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St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P. – Sermon on Matthew 9:18-26ff
Raising of the Girl and the Cure of the Woman

Mt 9 Douay transl. (from the Latin Vulgate used by St. Vincent)

18 And he was speaking these things unto them, behold a certain ruler came up, and adored him, saying: Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. 19 And Jesus rising up followed him, with his disciples.

20 And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. 21 For she said within herself: If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed. 22 But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23 And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a rout, 24 He said: Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25 And when the multitude was put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand. And the maid arose. 26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country.

" And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country." Mt 9:26

We have these words textually from Matthew 9. Our sermon will be on the holy gospel. If it pleases God, we shall have many good teachings etc. Let the Virgin Mary be saluted.

In the present sermon I wish take on the role of a gardener, who when he wants to spread seed or set good and useful plants in a garden, first arranges and orders them on boards [tabulis], then he plants the seed. So I shall do. Reason, because in holy scripture. the holy gospel especially [singulariter] is called a closed garden, and not a field, "a garden enclosed" or shut. (Cf Cant 4:12). Indeed it would be an enclosed garden who would have the highest sides for its wall, and a narrow entrance and a good gate and strong bolts. So the holy gospel is walled in with the highest wall, namely Christian faith, which ascends up to heaven, to the extent that no infidel, nor heretic, nor schismatic, can enter to destroy its fruits. The gate narrow and low [bassum] is humility. Therefore no proud person can enter collecting the fruits of its secrets, nor by understanding. The firm gate is apostolic poverty, because of this it is although many may try, but nevertheless they are not able to find the spiritual fruit, for a carnal person, delicate [delitiosae] etc., cannot enter to eat the fruits of this garden, because they cannot taste its sweetness, because of the sweetness of vices they lose the taste and infect the palate, but it is open to the Christian, who with a humble heart and a poor spirit etc. such a one perceives its odor. Therefore Christ, who is the Lord of this garden, says, "Let my beloved come into his garden," (Song 5:1). Note, "beloved," by Christ is the Christian, who in his heart has firm faith. Note, "into his garden." The gospel is the garden of Christ as owner [dominative], but it is said to be of the Christian finally [finaliter], because for it he was made. See how the holy gospel is called a garden.

Because of this in the garden of the gospel today I will dedicate three hours [Note: the length of his sermon ?], according to the three principal parts, which it has according to the three excellences of Christ which are revealed in it.

First is gracious humility [humilitas gratiosa],

Second, virtuous kindliness [benignitas virtuosa],

Third, glorious height [sublimitas gloriosa].

In these however I shall not plant cabbages, nor spinach, but aromatic and powerful herbs of good doctrine. In the first I shall plant one aromatic herb which is called ethics or individual morality, for ruling ones own person. In the second another which is called general and political ethics, for ruling the community. In the third another which is called domestic or family ethics, for ruling ones own house. These plants shall be so sweet smelling [odoriferae], that I will be able to say, "And the fame hereof went abroad," etc.

GRACIOUS HUMILITY

I say first that in today's gospel the first excellence of Christ shown is that which is called gracious humility. This is shown in the first part of the gospel when it is said, "And he was speaking these things unto them, behold a certain ruler [princeps] came up, and adored him, saying: Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus rising up followed him, with his disciples," (vv. 18-19). It is asked why Christ immediately followed this ruler [princeps], when in John 4:47-50, he rejected a vice-regent [regulus, little king] who asked to come? Response, because this ruler had two [qualities], namely a firm belief in his heart that he could heal his daughter, as is clear in his petition saying, "But come, lay your hand upon her, and she shall live." Second he had an ardent devotion to Christ. When he approached him, he adored him. These two [traits] immediately drew him. Note, an example from nature. The candle brightening and smoking, finally draws light to itself. Christ is called light, "He was the true light," (Jn 1:9). If therefore you have the brightness of faith in your heart, and the smoke of devotion, immediately you draw Christ to you. Apostle, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision: but faith," believing, "which works by charity," devotion, (Gal 5:6). Therefore because that ruler had theist two, and the vice-regent not, therefore etc. See here the gracious humility of Christ.

