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JMJ
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 – St. John Mary Vianney
NEW YEAR'S EVE.

“And none of you asketh me: Whither goest thou?” St. John xvi. 5.

An old Christian proverb says, beautifully and truthfully, “**Begin with God and end with God, and yours will be the happiest life.**” Every one who has honestly striven to verify this has had a thousand opportunities to experience the truth of this pious proverb.

I congratulate you, my dear friends, who have deemed it your sacred duty to begin every day with God. How serenely and with what satisfaction may you not look back upon the course of your life. And those of you also, my friends, I greet with joy, who began this year with God, and are now come here to end it with Him, who not only look up to the Almighty with grateful eyes, but also with a contrite heart, and who are convinced of the truth, that all is vanity except to love God and to serve Him, that we may live for ever more. All of us, my friends, who are gathered together at this holy hour, within these hallowed walls, carry within our souls the firm determination to close the year with God.

The end of a year is, and always will be, a solemn moment. The departure of a year is fraught with serious admonition. We take leave of father and mother, but in the hope of seeing them again; we leave a place to which we have become attached, which is endeared to us, and connected with indelible memories, but with the hope of one day returning to it; but the year, when it has passed away, is gone forever, and what it has taken away will never more return to us—those three hundred and sixty-five days of our existence have gone forever!

Now, let us look back, my friends, upon the year just ended. Can we look upon it with joyful hearts and a peaceful conscience; and can we welcome the coming year with hearts nerved with courage and without dread of the future? Aye, but there is a strange pang in our soul, full of anxious foreboding and secret dread. The battle of human minds for truth and for falsehood is growing fiercer from hour to hour, and the foundation of human society is trembling and threatens to collapse. And in many a poor human heart there is a private sorrow, and in many a house the light of hope is gone out.

Very well, then, let us ask at this solemn hour, in this sacred place, where we stand in the real presence of Him in the most Holy Sacrament, and try to find out, “Why and how is all this happening so?”

And after we have asked this question from the bottom of our hearts and with honest sincerity, then we will try and solve the problem of “What is to be done” to enable us to begin the New Year with hope and confidence?

Now join with me in devout prayer. “I will continue, O Lord, in Thy most Holy name, O Lord of all times, Thou wonderful ruler of the fate of men and nations! O Lord Jesus Christ, Blessed through all eternity!”

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour and our Redeemer, once addressed His disciples in these significant words: “But now I go to Him that sent me, and none of you asketh me: Whither goest Thou?”

We know whom Jesus meant; His Father by Whom He was sent upon this earth to redeem and to save mankind. Yea, His Father, whose image He was, for doth He not say, “He that seeth me, seeth the Father also”? And to Him He returned after accomplishing His work. “I go to Him that sent me.”

We also go to our Father when our mission is fulfilled, and our task on this earth is finished. “We will come to Him, and make our abode with Him,” saith Jesus. We also are created to the image and likeness of God, for did not God Himself say, when he created Adam, “Let us make man to our image and likeness”?

And when this temporal habitation, our body, breaks down and returns to the dust from which it came, that image, that likeness, our immortal soul, will also return from whence it came, will return to eternity—to God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost!

But now, dear friends, to reach the goal that we are striving for, to be sure that we may return to the Father’s house with joyful hearts as God’s own children, we must above all know the way which will lead us there. The wayfarer who knows where the end of his journey lies will surely and carefully take the right path which will bring him happily to his destination.

