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U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls.

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

From the Sermons of the Cure of Ars



Feast of the Ascension

“Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: because your reward is very great in heaven.” St. Matthew V. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—Our Lord promising great reward to those who, for love of Him, suffer persecution. This promise causing the fortitude of the martyrs. Magnitude of the reward considered.

I. The Happiness surrounding the Saints. Vision of God. Companionship of the Angels. No fear of loss. Gratification and content. Happiness in proportion to mortification. Hence various degrees in joy.

II. What to do to gain this bliss. General obligations. Duties of wife, of children, of men. Exhortation.

With these consoling words, dear brethren, Jesus Christ encourages His Apostles to undertake with fortitude the sufferings and persecutions which were before them. “Yes, my children,” this loving Father says to them, “you will be the object of the contempt and hatred of the wicked; you will fall a victim to their rage; the people will hate you and bring you before the princes of the earth, so that you may be condemned to the most dreadful chastisements, to the most cruel and ignominious of deaths; but be not discouraged, rather rejoice, for a great recompense awaits you in heaven.” O beautiful heaven, who would not love thee, for thou dost contain so many sublime things! In fact, dear brethren, is it not this thought which makes the Apostles untiring in their apostolical labors, unconquerable in the persecutions which they experience from their enemies?

Animated by the thought of this beautiful heaven, did not the martyrs stand before their executioners with a courage that surprised those tyrants? Was it not the sight of heaven that quenched the heat of the flames which were prepared to consume them, and that blunted the edge of the sword with which they were struck? O how happy they felt to sacrifice their lives, their possessions, for God, in the hope that they would enter into a better life, which shall never end! O blessed inhabitants of the heavenly city, how many tears have you shed, how many sufferings have you endured to obtain possession of your God? They cry out, from the height of their glorious thrones upon which they are seated, to us here below, “O how vastly God has rewarded us for the little good which we have done! Yes, we behold Him, this tender, loving Father; yes, we praise Him, this most amiable Saviour; yes we thank Him, this loving Redeemer,

throughout all eternity. O blessed eternity!” they exclaim, “what sweetness and joys thou dost give us to taste!”

Beautiful heaven, when shall we behold thee? O happy moment! when wilt thou arrive? Without doubt, dear brethren, we all long and pray for such a great good. So that you may long all the more ardently after it, I will show you, as far as lies in my power:

I. The happiness which surrounds the Saints, and

II. The path which we must take to obtain this happiness.

I. First of all, the ecstasy of love which takes possession of the hearts of the elect is produced by the sight of the beauty which they experience in the presence of God. No matter how beautiful and charming an object may appear to us in this world, our mind becomes fatigued after a few moments of enjoyment, and we turn away from it—we pass from one thing to another without being satisfied. But in heaven it is different: rather must God grant us His strength, that we may be able to stand the splendor of His beauty and the tender and charming objects which present themselves to our gaze uninterruptedly; a delight which steeps the souls of the elect into such an abyss of sweetness and love. O blessed abode! O lasting happiness! Who among us will enjoy thee?

Secondly, I say, we shall continually perceive the angels, who glorify the magnitude, the rapture and the everlasting duration of these joys by their hymns of praise. No mortal is capable of understanding what the blessed feel at all this.

Thirdly, when we enjoy a pleasure in this world, we feel at the same time the apprehension of losing it, or that of preserving it; this causes us never to be perfectly contented. In heaven it is otherwise: we find ourselves in the midst of pleasures and joys, and we are sure that they will neither decrease nor be taken away from us.

Fourthly, I say, we will enjoy the great and sweet gratification of receiving reward for all the tears which we have shed, and for all our works of penance performed in this life, without one good thought or one good desire being overlooked. O what joy for a Christian who has despised the world and who has mortified his body.

He will behold the steadfastness with which he resisted every bad thought presented by the devil to sully his imagination; he will remember the earnest preparations before going to confession; his ardent desire to nourish his soul at the altar of God; he will behold how often he impoverished himself to assist his poor and suffering fellow creatures. “O my God, O my God!” he will exclaim every moment, “what recompense for such small deeds!” But so as to inflame the love and gratitude of the elect, God will erect His cross in the midst of His court and depict to them all the sufferings which He was driven to undergo out of His great love and in his desire for our happiness. You can picture to yourself how they will be carried away with love and gratitude; how often during the infinite whole of eternity they will lovingly embrace the cross, remembering that God made use of this cross to procure for them so much bliss!

