

LESSON TENTH.

ON THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEMPTION.

102 Q. Which are the chief effects of the redemption?

A. The chief effects of the redemption are two: the satisfaction of God's justice by Christ's sufferings and death, and the gaining of grace for men.

An effect is that which is caused by something else. If you place a danger-signal on a broken railroad track the effect will be preventing the wreck of the train, and the cause will be your placing the signal. Many effects may flow from one cause. In our example, see all the good effects that may follow your placing the signal—the cars are not broken, the passengers are not killed, the rails are not torn out of their places, etc. Thus the redemption had two effects, namely, to satisfy God for the offence offered Him by the sins of men, and to merit grace to be used for our benefit.

103 Q. What do you mean by grace?

A. By grace I mean a supernatural gift of God bestowed on us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for our salvation.

“Supernatural,” that is, above nature. “A gift;” something, therefore, that God does not owe us. He owes us nothing, strictly speaking. Health, talents, and such things are natural gifts, and belong to our nature as men; but grace is something above our nature, given to our soul. God gives it to us on account of the love He has for His Son, Our Lord, Who merited it for us by dying for us. “Merits.” A merit is some excellence or goodness which entitles one to honor or reward. Grace is a help we get to do something that will be pleasing to God. When there is anything in our daily works

that we cannot do alone, we naturally look for help; for example, to lift some heavy weight is only a natural act, not a supernatural act, and the help we need for it is only natural help. But if we are going to do something above and beyond our nature, and cannot do it alone, we must not look for natural, but for supernatural, help; that is, the help must always be like the work to be done. Therefore all spiritual works need spiritual help, and spiritual help is grace.

104 Q. How many kinds of grace are there?

A. There are two kinds of grace—sanctifying grace and actual grace.

105 Q. What is sanctifying grace?

A. Sanctifying grace is that grace which makes the soul holy and pleasing to God.

“Sanctifying,” that is, making us holy by cleansing, purifying our souls. Sin renders the soul ugly and displeasing to God, and grace purifies it. Suppose I have something bright and beautiful given to me, and take no care of it, but let it lie around in dusty places until it becomes tarnished and soiled, loses all its beauty, and appears black and ugly. To restore its beauty I must clean and polish it. Thus the soul blackened by sin must be cleaned by God’s grace. If the soul is in mortal sin—altogether blackened—then sanctifying grace brings back its brightness and makes it pleasing to God; but if the soul is already bright, though stained or darkened a little by venial sin, then grace makes it still brighter.

* 106 Q. What do you call those graces or gifts of God by which we believe in Him, hope in Him, and love Him?

A. Those graces or gifts of God by which we believe in Him, and hope in Him, and love Him, are called the divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

“Virtues.” Virtue is the habit of doing good. The opposite to virtue is vice, which is the habit of doing evil.

we acquire a habit bad or good when we do the same thing very frequently. We then do it easily and almost without thinking; as a man, for instance, who has the habit of cursing curses almost without knowing it, though that does not excuse him, but makes his case worse, by showing that he must have cursed very often to acquire the habit. If, however, he is striving to overcome the bad habit, and should unintentionally curse now and then, it would not be a sin, since he did not wish to curse, and was trying to overcome the vice. One act does not make a virtue or a vice. A person who gives alms only once cannot be said to have the virtue of charity. A man who curses only once a year cannot be said to have the vice of cursing. Faith, hope, and charity are infused by God into our souls, and are therefore called infused virtues, to distinguish them from the virtues we acquire.

107 Q. What is faith?

A. Faith is a divine virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed.

“A divine virtue” is one that is heavenly or holy. Faith is the habit of always believing all that God has revealed and the Church teaches. “Firmly,” that is, without the slightest doubt. “Revealed,” that is, made known to us. Revelation is the collection of all the truths that God has made known to us. But why do we believe? Because we clearly see and know the truth of what is revealed? No, but because God reveals it; we believe it though we cannot see it or even understand it. If we see it plainly, then we believe it rather because we see it than because God makes it known to us. Suppose a friend should come and tell you the church is on fire. If he never told you lies, and had no reason for telling you any now, you would believe him—not because you know of the fire, but because he tells you; but afterwards, when you see the church or read of the fire in the papers, you have proof of what he told you, but you believed it just as firmly when he told you as you do afterwards. In the same way God tells us

His great truths and we believe them; because we know that since God is infinitely true He cannot deceive us or be deceived. But if afterwards by studying and thinking we find proof that God told us the truth, we do not believe with any greater faith, for we always believed without doubting, and we study chiefly that we may have arguments to prove the truth of God's revelations to others who do not believe. Suppose some person was present when your friend came and said the church is burning, and that that person would not believe your friend. What would you do? Why, convince him that what your friend said was true by showing him the account of the fire in the papers. Thus learning does not change our faith, which, as I have said, is not acquired by study, but is infused into our souls by God. The little boy who hears what God taught, and believes it firmly because God taught it, has as good a faith as his teacher who has studied all the reasons why he should believe.