It was 1900 years ago when the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. “He, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (St. John). “He who laid down His life for us, and offered Himself on the cross as a sacrifice of propitiation,” one day said in distinct and solemn tones, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.” Since then the way lies open before us, and no one can say truthfully, I know it not! Let us at his moment raise our eyes to the realm above, and greet with holy reverence the millions of Saints who followed steadfastly and faithfully the way which the Redeemer had shown them. The way is not one of ease and comfort, it demands the entire sacrifice of a God fearing heart; but it is the only way which leads to the Father, and those who followed it resolutely bedewed it with their tears, dyed it with their blood, and adorned it with the deeds of a living Christian faith. They alone found peace, and now shine in snowy garments with palms and crowns, like stars in heaven, and cry out to the Christian pilgrims the encouraging words, “Look up at us! Regard us well! Behold! This is thy reward if thou followest Jesus.” But thousands upon thousands leave this path and nobody asketh, “Whither goest thou?”

And herein, my dear friends, we find the first and the last reason for our moral degeneration, the reason for the dreadful errors into which human society plunges. For the wanderer, when once he has left the right path, will never be able to measure the mistakes into which he may be led, and he never knows how to avoid the misfortune which will meet him on the abyss that yawns at his very feet. As the liar is never at a loss to contradict truths with a new lie, nor to add to this another one, or ten others, if need be, even so has the original but ever watchful father of lies, the prince of this world since the days of Paradise, ever stood up, particularly against Christ and His Church. To accomplish his purpose he invented, about eighty years ago, a significant word of falsehood, full of meaning, which has since risen like a password from mouth to mouth. Its name is Progress.

A steadfast adherence to Christ and His Church, a faithful pursuance of the way we are taught, is what we call progress; but to them this is an old-fashioned and ridiculous thing, irreconcilable with the spirit of intelligence, and the exigencies of the spirit of the times, which can only be to the taste of ignorant poor people, or of men whose minds are steeped in monkish fanaticism and superstition.

Now, my dear people, give me your undivided attention. The subject is too serious and too important that we should not try to answer the question, “Whence comes this language which we hear everywhere, day in, day out, in high and low circles, in the houses of the rich, and the workshops of the poor, in mansions, and in huts, on the highways and byways? It certainly did not come to us over night, but it came to us, because millions are heeding the call of untruth and free thought, while nobody asketh “Whither goest thou?”

In the first place and above all it was the puffed up science of the philosophers, full of pride and devoid of faith, which opened up the way to hell. The authority of divine revelation has been set against modern philosophy in order to enkindle the flame of so-called enlightenment. After the foundation of positive Christianity had been undermined and the seed had been sown in the hearts of the young from the lecturer’s platform, it was an easy matter to disturb even the historical foundation upon which rests a nation’s fame and right.

They have made merry over the most sacred institutions, over the most revered customs and rites in Christian congregations and communities. They called them old-fashioned, and contrary to the spirit of modern progress; they were abolished—new institutions were created, new laws were made—but all without faith, without God, without Christ. For the word which God Himself put into the mouth of the royal psalmist, “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it” (Psalm cxxvi.), this word of eternal truth has been long forgotten, has been scoffed at, and made a mockery of. And so, my dear friends, everything has become modern indeed—government, family life, education, matrimony—all has been modernized; in fact, all our thoughts and deeds have been changed in the progress of modernization. Need we, then, be surprised at what is happening before our very eyes? Is

it not the fruit of that tree which falsehood has planted in the place of truth, and of whose fruit the children of the earth eat with such eagerness?

A horse which has thrown its rider and is running away, tries frantically to free itself of bridle and reins. Man, who wants to be free and untrammled, tears asunder the last bond which holds him in check. Hence "Separation of State and Church," "Separation of School and Church," "Separation of Marriage and Church," separation of everything which stands in the way and might call to your mind the harassing question, "Whither goest thou? "O my dear Jesus, what hast Thou done to mankind that they put Thee aside with such ingratitude and such indifference? What hast thou done to human kind, my beloved Catholic Church, that they turn sullenly away from thee, and clamor for separation? Has not Christ saved the world? Has not Christianity destroyed the barbarity of paganism, spread culture and civilization over the world, sanctified matrimony and family life, taught us to know and practice all those virtues which bring peace to man, and blessings to nations? Is not the Church the continued visible Saviour and Redeemer of the world, since He said explicitly to His apostles: "As the Father hath sent Me, so I send you"? Is not the Church the standard-bearer of the conceptions of right, obedience, and love? Does the Church not assure every man his right, does she not demand obedience in the name of God, and by virtue of divine authority, whose first and last command is love?

