

Father Goffine's instructions for the 1st Sunday of Advent.

From the Explanation of the Epistles and Gospels by Father Leonard Goffine.

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PART I

Explanation of the Epistles and Gospels for Sundays and Holy Days, to which are added instructions on Catholic Faith and Morals.

SHORT INSTRUCTIONS ON THE MANNER OF USING THIS BOOK

My dear Catholic, before you commence to read these instructions:

- 1) Place yourself in the presence of God.
- 2) Humble yourself before Him, sincerely imploring His forgiveness.
- 3) Pray that you may be enlightened, that you may love Him.

Recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin and to the saints.

Then, step by step, read the instructions carefully. After each point reflect upon the truth you have just read, asking yourself:

1. *What must I believe?* That which I have just read. Then make an act of faith, saying: "O Lord! I will believe this truth, help my faith, increase my faith!"
2. *What must I now do?* I must correct the faults opposed to this truth.
3. *What have I done heretofore?* Unhappily, O God, I have acted in contradiction to this truth; how differently, O Jesus, from Thee and from Thy saints!
4. *What shall I now do?* Here make a firm resolution to put these truths into immediate practice, to contend against and overcome the faults opposed to them, and to acquire new virtue.

Then finish the reading with acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition; repeat the same each time you read in this or in any book of devotion, and you will soon perceive that great benefit for your soul is derived from such exercises.

EXPLANATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE CHURCH YEAR

What is understood by the Church Year?

By the Church Year is understood the succession of those holy days and seasons, reoccurring with each succeeding year, which the Church has appointed to be celebrated, that the faithful may be reminded of the divine graces and mysteries, may praise God, and occupy themselves, at such times, with pious, devotional exercises in His honor, and for their own sanctification.

When does the Church Year begin, and when terminate?

It begins with the First Sunday of Advent and concludes with the last Sunday after Pentecost.

How is the Church Year divided?

Into Sundays, weekdays, festivals, holy days, and fast days.

What is Sunday?

Sunday is the first day of the week, sanctified in an especial manner by God Himself; therefore, it should be devoted exclusively to His service. The Apostles called it the "Lord's Day."

Why should Sunday be devoted exclusively to God?

Because it is but proper that man, who is created for the service of God only, should reserve at least one out of the seven days of the week for that service, and for the salvation of his own soul; again, in the beginning, God ordered that on the seventh day or Saturday, on which He rested after finishing the work of creation (Ex. 20:11), man should also rest (Ex. 20:8-10), abstain from all worldly employment, and attend only to the worship of God. This was the Sabbath, or day of rest, of the Jews which they were required to keep holy (Lev. 23:3).

But the Catholic Church, authorized by Christ, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and directed by the Apostles, has made Sunday, the first day of the week, the day of rest for Christians. The holy martyr Justin (+ 167 A.D.) makes mention of this fact. Sunday was designated as the day of rest for the Christians partly to distinguish them from the Jews, as well as for the following reasons: On this day God commenced the creation of the world, so too on this day He crowned the glorious work of our Redemption by Christ's Resurrection; on this day, as Bellarmine says, Christ was born, was circumcised, and was baptized; and on this day the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles.

Why is this day called Sunday?

Because on this day, as St. Ambrose says, Christ, the sun of justice, having driven away the darkness of hell, shone forth, as the rising sun, in the glory of the Resurrection (Mal. 4:2).

How should the Catholic keep Sunday holy, and how does he profane it?

Sunday is kept holy by abstaining from all servile work performed for wages or gain, or not commanded by necessity; by passing the day in works of piety; in hearing Mass devoutly, listening to the word of God in Church and spending the day at home in a quiet manner pleasing to God. If justly prevented from being present at Church on Sundays and holy days of obligation, we should unite, in spirit, with the priest and the faithful assembled there, and pray fervently; during the rest of the day we should read books of devotion, and endeavor to perform some work of charity. Sunday is profaned by being spent either in idleness, or in unnecessary servile work, or in that which is still worse, debauchery, gambling, dancing, and other sinful actions. It would be better, that is, less sinful, as St. Augustine says, to till the field on such days, than to spend them in frivolous,

dangerous, and sinful pleasures. But it is not forbidden, after having properly attended divine service, to participate on Sundays and holy days in honorable, decorous entertainment of the mind and heart.