108 Q. What is hope?

A. Hope is a divine virtue by which we firmly trust that God will give us eternal life and the means to obtain it.

"Eternal"—that is, everlasting life—life without end.
"Means"—that is, His grace, because without God's grace we cannot do any supernatural thing.

109 Q. What is charity?

A. Charity is a divine virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

The virtue of charity makes us **"love God,"** because He is so good and beautiful, wise and powerful in Himself; therefore for His own sake and without any other consideration. **"Above all things,"** in such a way that we would rather lose anything than offend Him. But some one may say, he thinks he loves his parents more than God. Well, let us see. To repeat an example already given, suppose his parents

told him to steal, and he knew stealing to be a sin ; if he would not steal, that would show, would it not, that he loved God more than his parents, for he would rather offend his parents than God. That is the kind of love we must have for God ; not mere feeling, but the firm belief that God is the best of all, and when we have to choose between offending God and losing something, be it goods or friends, we would rather lose anything than offend God.

“Neighbor.” Not merely the person living near us, but all men of every kind and nation—even our enemies. The people who lived at the time of Our Lord in His country used to dispute about just what persons were to be considered their neighbors ; so one day they asked Our Lord, and He answered them by telling them the following. Said He (Luke x. 30): “A man was once going down from Jerusalem, and on the way robbers beat him, robbed him, and left him on the wayside dying. First one man came by, looked at the wounded man, and passed on ; then another came and did the same ; finally a third man came, who was of a different religion and nationality from the wounded man. But he did not consider these things. He dressed the poor man’s wounds, placed him upon his horse and brought him to an inn or hotel, and paid the innkeeper to take care of him. Now,” said Our Lord, “which of these three was neighbor to the wounded man?” And they answered rightly, “The man that helped him.” Our Lord, by this example, wished to teach them and us that everybody is our neighbor who is in distress of any kind and needs our help. Neighbor, therefore, means every human being, no matter where he lives or what his color, learning, manners, etc., for every human being in the world is a child of God and has been redeemed by Our Lord. Therefore every child of God is my neighbor, and even more—he is my brother ; for God is his father and mine also, and if he is good enough for God to love, he should be good enough for me.

“As ourselves.” Not with as much love, but with the same kind of love ; that is, we are to follow the rule laid down by Our Lord: “Do unto others as you would have others do

unto you." Never do to any one what you would not like to have done to yourself; and always do for another just what you would wish another to do for you, if you were in the same position. Our neighbor is our equal and gifted with all the gifts that we ourselves have. When we come into the world we are all equal. We have a body and a soul, with the power to develop them. Money, learning, wealth, fame, and all else that makes up the difference between men in the world are acquired in the world; and when men die, they go out of the world without any of these things, just as they came into it. The real difference between them in the next world will depend upon the things they have done, good or bad, while here. We should love our neighbor also on another account: namely, that he is one day to be in heaven with us; and if he is to be with us for all eternity, why should we hate him now? On the other hand, if our neighbor is to be in hell on account of his bad life, why should we hate him? We should rather pity him, for he will have enough to suffer without our hatred.

110 Q. What is actual grace?

A. Actual grace is that help of God which enlightens our mind and moves our will to shun evil and do good.

"Actual." Sanctifying grace continues with us, but when grace is given just so that we may do a good act or avoid a bad one, it is called actual grace. Suppose, for example, I see a poor man and am able to aid him. When my conscience tells me to give him assistance, I am just then receiving an actual grace, which moves me and helps me to do that good act; and just as soon as I give the help, the actual grace ceases, because no longer needed. It was given for that one good act; and now that the act is done, the actual grace has produced its effect. Again, a boy is going to Mass on Sunday and meets other boys who try to persuade him to remain away from Mass and go to some other place. When he hears his conscience telling him to go to Mass by all means, he is receiving just then an actual grace to avoid the mortal sin of

missing Mass, and the grace lasts just as long as the temptation. Sacramental grace is sanctifying grace—given in the sacraments—which contains for us a right to actual graces when we need them. These actual graces are given to help us to fulfil the end for which each of the sacraments was instituted. They are different for each sacrament, and are given just when we need them ; that is, just when we are tempted against the object or end for which the sacrament was instituted.

* 111 Q. Is grace necessary for salvation ?

A. Grace is necessary for salvation, because without grace we can do nothing to merit heaven.

* 112 Q. Can we resist the grace of God ?

A. We can and unfortunately often do resist the grace of God.

Grace is a gift, and no one is obliged to take a gift; but if God offers a gift and we refuse to take it, we offend and insult Him. To insult God is to sin. Therefore to refuse to accept, or to make bad use of the grace God gives us, is to sin.

* 113 Q. What is the grace of perseverance ?

A. The grace of perseverance is a particular gift of God which enables us to continue in the state of grace till death.

“Perseverance” here does not mean perseverance in our undertakings, but perseverance in grace—never in mortal sin, always a friend of God. Now, if God keeps us from all sin till the day of our death and takes us while we are His friends, then He gives us what we call the gift of final perseverance. We cannot, strictly speaking, merit this great grace, but only pray for it ; so any one who commits mortal sin may be taken just in that state and be lost for all eternity.