So this is the first part of this garden of Christ, laid out and ordered. Now we will plant the seeds of these aromatic herbs, namely of individual ethics, for ruling your own persons in a good life. And there are two, namely prayer, which preserves us from future sins. Second is confession, which purges past sins. Prayer is shown when it is said, "Behold a certain ruler came up," (v. 18) For he who wishes, etc., ought first approach Christ. He who wishes to supplicate the king, first approaches him. If it is asked, "And how can we approach Christ, since he is in heaven?" I say, it is not necessary that we approach him bodily, but intellectually, by thinking that you see him sitting on the throne. This is how a man approaches. And just as the one who speaks with the king, genuflects, and uncovers his head, so also in prayer, because the fact that a man approaches, he ought to pray. Therefore it is said of the ruler, that he approached him, and made a supplication of him. See how he shows us to pray. Therefore David, "Come to him and be

enlightened," (Ps 33:6). Whoever shall pray like this ruler, his prayer will be accepted; should he pray otherwise, he will not obtain anything. Here are the aromatic herbs, which preserve man.

Note here the example or miracle of the young merchant, devoted to the Virgin Mary, who every day by contemplating the twelve blessings [gratias] given to the Virgin Mary, according to the twelve parts of her person, said twelve Hail Marys. First he thought about and was contemplating the head of Mary, filled with wisdom more than the patriarchs and the prophets, etc., and so he said the first Ave Maria. Then the eyes, how often she gazed at Christ. Third the ears, how she heard the sermons of Christ. Fourth the nose, how she had sensed the smell of the body of Christ on the day of his birth. Fifth, her lips, how often she had kissed Christ. Sixth the breasts which had nursed the Son of God. Seventh the heart, filled with the fire of love. Eighth the arms by which she had embraced Christ. Nine, her womb, like the chamber of Christ. Tenth, knees, how she had prayed. Eleventh the legs, how she had journeyed at great effort when she had lost her son, when he was twelve years old. Twelfth, the soul filled with all perfection, and the body with penitential affliction. Note how when the aforesaid young man was going to the fair, on the way he came upon robbers, etc. From this miracle you are able to know how prayer made to God is an aromatic herb. Therefore Christ said, "we ought always to pray, and not to faint," (Lk 18:1), every morning and evening.

Second this ruler demonstrated sacramental confession, which purges us from past sins when he said the words, "Even now my daughter is dead," (Mt 9:19). Immediately after mortal sin "my daughter, "that is my soul, "is dead." So for good reason and from good advice, sin should be confessed immediately, every day. Now many say, "I shall wait for Lent." and so a stain falls on your tunic. You should never say I shall wait for a year? Behold why he says, "Now dead?" Whoever does not wish to confess even in Lent, is punished first in the soul which is entombed in hell, second in body, because he should not be buried in blessed ground [the cemetery] *Extra de poe. et re. c. omnis. vide supra domi 18. ser 1, in fine.* [citation from Canon Law]. Note why the parish priest [curatus] ought to have in writing who confessed and who didn't. "He who hides his sins, shall not prosper: but he who shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy." (Prov 28:13) See why he says, "My daughter," etc.

Second, the first part says, "come, lay your hand upon her," (v.18). See here absolution. Before someone confesses, he is the dwelling of demons. For as many as he has mortal sins, so many demons he is said to have. Of St. Mary Magdalen the evangelists say that Christ cast out seven demons, that is seven mortal sins, because we don't read that she was possessed, but having made confession Christ came through grace. Therefore he said, "Come Lord." And Christ, "I shall come, etc.

It is the teaching of theology that in absolution not only does Christ come through grace, but also through a personal presence, and not only Christ but also the whole Trinity. John 14:23, " If any one love me, he will keep my word," – namely that which he said through the lips of the Apostle James, "Confess therefore your sins one to another:

and pray one for another," (Jam 5:16) – "and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." See here the commandment of penance.

