

Wednesday of The First Week of Great Lent

“The Danger of Vanity” (Regnum Christi Meditation for Wednesday of the Eleventh Week in Ordinary Time by Father Walter Schu, LC – [Audio Version](#) * - Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18)

Jesus said to his disciples: “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I believe in you with a living faith. Though I am so inclined to sin and weakness, I trust in your mercy. I want to show my love for you in this meditation. I long for my recompense to come only from you, not from people’s applause.

Petition: Lord, help me to act with greater purity of intention in my life.

1. **Who Do You Seek to Please:** In today’s Gospel reading, Christ presents a difficult challenge and, at the same time, a great consolation. His teaching can be summed up with a simple phrase: In everything we do, act always before God alone. At the end of our life, all that will remain is what we have done for God and our brothers and sisters. Everything else, all of our vanities, our desires to be esteemed, loved or taken into account will vanish on the last day, like fog disappears under the rays of the sun. The challenge is clear: to act before God with absolute purity of intention. But where is the consolation? Our heavenly Father “sees in secret.” What might never be perceived or recognized or appreciated by the world will one day be rewarded in heaven.

2. **Between You and God:** Mother Theresa echoes the Gospel teaching in a brief poem entitled “It’s Between You and God.”

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you.

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight.

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, others may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.

Give the world the best you have anyway.

Why?

Because in the final analysis, all of this is between you and God....

It was never between you and them anyway.

3. **Our Everlasting Reward:** Christ declares three times that hypocrites who act before others have already received their reward. One day each of us will stand alone before Christ. Our eternal destiny will depend upon the outcome of that moment. May we not discover to our chagrin that our hands are empty because we have secretly acted to win the applause of men. Rather, may we perform our good deeds in secret, not letting our left hand know what our right is doing. Then our heavenly Father, “who sees what is hidden” will repay us.

Conversation with Christ: Thank you, Lord, for always seeing what is hidden, for always being ready to reward what is done for you. Your words and the example of holy men and women inspire me on this point. I wish to live facing you and eternity and to give up all my vain ambitions and worries about what others think of my actions.

Resolution: I will renew my purity of intention in the different activities of the day, doing them out of love for Christ and to help establish his Kingdom.

**The Gospel read in the Maronite Catholic Church on Wednesday of the first week of Great Lent is Matthew 6:1-4. The above meditation from Regnum Christi is based on the Gospel of Ash Wednesday in the Roman Catholic Church Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18.*