Let us look at this a little closer. If modern governments imagine that they can govern man solely by their laws, let them take into consideration how long these people, after divesting themselves of all respect for divine authority, will have any respect for human authority. What weight will the oath have which even the modern state uses as the only decisive medium in judicial proceedings; what value, I ask, will the oath have when it is shorn of its terrible consequences in eternity, when the civil government does not concern itself with the question whether man has faith or not? We have no expectation that modern progress will abolish poverty, or diminish the number of the poor; well then, tear out of the heart of the poor his living Christian faith, his belief in Him who was born a child of the poor, in the stable of Bethlehem, and lived all His life a poor man, so that we may learn to respect poverty and learn to suffer poverty with patience; subdue the Church of Christ which, in its chosen members, takes upon itself voluntary poverty, and bears it in humility before the world, and which has at the same time founded those innumerable benevolent institutions and associations for the relief of the sick, poor and the abandoned of this world, where we see them with touching devotion and heroic self-sacrifice soften the sufferings of the poor—yes, deprive the poor of their faith in their poor Jesus, take away from the Church her consoling and benevolent influence, and you will see, you rich and powerful of this world, how you will fare! The lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh were at all time a source of moral ruin and great misery in this world. How sublime shines that ideal of chastity and virginity through the darkness of night! What a heavenly aroma arises from this sacred flower! Has not Christ taken His flesh from the ever Immaculate Virgin? Has He not Himself called holy virginity the highest gift of an elect soul? Is not the Church the abode and the champion of holy virginity, for, led by her hand, we see that

land of saintly youths and maidens, before whom we stand with awe and reverence. Destroy the Church and you will destroy also this sacred ideal!

Then they want to withdraw the school from the influence of the Church; the school, they say, is an institution for instructing the young. But the school is by no means merely a place for instructing, but it is at the same time and pre-eminently the place for the education of the young. Our children take with them to school not only their intellects, but also their hearts and their souls, and the latter must receive quite as much attention as the former. Just as conscientious parents will not be indifferent as to how and by whom their children receive instruction, as regards their intellects, they should also take a great interest in seeing that the right light shall shine into their hearts and souls. And this light is religion. The child's heart is naturally turned towards God, and is grateful to those who will lead it there. Oh, how touching is the sight of a child at prayer, and how close it draws to those who are teaching it to pray. It is, therefore, not only wrong but also ungrateful to try to take away the children from those who are constantly holding before the little ones all that is divine, great, and holy, and who instruct them at the same time in all they need to know for the fulfillment of their duties as good citizens. "I am not a school master, and cannot judge between the different methods of teaching," said the old Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords in London, "but I wish most emphatically to give expression to my firm conviction, that if religion is not made the foundation of teaching it will be your fault if in future the number of clever rogues in the world is largely increased."

In a nation, or a state, or a family, or community, where religion is despised and allowed to perish, there the process of disintegration will invariably occur. It was in the year 1789 when this process was very evident in the State of France. After the holy Catholic faith had been derided and scoffed at for many years, in word and picture, in writings and plays, in public lectures and so-called clubs, and after unbelief and licentiousness had been given full sway, the French revolution broke out. All religion was considered a mortal crime. Priests were killed when they could not flee or hide themselves. Churches were robbed and desecrated; in some places the wickedness went even so far that a lewd woman was placed upon the altar, and mock ceremonies carried on before her as the goddess of reason. When the strong barriers, religion and conscience, which keep man from all wickedness, had been removed throughout the whole country, a new power, as it were, the raging of the devil, broke loose all over the land. Envy, hatred, and cupidity, in a degree as they had never been known to exist before, exercised their power with reckless disregard and wild fury. People were slaughtered by the thousands, by order of their own government, in most cases without their having committed any offence. It was enough to be suspected of an attachment for the murdered royal family, or for the old order of things, or for religion, to be condemned to death on the guillotine. My friends! The world is round and there is nothing new under the sun; it has never been possible to gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. What a man sows, that will he reap. We, also, shall have the same experience, we shall have to suffer for what we ourselves or for what others have sown in fatal self conceit; with us also the same causes will produce like results, and the laws of

