

5 July 2017 - Our Lady Refuge of Sinners, Patroness of California (Readings from Wednesday of Week 13)

Sajnos, nincs magyar fordítás!

(Mt 8:23-27) For Abraham's sake, his kinsman Lot was spared the fire and brimstone that overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. God made the city of Zoar a refuge for Lot, where he might escape together with his family. His wife, however, after undervaluing this refuge, was changed into a pillar of salt when she looked back. In today's first reading, Hagar had given up all hope of survival after her water ran dry in the wilderness. Yet, for Abraham's sake, God provided a refuge, an oasis in the desert, where Hagar and her son, Ishmael, might escape death. In both these stories, there is a person who intercedes and a place of refuge. What happens when the two are one and the same? – Then it is that we have found the most perfect haven: Our Lady Refuge of Sinners, patroness of California, whose feast we celebrate today. Every divine refuge in Scripture is but a faint symbol of God's immaculate refuge.

In the gospel we just heard, two violent demoniacs, who lived among the tombs, pleaded with our Lord, saying: "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of swine." After Our Lord gave them leave, the demons entered the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea where they drowned. God in His mercy even allows reprobate demons a place to flee from His wrath. But what refuge must they content themselves with? – In Scripture, there are no animals more unclean than swine. Holy and learned men have speculated that Satan only rebelled when God's future plan was revealed to him: he would be subordinated to a teenage maiden, who by nature was greatly inferior to him. In grace, however, after God, nothing and no one comes before Our Blessed Mother. Fallen angels must seek refuge within swine because they refused to array themselves under Mary's charge in God's heavenly kingdom.

Even more hopeless than Hagar in the arid wilderness of Beer-sheba was the plight of her little toddler, Ishmael. She couldn't bear to witness it. Yet a newborn babe is even more vulnerable than a toddler. For love of us, the Eternal Word became just such a helpless little nursling. His one refuge from certain starvation was the loving embrace of His Immaculate Mother Mary. God's ability to fashion for Himself the most perfect refuge against death far surpasses our wildest imaginings, yet God's masterpiece in this regard turned out to be nothing other than Mary Most Holy. She became refuge for the Saint of Saints so that we sinners might also find our refuge in her tender embrace. For head and members of one and the same body must have the same mother, the same refuge against certain death – in Jesus's case physical death, in our case spiritual.

Allow me to conclude with a prayer composed by St. Alphonsus Liguori! "O most holy and pure virgin! O my mother! You who are the mother of my Lord, the queen of the world, the advocate and refuge of sinners! I, a most wretched sinner, now come to you. I honor you, great queen, and give you humble thanks for the many favors which have come to me in the past through your intercession. I love you, Lady most worthy of all love, and by the love which I bear you, I promise ever in the future to honor you, and to do what lies in me to win others to your love. Receive me as your servant, and cover me with the mantle of your protection, you who are the mother of mercy! And since you have so much power with God, implore him to deliver me from all temptations, and to give me the grace ever to overcome them. Pray for me that I may love Christ in this world as you love him, and intercede for me that I may have the grace of a good death. O my mother! By your love for God I beseech you to be at all times my helper, but above all at the last moment of my life. Cease not your supplications until you see me safe in heaven, there for countless ages to bless you and to worship and adore your son, for ever and ever. Amen."