



UNLESS YOU DO PENANCE...

Ash Wednesday 2020

Dear Friends and benefactors,

“Unless you do penance, you will likewise perish.”

These famous words of Our Lord Jesus Christ fall upon us as a hammer blow.

Their meaning is very clear. We cannot try to avoid it by giving this saying an allegorical or fanciful interpretation that would permit us to stay lukewarm. Our Savior presents us with a simple alternative: either we do penance and live, or we refuse it and die.

The satanic trap is that modern man, too full of himself since the Revolution wrongfully made him god and king, does not hear these words of Our Lord any more. They do not find any echo in him.

This spiritual apathy is deadly because if man does not react to this merciful and just call to do penance, the facts remain: original sin is a reality that does not spare anybody and whose wounds are felt every day.

Wounded in his heart, man inclines almost naturally towards base things and there he becomes bogged down. Pulled down into a satanic spiral, man follows the path that leads him to hell.

Unless he does penance!

Penance is thus not an optional matter, but a question of life and death.

The constant search for his satisfactions, conscious or not, undermines man. The inclination of his senses to enjoy their pleasing objects immediately exerts upon man a true tyranny. Enslaved, he is guided by his passions and loses the unity of his being. He does not live any more in a harmonious way for an end which exceeds and ennobles him. He falls under the tyrannical rule of his senses, which, becoming his masters, pitilessly reduce him to nothing more than a fragile boat without a rudder in the midst of a raging storm.

Penance is a remedy. It dries up the source of the insatiable needs that man himself has created and imposes a calming remedy that allows him to turn towards higher things and thus to leave the infernal decline into which he was sinking.

But penance is not only a means of healing. Above all, it is a school of holiness, by conforming us to the life of Our Lord who, from Christmas to Easter, between the wood of the crib and that of the Cross, lived a life of constant penance.

Christ descended on earth to save us by healing us and by inviting us to imitate Him, following the example that He gave us. In baptism we were incorporated to Christ. Becoming His members, we are called to participate in His life, His passion, His death and His resurrection. Christ granted us the mercy of incorporating us to Him and to His work of redemption.

Before the incarnation, the sinner was of the race of the torturers who clamor at the foot of the Cross. From now on, incorporated to Christ by baptism, the Catholic becomes a beneficiary of the redemption and participates in it by doing penance.

Penance is also a work of justice since it is only right that, when man acknowledges his wrongdoing, he repairs it as far as it is possible.

Lastly, penance is a work of prudence because man, shattered by sin, is always in search for his satisfactions, which create in him a deep imbalance, a native weakness that could reappear at any time. Penance maintains us in order, within measure.

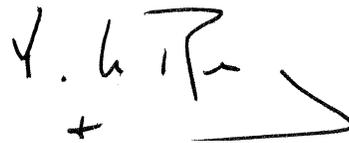
The command to do penance, proclaimed by Christ in a peremptory way, is certainly not a morbid call but, on the contrary, a true hymn to joy – consequently, the life of man becomes a symphony that sings of God and His Glory.

Is there a man who is not eager to live? Could a man be found who is not stirred by a call to love?

This call has resounded, it is the appeal that Christ addressed to any soul of good will: “Do penance, otherwise you will all perish!”

During this Lent, let us answer this call with generosity.

In Christo Sacerdote et Maria,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'Y. le Roux' with a stylized flourish extending to the right. Below the signature is a small plus sign and a horizontal line that ends in an arrowhead pointing to the right.

Fr. Yves le Roux