Penance is called the hand which has five fingers. The first is the thumb, and it is contrition of the heart. Second is the firm purpose of amendment. Third is penitential affliction, because just as the flesh was there the occasion of sin, so also it should do penance. Fourth is forgiveness of injuries, by thinking that you have inflicted major injuries on Christ. The doctors say that in this finger is the heart vein. Therefore in weddings the ring is placed there, for reminding them that they should love one another wholeheartedly. The fifth is the restitution for injustices, both of reputation as well as of goods. Behold why he says, "Lay your hand," because thus God promises, "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he has committed, ... living he shall live, and shall not die," (Ez 18:21).

VIRTUOUS KINDLINESS

I say second, that in the second part of the gospel is shown the second virtue of Christ, which is called virtuous kindliness [benignitas virtuosa], when it says, "And behold a woman," up to "from that hour."

"And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. 21 For she said within herself: If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed. 22 But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. vv. 20-22

See here the virtuous kindliness of Christ, because since this woman ought to be punished because she approached against the law, cf Leviticus 15, Christ not only did not punish her but even consoled her. And in this part should be planted aromatic herbs, namely political ethics, which are for the good rule of the community. And for this two points must be made. First, who is this woman who has etc.? This woman is the community, which abounds in notorious sins. Notable and notorious sins are called bloody in sacred scripture. Authority: David, who sinned gravely by lust and homicide, because there are consequences, and he believed etc. Therefore it was said to him: "Come out, come out, you man of blood, and you man of Belial," (2 Kg 16:7), and he asked pardon of God saying, "Deliver me from blood," Ps 50:16. How is this corruption of the community cured? I say by touching the cloak of Christ, which is sacred scripture. Reason, because just as by clothes a person is covered, so by sacred scriptures Christ. Therefore the Jews alone saw the clothing. Of this garment Isa. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation: and with the robe of justice he has covered me," (Isa 61:10). Note when it is said in the plural, "with the garments," because sacred scripture is not contained in one book, but in many. Second he says "with the robe of justice," because all sacred scripture is one, by which Christ is clothed. If therefore the community here suffers from a flow of blood, and already stinks of ill fame, and is slipping gradually and goes to destruction, the remedy is to touch the hem of Christ, namely sacred scripture, by doing those things which it says against the six deadly sins, and so it will be cured. The first sin is diabolical superstition. Second, blasphemy of divine things. Third the neglect of holy days.

Fourth, gambling. Fifth, hidden orgies [lupanaria secreta]. Sixth criminal gangs. The community is not imperiled from secret sins.

GLORIOUS SUBLIMITY

Third, I say that the glorious sublimity of Christ in the third part of the gospel, where it says, " When Jesus was come into the house, " up to the end.

23 And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a rout, 24 He said: Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25 And when the multitude was put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand. And the maid arose. 26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country.

On this board [tabula] should be planted the aromatic herbs of economic teaching, for the good rule of the household [domus]. Christ does three things in the raising of this girl in which is shown the whole regime of the house. First he casts out of the house the mourners, and those making a din, in which is signified the exclusion of bad associations. If you wish to rule your house, you should drive the wicked out. Also not only should you expel evil persons, but also evil customs. So if the family has a habit of not attending Mass, you should give them the opportunity, because it is necessary to render [to God] an account for them. Therefore scripture: " But if any man," i.e. the head of the household, "has not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he has denied the faith." (1 Tim 5:8).

Second, he "took her by the hand," (v. 25). See the protection of Christ. It shall keep your house in abundance and in peace and you can say with David, "You have held me by my right hand," of prosperity, "and by your will you have conducted me, and with your glory you have received me." (Ps 72: 24). Third saying to the girl, "Arise." Behold the collection [collatio] of spiritual grace, "Rise you who are sleeping, and arise from the dead: and Christ shall enlighten you," (Eph 5:14).