What ought a Catholic to think of dances and fairs on Sundays and holy days of obligation?

The amusement of dancing on such days cannot possibly be pleasing to God. Dancing in general is an occasion of sin. The council of Baltimore protests against round dances especially, because they are highly indecent. Buying and selling without great necessity, as also holding fairs on Sundays and holy days are likewise sinful. God never ordained His days of rest for the gratification of avarice. What rewards are offered for keeping Sunday sacred, and what punishment is incurred by its desecration?

The Old Law promised blessings, spiritual and temporal to those who kept holy the Sabbath day (Lev. 26), and threatened all evils and misfortunes to those who desecrated it. Thus, to show how much He condemned its profanation, God caused a man to be stoned to death for gathering wood upon that day (Num. 15:32). The Catholic Church from her very beginning, and in several councils (Council. Elv. A.D. 313, Paris 829) has enjoined the keeping holy of Sundays and holy days, and experience proves in our days especially, that, as the consequence of the constantly increasing profanation of Sundays and holy days, immorality and poverty are growing greater; a manifest sign that God never blesses those who refuse to devote a few days of the year to His honor and service.

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PRAYER FOR ALL SUNDAYS. O God, who hast appointed Sunday, that we should serve Thee and participate in Thy grace, grant that always on this day our faith may be renewed, and our hearts incited to the praise and adoration of Thy Majesty; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

What are festivals?

Festivals are days set apart by the Catholic Church, to celebrate with due solemnity the mysteries of religion, or the memory of the saints. Hence they are of two kinds, the festivals of our Lord, and the festivals of the saints.

Has the Church the right to institute festivals and fast days?

To deny her such right would be to place her below the Jewish Synagogue, which in acknowledgment of benefits received, established many festivals, such as the Feast of Lots (Esther 9:26); the festival in honor of Judith's victory over Holofernes (Jud. 16:31); the feast of the Dedication of the Temple (II Mac. 4:56), which our Lord Himself celebrated with them (Jn. 10:22). Should not the Catholic Church, therefore, celebrate with equal solemnity the far greater blessings she has received from God? God Himself, through Moses, commanded the Jews to celebrate and, as it were, to immortalize by the Pasch their

redemption from Egyptian captivity; the reception of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, by the festival of Pentecost; their forty years journey through the desert, and their living in tents, by the feast of the Tabernacles. How unjustly then would the Church conduct herself, if she would not commemorate, as the Old Law did, by the institution of certain festivals in honor of God and His saints, those graces of which He has made her partaker, through Christ and His saints, since our Lord gave to the Apostles and to the bishops, their successors, the power to bind and to loose, that is, to make ordinances and, as circumstances may require, changes for the salvation of the people (Mt. 18:18)! These festivals are instituted to assist the faithful in working out their salvation. And from this very right of the Church to institute festivals, follows her right to change or abolish them at her discretion, whenever her object of directing them to the honor of God is no longer reached, and the faithful in this case would be as much bound to obey her, as when she established them, for: Who hears not the Church, says Christ, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican (Mt. 18:17).

How are holy days and festivals to be observed?

They are to be observed like Sunday. Besides we should endeavor to understand well the mysteries and blessings of God and the lives and labors of the saints on whose account the festivals have been instituted. This we can do by hearing Mass and attending catechetical instruction, or by reading devotional books at home, in order to induce ourselves to love and praise God and to imitate the saints, which is the object the Church has in view in instituting festivals. But, unfortunately, as this object of the Church is responded to by few, and as, on the contrary, the holy days are spent very differently from what the Church intended, she has done well in abolishing certain festivals, or transferring them to Sunday, that they may be at least better regarded, and no offence offered to God by their profanation.

