

Absence of Complaint, pp. 67-89, In the Footsteps of Jesus by Fr. Parent

April 2016 Team Lesson Prepared by Michael Cronin, City of Lakes

Opening Prayer

O God of unchanging power and eternal light, look with favor on the wondrous mystery of the whole Church and serenely accomplish the work of human salvation, which you planned from all eternity; may the whole world know and see that what was cast down is raised up, what had become old is made new, and all things are restored to integrity through Christ, just as by him they came into being. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

(Presider's Prayer after the 7th reading at the Easter Vigil)

Introduction

"Absence of complain manifests the spiritual maturity of a person, it expresses the basic quality of a personality which tends toward self-control. Absence of complaint indicates a beautiful personality, one who has taken charge of his life, who has a sense of responsibility. It demands that each of us makes a constant effort which we call asceticism." In the *Footsteps of Jesus* by Fr. Parent, Founder

(Spirituality Section, voluntasdeiusa.org)

I Observe

The Constitutions of our community state that the absence of complaint means "avoiding all inner and outer complaining; opening oneself to a sense of the marvelous, so as to welcome Christ who is present in events" (*Constitutions, p. 9*). As we find ourselves in the midst of the Easter season. what better time could there be to reflect on this attitude that Fr. Parent so carefully and skillfully provides, as he reminded us "it would be unwise to ignore this means of perfection of humanity" (*In the Footsteps of Jesus, p. 67*).

I Evaluate My Way of Living

1. Each of us knows, and is reminded by Fr. Parent that "God is our most effective point of reference; the absence of criticism protects the presence of God" (*p.72*). Each of us also knows that the absence of complaint is not easy. How can we see more and more that this attitude—absence of complaint-- is a gift and strength from God that cannot be separated from the sense of wonder?
2. Fr. Parents reminds us that in understanding more and more what is "complaint" and its damages, we can better understand God's commandment to love our neighbor. He tell us that "complaint lessens the gift of our will to God, changes love into doubt and suspicion, breaks the rhythm of generosity, cools our devotion and smothers spontaneity. It turns us away from others causing us to withdraw into ourselves. It makes us detest discipline and exaggerate suffering; it multiplies complexes, limits the impulses of our heart and renders hateful what should be attainable work" (*p. 75*). Do any of these 'complaint realities' apply to our own experience? How can we avoid or fight against these tendencies?

3. The events of our lives certainly provide a ready laboratory for practicing the attitude of absence of complaint. As Fr. Parent notes “we can manage to live without complaining if we strive to discover the lessons that we can learn from events, be they happy or unhappy. We must detect in them the positive meaning that can help us. Just as God speaks through the Bible, so also he speaks through events” (p. 83). How have specific events in our life moved us through denial and the closing of our hearts to a more welcoming peacefulness?

Looking Ahead

“If we are capable of thinking of God, of nourishing ourselves with his presence, of avoiding criticism and complaint, it is because we are filled with the Holy Spirit and have recognized that we are beings of service” (p. 89).

Closing Prayer

God of everlasting mercy, who in the very recurrence of the paschal feast kindle the faith of the people you have made your own, increase, we pray, the grace you have bestowed, that all may grasp and rightly understand in what font they have been washed, by whose Spirit they have been reborn, by whose Blood they have been redeemed. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

(Opening Prayer at Mass, Second Sunday of Easter)