

THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Twenty-seventh Sunday of the Year



Many of you will have seen the film '*Les Miserables*', watched the series on television or read the book. It describes the release of a criminal, who had been chained in the galleys for nineteen years. His sufferings had embittered him and made him more like an animal than a man. When he came to the town no one would receive him, because they knew him to be an ex-convict and dangerous. They would not even allow him to sleep in a dog kennel. At last he came to the house of a good Bishop. He shouted in a harsh voice,

'Look here, I am a galley slave. Here is my yellow passport. It says, "This man is very dangerous." Now, will you give me a little food and let me sleep in the stable.'

The Bishop said, 'Sit down and prepare to have supper with me.'

After supper the Bishop handed him one of the silver candlesticks, which he had received as a Christmas present, and led him to the best bedroom. In the middle of the night the convict awoke. He felt that the time had come to extract revenge for all his wrongs. He remembered the silver spoons and forks that had been used at supper and made up his mind to steal them. So he took what he could find, sprang into the garden and disappeared.

The following morning the Bishop discovered his loss! An hour or so later five soldiers arrived at the Bishop's house accompanied by the galley slave under close arrest. The Bishop swiftly assessed the situation and, addressing the galley slave, said with a smile,

'I'm so glad to see you. You forgot to take the candlesticks I gave you!'

The soldiers were astonished and exclaimed that they thought he had stolen the plate and that is why they had arrested him.

'No,' said the Bishop, 'it is a mistake; I gave him the silver.'

When the soldiers had departed, the galley slave whispered,

'Am I free? May I go?'

'Yes,' said the bishop, 'but take your candlesticks, and do not go through the garden. The front door is always open to you night and day.'

Prayer for the week

Heavenly Father, we ask you to give us grace which will make us sensitive to the needs of others. Let your Holy Spirit flow through us, so that we may never refuse an appeal for help, so that we may find our joy in service and not in selfishness, in giving and not in getting; in sharing and not in keeping. Help us to set a Christian example wherever we are and to reflect in our lives that love which Jesus came to reveal.