What are fast days?

Fast days are those days on which the Church commands us to mortify the body by abstaining from flesh-meat, or by taking but one full meal in the day. Those days on which besides abstinence from meat, but one full meal is allowed, are called Fast Days of Obligation; those days on which it is only required to abstain from flesh-meat, are called Days of Abstinence.

Can the Church institute fast days?

She can, because the Church of Christ, as mother of the faithful, has the power to make all useful and necessary regulations for the salvation of their souls. In doing so she only follows the example of our Lord, her Head, for He fasted, and of the Apostles, who, even in their day, ordered the Christians to abstain from blood and things strangled (Acts. 15:29), in order not to prevent the conversion of the Jews, who, on account of the Old Law, abhorred the blood and meat of strangled animals. This prohibition was removed

when this danger no longer existed. “Fasting is no new invention, as many imagine,” writes the Father of the Church, Basil the Great, “it is a precious treasure, which our forefathers preserved long before our days, and have handed down to us.”

Why has the Church instituted fast days, and for what purpose?

The Catholic Church, from the very beginning, has looked upon external fasting only as a means of penance. Her object in instituting fast days, therefore, was and is that by fasting the faithful should mortify their flesh and their evil desires, seek to pacify God, render satisfaction for their sins, practice obedience to the Church, their mother, and by practicing these virtues become more zealous and fervent in the service of God. Innumerable texts of Scripture, as well as experience prove that fasting aids to this end. The Fathers of the Church praise very highly the usefulness of fasting, and our Lord predicted that the Church, His spouse, would fast, when He, her Bridegroom, should be taken from her (Mt. 9:15).

What are we to think of those heretics and Catholics who condemn the command of the Church?

Those Catholics who condemn this command, condemn their mother, the Church, and Christ her founder, her head, who fasted; they give scandal to the faithful children of the Church, and do themselves great harm, because they become slaves of the flesh, subjecting their souls to the evil desires of the body and thus fall into many sins. They prove moreover, that they have departed from the spirit of the early Christians who fasted with great strictness; that they are too cowardly to overcome themselves, and offer God the sacrifice of obedience to His Church. The heretics have the Bible against them, if they assert that the command of the Church to fast is useless and unnecessary (Acts 13:2-3): that Bible which they so often quote, as well as all Christian antiquity, experience and reason. One of the Fathers of the Church, St. Basil, writes: “Honor ever the ancient practice of fasting, for it is as old as the creation of man. We must fast if we would return to paradise from which gluttony expelled us.” Every rational, reflecting person must acknowledge, as experience teaches, that bodily health, and unimpaired mind are best preserved and improved by temperance and abstinence, especially from flesh-meat. It was by continual fasting that many of the fathers of the desert preserved vigorous health, often living beyond the usual limit of man's age, sometimes for more than a century, even in tropical countries, where a lifetime is generally shorter than in colder climates. St. Paul, the first hermit, lived one hundred and thirteen years; St. Anthony one hundred and five; St. Arsenius one hundred and twenty; St. John, the silent, one hundred and four; St. Theodesius, abbot, one hundred and five. The Catholic Church here proves herself a good mother to us, for in this command she regards not only the spiritual, but also the corporal welfare of her children. The words of our Lord: “Not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth a man: but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man” (Mr. 15:11), was meant for the Pharisees who judged certain kinds of food prohibited by law, or that

had been touched by unclean hands, to be unclean. Had He intended it to be understood in the sense the contemners of fasting assert, He would have declared intoxication by drinking, or even the taking of poison, to be permitted; certainly, food being the gift of God and therefore good, does not make man a sinner, but disobedience to the command and gluttony make him such.

Which are the most important fast days, and days of abstinence?

All the weekdays of Lent; the Fridays in Advent; the Ember days for the four seasons of the year; and the Vigils of All-Saints, Christmas, Whitsunday, and the Assumption. If the Feast, however, occurs on Monday, the vigil is kept on the Saturday before; as Sunday is never a fast day.'

