

## **Third Sunday after Pentecost**

### ***The Mercy of God***

*“There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner who repents more than upon ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance” (Luke, 15:7)*

Before the coming of the Son of God to earth the justice and the power of God were so deeply impressed on the minds of men that they were inclined to view Him with a sense of fear rather than with a spirit of confidence. But the message of Jesus Christ emphasised the mercy of God, as is illustrated by today’s Gospel. Just as the shepherd is so desirous to bring back the lost sheep to the fold that he goes out in search of this sheep and does not rest until it has been restored, so God through the prompting of grace seeks the sinful soul, yearning to restore it to His love and friendship.

It is the teaching of the Catholic Church that God gives even the worst sinners sufficient grace to repent. Even though a person rejects this grace time and time again, God continues to call him. Of course, through repeated sins a person can form in his soul a spirit of obstinacy, which makes conversion more and more difficult with the passing of the years; but, nevertheless God continues to confer the necessary grace as long as life lasts. Like the good shepherd, God continues to seek the lost sheep up to the end.

The means of restoration to God’s grace available to the sinner are very abundant in the Catholic Church. Above all, the Catholic can have recourse to the sacrament of Penance, so easy to receive, so beneficial in its effects. No matter how far a Catholic may have strayed from God, Our Lord is still calling him to the tribunal of Penance, that he may confess his sins honestly and express true repentance from his heart. Then, through the absolution of the priest, the sinner is forgiven by Christ Himself, the good Shepherd. And then, as Our Lord assures us, there is joy among the angels over the return of the lost sheep to the fold of the Divine Master.

It is a mystery how a Catholic can stay away from God for years. He knows that he is living in a very dangerous state, since death would mean eternal damnation. He knows that he is losing many opportunities of meriting a great measure of glory by remaining in mortal sin. He realises that he is not truly happy, even though he may possess an abundance of this world’s goods. And the great tragedy is that all this could be easily remedied by a good confession.

### **Practical Application**

If your conscience informs you that you are in the state of mortal sin, resolve to make a good confession as soon as possible. If you are happily numbered among those good Catholics who are in the state of grace, pray for the return of sinners to the fold.