

Jesus † Mary † Joseph
Chapter 21 - Holy Fear of God
Christ:

My child, if you desire to make progress along the way to Heaven, keep in your heart a holy fear of the Divine Justice. It is only reasonable that you should be afraid to hurt yourself. When you bring sin into your life, you are making yourself an object of My justice. I, the Eternal Truth, cannot accept you as good if you have become bad by sin. Therefore, keep your earthly desires under control and refuse to surrender yourself to unnecessary or dangerous pleasures. This holy fear of My justice will help you to stay free of the slavery of earthly attractions.

2. It is not very wise to think only of having a pleasant time and to forget your spiritual needs. It is reasonable and good for you to be afraid of losing My graces. Without them you can never reach the perfect life and happiness of Heaven.

3. If your love of Me is not yet strong enough to hold you back from doing wrong, then let your fear of hell keep you from sinning. A man who lacks this wise and holy fear, will not go on doing good for long. He will soon fall into Satan's snares, as he becomes more careless in avoiding temptations. This fear is a holy thing because it is given by Me. It makes a man strong in the daily battle against his unreasoning and selfish desires.

4. Even the saints, with all their confidence in Me, had this fear of Divine Justice. They knew the weakness and blindness of human nature. They were not less careful, nor less humble, because of their great virtues and many graces.

Think:

If my love of God ever fails to hold me back from sin, it will be because my self-love is strong at the moment. Yet, even then I can make a last effort against this misguided love by the thought of God's justice, which will deal with me as I deserve. It is a foolish man, indeed, who will refuse to consider the harm that can overtake him if he follows a certain path. This holy fear of God's justice is "the beginning of wisdom" because it guides men on to a holier life.

Pray:

My God, I do not want to presume so much on Your love as to forget Your justice. You will some day deal with each man according to his works. I desire to make good use of all the gifts which Your love daily sends me. May I never forget that I must one day account for my misuse of these gifts. This thought will help me to fight sin, and to please You more in my daily life. Amen.

November 17th

Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop, Confessor (†270)

Saint Gregory was born in the Pont, of distinguished parents who were still engaged in the superstitions of paganism. He lost his father at the age of fourteen, and began to reflect on the folly of idolatry's fables. He recognized the unity of God and was becoming disposed to accept the truths of Christianity. His father had destined him for the legal profession, in which the art of oratory is very necessary, and in this pursuit he was

succeeding very well, having learned Latin. He was counseled to apply himself to Roman law.

Gregory and his brother Athenodorus, later to be a bishop like himself, had a sister living in Palestine at Caesarea. Not far from that city was a school of law, and in Caesarea itself, another which the famous Origen had opened in the year 231 and in which he was teaching philosophy. The two brothers heard Origen there, and that master discovered in them a remarkable capacity for knowledge, and more important still, rare dispositions for virtue. He strove to inspire love for truth in them and an ardent desire to attain greater knowledge and the possession of the Supreme Good; and the two brothers soon put aside their intentions to study law. Gregory studied also in Alexandria for three years, after a persecution drove his master, Origen, from Palestine, but returned there with the famous exegete in 238. He was then baptized, and in the presence of a large audience delivered a speech in which he testified to his gratitude towards his teacher, praising his methods, and thanking God for so excellent a professor.

When he returned to his native city of Neocaesarea in the Pont, his friends urged him to seek high positions, but Gregory desired to retire into solitude and devote himself to prayer. For a time he did so, often changing his habitation, because the archbishop of the region desired to make him Bishop of Neocaesarea. Eventually he was obliged to consent. That city was very prosperous, and the inhabitants were corrupted by paganism. Saint Gregory, with Christian zeal and charity, and with the aid of the gift of miracles which he had received, began to attempt every means to bring them to the light of Christ. As he lay awake one night an elderly man entered his room, and pointed to a Lady of superhuman beauty who accompanied him, radiant with heavenly light. This elderly man was Saint John the Evangelist, and the Lady of Light was the Mother of God. She told Saint John to give Gregory the instruction he desired; thereupon he gave Saint Gregory a creed which contained in all its plenitude the doctrine of the Trinity. Saint Gregory consigned it to writing, directed all his preaching by it, and handed it down to his successors. This creed later preserved his flock from the Arian heresy.

He converted a pagan priest one day, when the latter requested a miracle, and a very large rock moved to another location at his command. The pagan priest abandoned all things to follow Christ afterwards. One day the bishop planted his staff beside the river which passed alongside the city and often ravaged it by floods. He commanded it never again to pass the limit marked by his staff, and in the time of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, who wrote of his miracles nearly a hundred years later, it had never done so. The bishop settled a conflict which was about to cause bloodshed between two brothers, when he prayed all night beside the lake whose possession they were disputing. It dried up and the miracle ended the difficulty.

When the persecution of Decius began in 250, the bishop counseled his faithful to depart and not expose themselves to trials perhaps too severe for their faith; and none fell into apostasy. He himself retired to a desert, and when he was pursued was not seen by the soldiers. On a second attempt they found him praying with his companion, the converted

pagan priest, now a deacon; they had mistaken them the first time for trees. The captain of the soldiers was convinced this had been a miracle, and became a Christian to join him. Some of his Christians were captured, among them Saint Troadus the martyr, who merited the grace of dying for the Faith. The persecution ended at the death of the emperor in 251.

It is believed that Saint Gregory died in the year 270, on the 17th of November. Before his death he asked how many pagans still remained in the city, and was told there were only seventeen. He thanked God for the graces He had bestowed on the population, for when he arrived, there had been only seventeen Christians.

Source: Les Petits Bollandistes: Vies des Saints, by Msgr. Paul Guérin (Bloud et Barral: Paris, 1882), Vol. 13.

Daily Thoughts and Prayers For Our Beloved Dead Seventeenth Day

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” When we stand before God in the hour of judgment, will we not welcome the Holy Souls who will throng about His throne to plead our cause, if we have shown ourselves merciful and compassionate toward them in their hour of need.

Prayer: Our Father. 3 Hail Marys. Glory Be. De Profundis.

O Lord Jesus Christ, relieve the sufferings of Thy departed servants, that they may not languish in Purgatory because of our neglect and thoughtlessness. Deliver them from their pains that they may praise Thee forever in Heaven and intercede for us when the hour of death draws near.

Ejaculation: Sacred Heart of Jesus, I trust in Thee. (300 days)

De Profundis (Psalm 129)

- 1 Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord:
- 2 Lord, hear my voice. Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.
- 3 If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities: Lord, who shall stand it.
- 4 For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness: and by reason of Thy law, I have waited for Thee, O Lord. My soul hath relied on His Word:
- 5 My soul hath hoped in the Lord.
- 6 From the morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord.
- 7 Because with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him plentiful redemption.
- 8 And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Source: Douay Rheims Bible, Imp. 1899

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