The days of abstinence are, all Fridays in the year, excepting Christmas day when it falls on Friday; and all fast days of obligation, excepting those on which the use of flesh-meat is expressly allowed by the proper authorities. Soldiers and sailors in the service of the United States of America, however, are exempted from the rule of abstinence throughout the year; Ash Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday in Holy Week, the Vigils of the Assumption and Christmas excepted.

A day of abstinence is that on which it is not allowed to eat flesh-meat.

What are the Ember days and why are they instituted?

The Ember days are the first Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of each of the four seasons of the year, set apart as fast days by the Catholic Church. According to the testimony of Pope Leo, they originated in the time of the Apostles, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost to dedicate each season of the year to God by a few days of penance, or, as it were, to pay three days interest, every three months, on the graces received from God. The Church has also commanded us to fast at the beginning of each of the four seasons of the year, because it is at this time that she ordains the priests and other servants of the Church, which even the Apostles did with much prayer and fasting. Thus she desires that during the Ember days Christians should fervently ask of God by prayer, by fasting and other good works, worthy pastors and servants, on whom depends the welfare of the whole Christian flock; she desires that in the spring Ember days we should ask God's blessing for the fertility of the earth; in summer for the preservation of the fruits of the field, in autumn when the harvest is ripe, and in winter when it is sheltered, that we should offer to God by fasting and prayer a sacrifice of thanks, petitioning Him to assist us, that we may not use His gifts for our soul's detriment, but that we refer all praise to Him, the fountain of all good, and assist our neighbor according to our means.

What are vigils?

They are the eves of certain festivals, which the Church has ordered to be observed as fast days. The early Christians prepared themselves by fasting, praying and watching, as

signified by the Latin word “*Vigili*,” for the coming festival. Thus to this day in the Vigil Mass the priest does not say: “*Ite Missa est*” - Go ye, Mass is over,” but, “*Benedicamus Domino*”; “Let us praise the Lord,” because in olden times when Mass was celebrated at night, the Christians were exhorted to continue praising God in Church until the dawn of the festival. This nightwatch the Church has now abolished, partly on account of the declining zeal of the Christians, and partly on account of the fear of its being abused; the fast, however, has been retained to honor God and His saints, to obtain their intercession, and to mortify the flesh according to their example. “By fasting on the eves of festivals,” says St. Bernard, “*We learn that we can enter heaven only through many sufferings.*”

Why does the Church forbid the use of flesh-meat on Fridays and Saturdays?

“The Church,” says Pope Innocent, “forbids the use of flesh-meat on Fridays because our Lord died on that day, and on Saturdays because on that day He rested in the sepulchre, and also that we may be better prepared by this abstinence for Sunday.” In many dioceses the use of flesh-meat is allowed on Saturdays, and the permission is so marked in the calendar, and every year announced to the people; for this dispensation the faithful should perform another good work and fast the more conscientiously on Fridays.

Who is bound to fast, and who not?

All Christians over seven years of age, unless for some reason excused, are required under pain of mortal sin, to abstain from flesh-meat on all days of fasting and abstinence; all those who are over twenty-one years of age are allowed to take but one full meal a day. A severe illness or a dispensation obtained for valid reasons, excuses from abstinence on Fridays: those are dispensed from fasting on one meal, who cannot fulfill the command without great inconvenience, such as: those recovering from sickness, pregnant and nursing women, old and infirm people, those who are engaged in hard labor, undertaking severe journeys, and the poor who have no full meals; also, those who are prevented by the fast from some better work, incumbent upon their office, or dictated by Christian charity.

These persons mentioned are excused from fasting, in so far that they are permitted to eat, whenever they need food, but must still abstain from the use of flesh-meat unless dispensed from the command of abstinence. They should, however, be sincerely grieved to be unable to unite with the whole Church in such meritorious work, and should endeavor to make amends by prayer, alms and other good deeds.

Who are those who sin against fasting?

