



Homily for 11/13/22

33<sup>rd</sup> Sun. O. T., Year C

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### The Instruments of Salvation

Now in this 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Mother Church continues her annual reminder of the Last Days that will come. We are called to prepare for ‘That day’. The Day of Christ. The Day when Christ will come again to Judge the living and the dead. To prepare for that day and to live in this present age, requires us to use the instruments of salvation: wisdom and hope.

The wisdom needed to live in this present age and to arrive at our eternal destination safely is to live in reality, not fantasy. To live in reality means to be set firmly on the bedrock of objective truth. Truth comes from both right reason and divine revelation. Thus, wisdom is based on trust in these two instruments of truth, right reason and divine revelation. The alternative is to live in fantasy. Fantasy, by definition, is unreal and therefore untrue. It is a reliance on make-believe and pretending. Fantasy feels nice and speaks to our sentiments, but it is not grounded in reality. It is as solid as a cloud.

As a pilot I have flown through clouds before. There is nothing to them. When you fly into a cloud, your forward progress is not checked at all. You can fly head long into a cloud, and it won’t stop you. But it can wreak havoc on your well-being if you are not attentive. If there is convective activity, like a storm cloud, it can shake you to pieces; you know something is wrong. But even if it is just a benign cloud, it is eerily calm, and you can be lulled into complacency. When you lose sight of *terra firma*, you can easily get disoriented. They call it ***spatial*** disorientation. In this state, it is deadly to rely on your own sense data. Your inner ear tricks you. Being deprived of the orienting sense of sight, you feel like you are going up, but you are really going down. You feel like you are going right, but you are really going left. When it is a matter of life and death, reality trumps feelings. If you steer the plane using your feelings, you will end up feeling the hardness of the ground in one quick stop. For this reason, pilots are taught not to rely on their feelings, but rather on the instruments, which they trust with their lives. If the compass and heading indicator says you are in a right-hand turn, but you feel like you are going left, you have to follow the compass and not your feelings, or else you will deviate from your intended course. If your attitude indicator, also known as the artificial horizon, indicates you are descending, even though you feel like you are ascending, you have to follow the instrument, else you will steer your plane right into the ground.

The same thing happens in the spiritual life. There is such a thing as ***spiritual*** disorientation. When the difficulties of life envelope us like a cloud, we tend to lose sight of reality. We get caught up in the cloud of emotions and feelings and desires that don’t always correspond to the reality of our ultimate good. There is a temptation here to project a fantasy based on what feels good. In these moments, the disciple of Christ is trained to rely on the instruments of wisdom: The first instrument, which deals with our horizontal existence, is **right reason**. This is like a compass built into our mind. This heading indicator directs us to truth.  $2+2=4$ ; rocks are hard; water is wet. We can discern the nature of things and what they are for. We move towards healing and holiness when we use created things according to their nature and for their proper ends. We miss the mark when we distort nature or militate against its natural ends, and we become disordered and disoriented. This is not too far from our grasp. It is as simple as stating that if you throw a rock at a person, it will hurt, and if you jump into water, you will get wet. Even when our feelings diverge from what right reason says, we must trust this instrument of truth built into our mind to steer our course.

The second instrument deals with the vertical dimension of life: **divine revelation**. This is the God-given artificial horizon that cuts through the cloud of ignorance with the gift of supernatural sight. This supernatural sight is able to discern our ultimate end beyond this world. God’s revelation to us is trustworthy, because the one who reveals, can neither deceive nor be deceived. If we follow the data revealed by Sacred Scripture, we will be able to stay airborne in our journey while here on earth and then safely land on the eternal shore as our true final destination. The soul needs both the horizontal and the vertical to live in reality. In contrast, the one who relies only on his senses, unenlightened by faith, lives in pride.



Pride is the chief of the deadly sins. Just as pride leads to pilots crashing, so to it leads to the death of the soul. “*Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the LORD of hosts.*” Pride’s remedy is humility. Humility literally means being grounded in reality. It means submitting to higher power, even if that power is simply the laws of physics. In the spiritual life it means humbly submitting to the authority of both instruments of truth. When you find yourself in the fog of life, be humble. Submit to the instruments. Live in the reality of your situation and do not rely on fickle sentiment.

But even here, Our Lord gives words of caution. Be careful, and tread lightly. Humility can be feigned, and some try to use their supposed humility and righteousness to judge others. Don’t try and fly someone else’s plane. You do well to fly your own. Remember, you are as much in the cloud as your neighbor. Do not mistake disgust for the proud as humility; this is a common sin in our day. Do not mistake your wrath against sinners as justified. Wrath is also a deadly sin. Only God judges the soul. Yes, we must meet the demands of justice, and we are able to vindicate our rights, but only with prudence and above all, charity. Yes, there is a place for fighting, but it must be based on charity, willing the good of the other. We must live in justice ourselves. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. Not yours. Everyone is due their freedom before God - even the freedom to sin. And God will be the judge of where this will lead them. Not me, not you. Wisdom, be attentive. St. Paul gives this advice: “*We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.*” Think on your own day of judgement instead of pre-judging and condemning others for their evil deeds. Yes, we must admonish the sinner when it is prudent, counsel the ignorant when the time is right, but this must be done in charity and keeping in mind the plank in our own eye. Remember that the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you! Prepare your heart for the Day of Christ in all humility.

But this then leads to the third instrument of salvation when living in this world, **Hope**. “*The Lord comes for he rules the earth with justice and the peoples with equity.*” The Lord knows our plight. He knows our deficits. He knows that we are fallen, and He treats us with compassion and understanding, taking into account our fallen state. This is what is meant by ruling with equity. He accounts for our brokenness in His greatest work of mercy, when He paid the price of our sin by the shedding of his innocent blood on the cross. He has bought us at the price of his blood. He has adopted us as His own beloved children. He has made the declaration that you are worth it. Through our baptism, we are the Lord’s own. Do not let the devil persuade you otherwise with lies and falsehoods. God, in His proven mercy, will save those who cling to him. This is the hope that tells us to stay the course in the crucible of life’s suffering. He promises a safe harbor, a smooth landing at the end of our journey if we listen to his voice. If we want to continue the flying analogy, when we are in the thick cloud of life with all its suffering, we have to be tuned into the right frequency to hear the air traffic controller’s voice. He has radar and can see you even if you can’t see him. He has perspective and knows the other traffic around you. When he tells you to turn right or to change altitude, obedience to his command can be life or death. The pilot has to trust the Controller and hope that he has the bigger picture. The same goes for the Christian. We have to be tuned into God’s frequency through prayer, and we have to be listening when He calls us. God cares for you even more than an Air Traffic Controller cares for the safe delivery of air traffic in his sector. “*Not a hair on your head will be destroyed,*” He promises. “*If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*”. When we hear the voice of God speaking, we are called to trust that His perspective is greater than ours, He sees all and knows all, and His is a will of love for all. When we don’t hear His voice, do not fret, He still has us on radar, and He is watching out for us, even when He is silent. When we put our trust in the Lord in this way, we gain the gift of hope. “*Hope in the Lord, I will praise Him still, my savior and my God.*”

Following the instruments of salvation, wisdom and hope, the Lord is guiding us through “That day”, the Day of Christ, to a safe landing in His eternal Kingdom.