

Saturday of the Third Week of Great Lent

“Condemning the Innocent ” (Regnum Christi Meditation for Friday of the Fifteenth Week of Ordinary Time by Father Eugene Gormley, LC – [Audio version*](#)) Matthew 12:1-14

Jesus was going through a field of grain on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, how he went into the house of God and ate the bread of offering, which neither he nor his companions but only the priests could lawfully eat? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests serving in the temple violate the Sabbath and are innocent? I say to you, something greater than the temple is here. If you knew what this meant, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned these innocent men. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Moving on from there, he went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man there who had a withered hand. They questioned him, “Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?”* so that they might accuse him. He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep that falls into a pit on the sabbath will not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable a person is than a sheep. So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and it was restored as sound as the other. But the Pharisees* went out and took counsel against him to put him to death.”

Introductory Prayer: Almighty and ever-living God, I seek new strength from the courage of Christ our shepherd. I believe in you, I hope in you, and I seek to love you with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength. I want to be led one day to join the saints in heaven, where your Son Jesus Christ lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Petition: Help me to make every Sunday a special day for me and my family.

1. **Fasting on Sunday?** It was the Sabbath, a day of rest. The disciples had had a difficult and busy week, and they were hungry. Jesus allowed them to look for food in the fields. This could have discouraged them, not having a meal waiting for them. But they were accustomed to hardship. They were busy and

had much to do. There was little free time. Christ was busy on weekends; his mission didn't stop. The disciples were united with Jesus, participating in his mission. This made all their sacrifices worthwhile and easier to cope with. When we trust in and unite ourselves with Christ, we can be patient and at peace in the midst of trials.

2. **The Confrontation:** The Sabbath was established in order for the Jewish people to remember and reflect on their special covenant relationship with God. He had delivered them from slavery and given them rest. The Pharisees, however, focused on “what you can't do” and failed to see “what you should do.” On Sundays, we should focus more on what we should do in order to worthily receive Christ. Then secondary things will not distract us from what is essential. God has a special relationship with us. He has delivered us from slavery. He continues to love us and asks that we love him and others with all our heart. On Sundays, do I recall my covenant relationship with Our Lord? Am I mindful and grateful for all the good things he has done and continues to do for me? Does God take first place for me on Sundays?

3. **Sunday Service:** Christ instructed his disciples about his mission. They grew to understand, appreciate and live it. He taught them to participate at the Sabbath service with fervor, but also to be open to any needs others might have, even on the Sabbath. It is lawful to do good any day of the week, especially the Lord's Day. Christ cured the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, fed his disciples on the Sabbath, and cured another woman with a bent back on the Sabbath. Charity will inspire us to do good to others even on a Sunday. “Sunday service” and “Service-on-Sunday” go together. Do I ever dedicate my Sundays, or part of them, to bring rest to those who are most in need? What can I do to help the poor and marginalized on that day? How can I instill this spirit of service in my children?

Conversation with Christ: You long to share your Word and Body with me at Sunday Mass and at every Mass I can attend during the week. May I always have a hunger for this encounter with your love and friendship. May I serve others with the same charity and love as you serve me. May Sunday be the most important day of the week for me and my family.

Resolution: I will organize this coming Sunday to be a day of worship and rest. I will try to do good to someone this Sunday, and I will help someone come back to Sunday Mass attendance, whether in-person or online.

*The Audio version and the meditation focuses primarily on Matthew 12:1- 8