First, those who deliberately and without sufficient cause do not abstain from the use of flesh-meat; secondly, those who without any of the excuses mentioned, take more than one full meal a day; thirdly, those who eat between the time of meals; fourthly, those who indulge in long, extravagant and sumptuous dinners, and excessive drinking, all of which are opposed to the spirit of penance and mortification. Lastly, when on a fast day meat and fish are used at the same meal.

Is it not allowed to eat anything in the evening, on fast days?

The early Christians were so rigorous in their penance that they contented themselves with one temperate meal on fast days, and that was generally of bread and water, taken only in the evening; but as, in the course of time, the penitential zeal declined, the Church like an indulgent mother permitted, besides the full meal at noon, a small quantity of food to be taken in the evening, about as much as would make the fourth part of a regular meal, or not to appear scrupulous, as much as would not cause too great an aggravation, or exhaust the strength necessary for the next day's labor; but “*to wish to feel no aggravation in fasting, is to wish not to fast at all.*”

With what intention should we fast?

First, with the intention of doing penance and punishing the body for the sins which we have committed by yielding to its evil desires; secondly, to satisfy God and to unite ourselves with our Lord in his forty days fast; thirdly, to obtain strength to lead a chaste, pure life; fourthly, to give to the poor that which is saved by fasting.

- NOTE. Whatever is necessary to be understood further in regard to this subject, will be found in the instructions on the forty days fast.

INSTRUCTIONS ON ADVENT

What is the meaning of Advent, and what do we understand by the term?

The word Advent signifies coming, and by it is understood the visible coming of the Son of God into this world, at two different times.

It was when the Son of God, conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the immaculate Virgin Mary, was born, according to the flesh, in the fullness of time, and sanctified the world by His coming, for which the patriarchs and prophets had so longed (Gen. 49:10; Is. 64:1; Lk. 10:24).

Since Christ had not yet come, how could the Just of the Old Law be saved?

Immediately after their sin, God revealed to our first parents that His only-begotten Son would become man and redeem the world (Gen. 3:15). In the hope of this Redeemer and through His merits, all in the old covenant who participated in His merits by innocence or by penance, and who died in the grace of God, were saved, although they were excluded from heaven until the Ascension of Christ.

When will the second coming of Christ take place?

At the end of the world when Christ will come, with great power and majesty, to judge both the living and the dead.

What is Advent, and why has the Church instituted it?

Advent is that solemn time, immediately preceding Christmas, instituted by the Church in order that we should, in the first place, meditate on the Incarnation of Christ, the love, patience and humility which He has shown us, and prove our gratitude to Him, because He came from the bosom of His heavenly Father into this valley of tears, to redeem us; secondly, that we may prepare ourselves by sincere repentance, fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, and other works pleasing to God, for the coming of Christ and His birth in our hearts, and thus participate in the graces which He has obtained for us; finally, that He may be merciful to us, when He shall come again as judge of the world. “*Watch ye, for ye know not at what hour your Lord will come*” (Mt. 5:42). “*Wherefore be you also ready; because at what hour you know not, the Son of man will come*” (Mt. 24:44).

How was Advent formerly observed?

Very differently from now. It then commenced with the Feast of St. Martin, and was observed by the faithful like the Forty Days' Fast, with strict penance and devotional exercises, as even now most of the religious communities do to the present day. The Church has forbidden all turbulent amusements, weddings, dancing and concerts, during Advent. Pope Sylverius ordered that those who seldom receive Holy Communion should, at least, do so on every Sunday in Advent.

How should this solemn time be spent by Christians?

They should recall, during these four weeks, the four thousand years in which the just under the Old Law expected and desired the promised Redeemer, think of those days of darkness in which nearly all nations were blinded by Satan and drawn into the most horrible crimes, then consider their own sins and evil deeds and purify their souls from them by a worthy reception of the Sacraments, so that our Lord may come with His grace to dwell in their hearts and be merciful to them in life and in death. Further, to awaken in the faithful the feelings of repentance so necessary for the reception of the Savior in their hearts, the Church orders that besides the observance of certain fast days, the altar shall be draped in violet, that Mass shall be celebrated in violet vestments, that the organ shall be silent and no Gloria sung. Unjust to themselves, disobedient to the Church and ungrateful, indeed, to God are those Christians who spend this solemn time of grace in sinful amusements without performing any good works, with no longing for Christ's Advent into their hearts.

