Dimanche V apres Pâques 2014

« be doers of the Word [Parole], and not hearers only » (James 1:22) [Please translate this phrase yourself—the Crampon is not good here.]

In the continuation of the Epistle of St. James today, the Apostle bids us to « be doers of the Word [Parole], and not hearers only. »

To do the Word [Parole], we must first know the Word—and this Word is none other than the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, Jesus-Christ. There can be no truly Christian action apart from knowledge of Christ. St. James writes that the true hearer of the Word is the one « qui fixe son regard sur la loi parfaite >, the one who pours over the Perfect Law of the Gospel, “meditating upon it day and night” as the Psalmist says. This daily, prayful meditation on the Word of God is the absolute foundation of the Christian life, and there can be no spiritual progress without it. Inasmuch as our current culture empasizes the value of DOING more than the value of BEING, it is important to be counter-cultural: we must not immerse ourselves in exterior works at the expense of our interior life, but rather, immerse ourselves in God, in order that our works might bear fruit.

To this end, St. James gives three eminently practical directions: In the first place, “bridle the tongue”. In order to bridle the tongue, we must FIRST bridle the mind, check it when we realize that we are entertaining thoughts of anger, jealously, envy, pride, and drag our attention back to the Foot of the Cross. Second, “Visit the orphans and widows.” That is, practice spiritual and corporal works of mercy towards all, with a “preferential option” for the most vulnerable. The third practical directive brings us back to the beginning: in all exterior works, we must “se préserver pur des souillures de ce monde.” In the terse proverb of Seneca, “As often as I have been among men, I returned home less a man.” To preserve ourselves unstained in the world requires interior silence, the practice and cultivation of solitude. For indeed, as it says in the Imitation of Christ: “In silence and in stillness…[the soul becomes] more familiar with her Creator…Whoever withdraws from the world, God will draw near unto him, together with His holy Angels.”