In regard to the happiness of the blessed in heaven, I say that their happiness, their pleasures, their joys, will be in proportion to the sufferings which they endured during this life. If we have had a horror of shameful songs and conversations, in heaven we shall hear the most delightful and entrancing hymns of the angels; if we have been modest in our looks, our eyes will then be occupied with objects whose beauty will accord us continuous rapture without ever feeling the least fatigue; that is to say, we shall be ever discovering fresh beauties, like unto a torrent of love which flows on without ceasing. Our heart, which has sighed and wept in our banishment, will experience such an excess of sweetness that it will be quite enraptured.

The Holy Ghost tells us that chaste souls resemble a person who lies upon a bed of roses, the perfume of which causes them a continual ecstasy. The saints will be nourished and overwhelmed with chaste and pure pleasures through all eternity.

But, you will think, when we are in heaven we all shall be happy alike. Yes, my friend, but there is still a difference. If the damned are miserable, and suffer in proportion to their sins, there is no doubt that the glory of the blessed will be radiant in proportion to the works of penance which they have performed. Nevertheless, it is true that we shall all be very happy and very contented, because we shall be able to enjoy so many delights, so that there will be nothing left to be desired. O beautiful heaven! O glorious dwelling place! when shall we behold thee? O my God! how much longer wilt thou leave us to languish on this imperfect earth in banishment?

II. Now, my friends, you ask me what you must do to obtain heaven. Very well. Pay attention and you shall hear. You must not be attached to the good things of this life; instead of thinking only how to amass money and to purchase property, you must take care to purchase a place for yourself in heaven; instead of working on Sundays, you should keep the day holy by going to the house of God, there to lament your sins, and to implore His grace that you may not fall into the same sins again, and that He may pardon you; instead of not allowing your children sufficient time to fulfill their religious duties, you must be the first to set them the good example in word and deed; instead of being angry at the least loss, or at a contradiction, you should remember that as a sinner you have deserved far worse, and that God leads you in the surest way toward the goal of your happiness. This, my friend, is what you ought to do in order to reach heaven; but you do not always do it. Do you not envy the blessed inhabitants of the heavenly court? "Ah," you will say, "how I wish I were there; at least I should be free from all the hardships of this life!" But wishing and acting are two different things. If your intention is good, very well; I will tell you what to do. You should, my sister, be more subject to your husband, you should be more complaisant toward him; instead of going about telling what your husband has said or done, you should use that time to ask God to grant you the patience and submission which you owe to your husband; you should ask God to touch his heart and change it. I will tell you what we ought to do to attain heaven. Mothers, pay attention. You should spend more time in attending to your children, to instruct and show them what they should do to get to heaven; you should not spend so much on dress, that you may have more to give in alms, to draw down the blessing of God upon you, or you should lay by something so as to be able to pay your debts; you should put aside vanities, and your whole life should give a good example; morning and night prayer should be carefully said, a devout preparation for Holy Communion and the reception of the Sacraments should be your chief care; your conversation should express contempt for everything worldly and an appreciation of the goods of another life. This should be your occupation and your care; if you act otherwise you will be lost. Reflect upon all this to-day, to-morrow it will be too late; examine yourself in this respect and then adjust yourself accordingly; weep over your shortcomings and endeavor to behave better, or you may never get to heaven.

What must you do, young people? I will tell you, and I pray you to think it well over. You must not be so solicitous for your body, let it endure a little more; do not think so much about your appearance. You should be more submissive to your parents, remembering that after God it is to them you owe your existence, and you should obey them with a cheerful spirit, without murmuring. Furthermore, you should be more careful of your words, and be modest in your conversations with persons of the opposite sex. This is what God asks of you; if you do this you will attain heaven.

And what do you think of all this, my brother? Toward which side are you inclined? "Ah," you say, "I would much rather go to heaven, because it is so lovely there, than go to hell, where such manifold torments have to be endured, but it is no use to strive to get there; I have not the courage. If one mortal sin suffices to damn us, I, who get angry every moment, can not venture to try." You can not try? Listen to me for a moment and I will prove to you as clear as day that it is not so difficult as you imagine, and that it requires less exertion to please God and to save your soul than it does to lead a life of pleasure and to please the world. Dedicate to God the care and the trouble which you take to please the world, and you will find that He does not expect so much from you as the world does. Your worldly pleasures are at best alloyed with sadness and bitterness, and then follows remorse for having partaken of them. Yes, my

friends, by observing all these things you will find how much sweeter it is to serve God than to serve the world. It is only too true that if we would only do as much for God as we do for the world we should all be saints.

Let us resolve, then, to-day that henceforth we will serve our Lord better than we have done heretofore, so that at the end of our days we may be permitted to partake of the glorious and infinite reward which the Lord has prepared for the faithful. Amen.

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