What are Rorate High Masses, and why are they celebrated?

They are the solemn high Masses celebrated in some countries in commemoration of the tidings brought to the Blessed Virgin by the Archangel Gabriel, announcing to her that she was to become the Mother of God; they derive their name from the words of the Introit in

the Votive Mass, *Rorate coeli desuper*. They are celebrated very early in the morning because the Blessed Virgin preceded our Lord, as the aurora precedes the rising sun.

PRAYER IN ADVENT. O God, who by Thy gracious Advent hast brought joy into this world, grant us, we beseech Thee, Thy grace to prepare ourselves by sincere penance for its celebration and for the Last Judgment. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The first Sunday in Advent is the first day of the Church Year, and the beginning of the holy season of Advent. The Church commences on this day to contemplate the coming of the Redeemer, and with the prophets to long for Him; during the entire season of Advent she unites her prayers with their sighs, in order to awaken in her children also the desire for the grace of the Redeemer; above all to move them to true penance for their sins, because these are the greatest obstacles in the path of that gracious Advent; therefore she prays at the Introit of the day's Mass:

INTROIT. To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul: in Thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed: neither let my enemies laugh at me: for none of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded. Show me, O Lord, Thy ways, and teach me Thy paths (Ps. 24). Glory be to the Father.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH. Raise up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy power, and come; that by Thy protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins, and to be saved by Thy deliverance. Through our Lord.

EPISTLE. (Rom. 13:11-14). Brethren, knowing the time, that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep: for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is past, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and strife; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does St. Paul teach us in this epistle?

After fully explaining the duties of a Christian life to the Romans who were converted mainly by St. Peter, he exhorts them to hesitate no longer to fulfill these duties, and he seeks to move their hearts by this time of grace, presented them by the Christian dispensation, and by the shortness of the time of grace.

What is here meant by sleep?

The stupidity and blindness of the soul that, forgetting her God, is sunk in a lukewarm, effeminate, slothful and lustful life, which, when it is gone, leaves nothing more than a dream.

Why does St. Paul say, "salvation is nearer"?

He wishes to impress upon the Romans that they now have far greater hope of salvation than when they first became Christians, and that they should secure it by a pious life, because death, and the moment on which depended their salvation, or eternal reward, was drawing near. "What is our life," says St. Chrysostom, "other than a course, a dangerous course to death, through death to immortality?"

What is the signification of day and night?

The night signifies the time before Christ, a night of darkness, of infidelity and of injustice; the day represents the present time, in which by the gospel Christ enlightens the whole world with the teachings of the true faith.

What are "the works of darkness"?

All sins, and especially those which are committed in the dark, to shun the eye of God and man.

What is the "armor of light"?

That faith, virtue and grace, the spiritual armor, with which we battle against our three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in which armor we should walk honestly before all men. A Christian who in baptism has renounced the devil and all his pomps, must not live in vice, but must put on Christ Jesus, that is, must by the imitation of Christ's virtues adorn his soul, as it were, with a beautiful garment. This text (verse 13) moved St. Augustine to fly from all works of uncleanness in which he had been involved, and to lead a pure life which he had before thought difficult.

ASPIRATION. Grant, O Lord, that we may rise by penance from the sleep of our sins, may walk in the light of Thy grace by the performance of good works, may put on Thee and adorn our souls with the imitation of Thy virtues. Amen.

GOSPEL. (Lk. 21:25-33). At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves, men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. And he spoke to them a similitude: See the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Why does the Church cause the gospel of the Last Judgment to be read on this day?

