday night – to His death!