nature and necessity, bearing the testimony of the history of 6,000 years, will be confirmed in the future as they have been in the past.

Let us then open our eyes; for it is high time that we awake from sleep. The enemy stands before us in full power, and it seems to me as if I could hear our Saviour repeat the words which He once spake in the garden of Gethsemani when he was taken prisoner:

“This is your hour and the power of darkness.”

We enter into a New Year; with its thousands of highways and byways, paths and roads, it lies before us. Oh! let each one ask himself in earnestness and sincerity to day, at this holy hour,

Whither goest thou!

There is only one sure way that leads to the Father, and that is the way which Jesus and His representative on earth, the Church, teach us. Are we really still in the right path, or have we, also, already left it? Have we, perhaps, allowed them to lead us astray by that falsehood which has drawn so many from the right path, namely, that the war which progress has declared against darkness, as it is called, is not directed against Christianity and its Founder, but against the so-called Church?

Many a human heart is empty and desolate and icy cold, and in many a home the beacon of hope has gone out. Why, my dear friends? Let us be candid and do not let us put the blame too much on the world and on other people, but let us beat our own breasts and give a true and sincere answer to the question:

Whither goest thou?

For years you have lived happily with wife and child. The bread which you have had to earn, though by hard labor, you have eaten in the evening in blissful contentment in your family circle. But you have changed. You find too much constraint in your home, and your own are a burden to you. You are looking for distraction outside, and sullenly and with curses on your lips you go to your work. What has happened to cause this change? Be sincere! Have you not deserted your Master, and His way? Have you not fought shy of your Church and your prayers? Do you not pursue other ways now? Stop! Do not let the year glide into the sea of eternity without asking yourself honestly

Whither goest thou?

and tremble, for the end for you may lead to destruction.

And you, sons and daughters! Once you were good children and the joy of your parents! But it is otherwise now. Look! You are afraid of a glance from your father's eye, and you are cold towards your mother, and their teachings you call old-fashioned; in the faces of your parents there are lines of deep sorrow. And what has caused all this? Be sincere! You have left your Master and His way! You neglect your Church and your prayers, for you go quite another way. Bad books, which you know well how to procure; wanton speech, and loose principles in which you have indulged, have kindled the passions which were slumbering in your breast into a blazing flame.

Ah! Whither goest thou!

The New Year is coming, also, for you. Do not begin it in the same way. Return to the right path, which your parents have shown you and which you used to follow with a clean heart and peaceful conscience, so blithe and happy. Follow your Master and your Mother Holy Church.

God's forbearance offers you another year. Will you again be indifferent to this boundless love? Ah! lift up your eyes! Take the bandage from them. See, there is a cemetery, and they are digging a new grave. Perhaps they are digging it for you.

My dear friends! If we are to have peace and gladness in our hearts, in our families, yea, in the whole human society, there is only one sure way, since "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," which leads to this happiness, to peace, and, finally, to the Father. It is the way about which, my dear people, I have preached to you to day, and which I will name to you once more with all the strength of my soul. "The way which Thou, O Jesus, hast taught us and Thy Church." Let us, all together, enter upon this way with manly determination, let us raise our right hand for the solemn oath, that indeed we will do it in all sincerity. Upon this ground we will await thee, O New Year, and with courage look forward to all that God in His eternal wisdom may determine upon for us. Amen!

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