To move us to penance, and to induce us to prepare our souls for the coming of Christ, by placing the Last Judgment before our minds. Should not the thought of this terrible judgment, when all good and all evil will be revealed, and accordingly be rewarded or punished in the presence of the whole world-should not this thought strengthen us in virtue!

What signs will precede the Last Judgment?

The sun will be obscured, the stars will lose their light and disappear in the firmament (Is. 13:10), lightning and flames will surround the earth, and wither up every thing; the powers of heaven will be moved, the elements brought to confusion; the roaring of the sea with the howling of the winds and the beating of the storms will fill man with terror and dread.

Such evil and distress will come upon the world, that man will wither away for fear, not knowing whither to turn. Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, the holy cross, the terror of the sinners who have scorned it, the consolation of the just who have loved it (Mt. 24:30).

Why will all this come to pass?

Because as the people love the creatures of God so inordinately, more than the Creator, and use them only to His dishonor, He will destroy them in this terrible manner, arming all creatures for vengeance against His enemies (Wis. 5:8-24), and showing by the manner of their destruction the evils which will fall upon all sinners. The darkness of the sun will indicate the darkness of hell; the blood-red moon, the anger and wrath of God; the disappearance and falling of the stars, will represent the fall of sinners into the abyss of hell and their disappearance from earth; and the madness of the elements, will exhibit the rage of the beasts of hell. Sinners will then vainly, and too late, repent that they have attached their hearts to things which will end so horribly, and that only increase their torments.

Why does Christ nevertheless command: "Lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand"?

These words are spoken to the just who as long as they live on earth are like prisoners and exiles, but who at the Last Judgment will be taken body and soul into their long desired fatherland, the kingdom of heaven: into the freedom of the children of God. These will have reason to raise their heads, now bowed in mourning, and to rejoice.

How will the Last Judgment commence?

By the command of God the angels will sound the trumpets, summoning all men from the four parts of the earth to come to judgment (I Thess. 4:15). Then the bodies of the dead

will unite with their souls, and be brought to the valley of Josaphat, and there placed, the just on the right, the wicked on the left (Mt. 25:33). Then the devils as well as the angels will appear; Christ Himself will be seen coming in a cloud, in such power and majesty that the sinners will be filled with terror. They will not dare to look at Him, and will cry to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them (Lk. 23:30).

How will the judgment be held?

The book of conscience, upon which all men are to be judged, and which closed with this life, will be opened. All good and evil thoughts, words, deeds and motives, even the most secret, known only to God, will then be as plainly revealed to the whole world as if they were written on each one's forehead; by these each one will be judged, and be eternally rewarded, or eternally punished.

O God! If we must then give an account of every idle word (Mt. 12:36), how can we stand in the face of so many sinful words and actions!

Why will God hold a universal public Judgment?

Although immediately after death, a special private judgment of each soul takes place, God has ordained a public and universal judgment for the following reasons: First, that it may be clearly shown to all how just has been His private judgment, and also that the body which has been the instrument of sin or of virtue may share in the soul's punishment or reward; secondly, that the justice which they could by no means obtain in this life, may be rendered before the whole world to the oppressed poor, and to persecuted innocence, and that the wicked who have abused the righteous, and yet have been considered honest and good, may be put to shame before all; thirdly, that the graces and means of salvation bestowed upon each, may be made known; fourthly, that the blessed providence of God which often permitted the righteous to suffer evil while the wicked prospered, may be vindicated, and it be shown on that day that His acts are acts of the greatest wisdom; fifthly, that the wicked may learn the goodness of God, not for their comfort or benefit, but for their greater sorrow, that they may see how He rewards even the slightest work performed for His love and honor; finally, that Christ may be exalted before the wicked on earth as before the good in heaven, and that the truth of His words may solemnly be made manifest.

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ASPIRATION. Just art Thou O God, and just are Thy judgments. Ah, penetrate my soul with holy fear of them, that I may be kept always in awe, and avoid sin. Would that I could say with the penitent St. Jerome: "*Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, I seem to hear the awful sound of the trumpet in my ears: 'Arise ye dead, and come to judgment.'*"

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