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Wednesday's Gospel: Monuments of Love

Gospel for Wednesday in the
11th Week of Ordinary Time,
and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt* 6:1-6.16-18)

“Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have

received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that

your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Commentary

In today's Gospel passage, our Lord offers us three great “monuments” that we can raise up in our Christian life: almsgiving, prayer and fasting. These are three wonderful works that please our Father who is in heaven.

And so that these actions do not lose their value, we need to carry them out facing God. Giving alms, praying or mortifying ourselves just to look good and give the impression that “we are good people” tarnishes an inherently beautiful action. It would be like covering over an artistic monument with a veil or adding an

inexperienced brushstroke to a painting that was already finished.

In setting forth these teachings, Jesus repeats in each one this phrase: *your Father who sees in secret will reward you*. We all sense that good works should be acknowledged, and our Lord doesn't deny this. But he reminds us that the best acknowledgement is the one that comes from God. Unfortunately, people can compliment someone today and criticize them tomorrow. But God's fatherly look never falters.

God gives great value to our charity, our prayer and our sacrifices, no matter how small and hidden they might seem. When we reach heaven, we will contemplate with Him the monuments of love that we have built in our lives, and we will be happy to discover the immense value they have in his eyes.

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