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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 + + +

VOL. 4

THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE  
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER, EPIPHANY

The All-Wise Providence of God in Arranging Different States of Life

*"I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."*—St. Matthew 13: 35.

There are many great and hidden mysteries which we in vain try to unravel with our weak intellects, and which we should never know anything about, unless the Lord Himself declared them to us. Nor do I speak now of divine mysteries, such as the Trinity and Unity of God, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. Amongst the natural events that daily occur before our eyes there is one that puzzles most men, as if it were an incomprehensible mystery; nay, sometimes it makes them murmur and complain and dissatisfied with their state. They ask: Why has God made the states and conditions of men so different? Is He not the Father of His great household? Are we not all His children, and alike according to nature? How comes it, then, that we are treated so differently; that one gets more, another less; that one is in a high, another in a lowly position; that one can live in idleness and comfort, while another must live in poverty and hard work; that one is rich, another poor? To answer these complaints, I will show that all these things are perfectly just, right, and consistent, and for our greater good.

*I. God has arranged all things for our greater good in general;*

## *II. For the greater good of each one in particular.*

I. Amongst other wonderful things that God has created is the human body. The head occupies the principal place, and is the council-chamber in which the reason weighs everything, and directs the other members. The eyes are placed just below the forehead to see; the ears are on both sides of the head to hear; the arms and hands can be stretched out much farther that they may work, and help the other members; the feet are placed underneath to bear the body from one place to another; the teeth are placed in the mouth to masticate the food; the stomach is placed in the center of the body to digest the food; the heart is so placed that it can send the blood through all the veins. Each member has its own duty to perform, and differs from all the others in form and appearance.

That difference of the members is necessary to the stature and support of the body, that one may be able to help the other, and that all may concur in preserving themselves in their proper position. Without that order, difference and concurrence, the whole body would be destroyed. Suppose, now, that all the members were independent, and that they began to murmur amongst themselves and to complain of their position and duty. The feet complain of the load they have to carry, and would wish to be higher up and see like the eyes; the hands grow tired of working and wish to digest like the stomach, or else refuse to supply it with food. What would become of the body in that case? Try it for a few weeks: let the hands lie idle and give no food to the stomach, and see how it will be with you. Hands, feet, and stomach must die of hunger.

The same difference is necessary in all states of life to support man. We constitute a body, as St. Paul says: "We being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of another: having gifts different according to the grace that is given us" (Rom. 12: 5, 6). Experience proves that one cannot exist, or can do so only for a very short time, without the help of another of different condition; so miserable is man when he is alone. We live in society, and by society our lives are preserved. Let us consider merely those things that we require for our daily support. We must at least have bread to eat; but how are we to get it? The ground has to be tilled, the corn must be sown; there must be some one to do that, and to provide enough for millions of people; they who do it are laborers or agriculturists. Many different implements are necessary to till the land properly—ploughs, for instance, and smiths are required to make them. The corn must be ground after being threshed, the meal must be made into dough, and baked in an oven; therefore, there must be millers and bakers. See how many different occupations are necessary to supply us with bread alone! We require clothes, and where are we to get them? We must have wool, that has to be first shorn from the sheep, then cleaned, carded, spun, woven, pressed, cut and shaped to the size of the body. Who will do all that?

The head and feet must also be covered; so that hats and stockings and shoes are wanted. Who will provide us with all those things? You see, therefore, that weavers, dyers, hatters, shoemakers, and tailors are required. We must have houses to live in, to protect us from

the rain and snow and cold air; different articles of food must be brought from one country to another, because everything cannot grow in the one place; therefore, there must be builders, sailors, and drivers. Arms, offensive and defensive, are necessary to keep off the attacks of enemies; the liberal arts and sciences must be taught and learned, that the country may be governed properly; and the same may be said of countless other usages, occupations, and employments that require people of different trades and arts, without which human society could not exist.

Where are you now, you uneasy people, who are dissatisfied with your lot in life? Let us again hear your complaints and murmurs, your wishes and desires. Oh, what a difference there is between people in this world! Why must I work hard for my daily bread, while others have only to sit down and it is brought to them? Why am I so poor that I must beg for food? Could not God give me money and property, as He has given to others? Why am I a servant, while others are masters and mistresses? Why am I always in trouble, while others have nothing to annoy them? Would that I had never entered on this state! Would that I had never known the person who now torments me so! If I had only become a priest! If I had only remained in the world! I wish I was this! I wish I was that! All very well; but what does it all mean? Do you wish that all men should be equal? That one should be as rich, as honored, as clever, as learned as another; that one should have as many comforts as another; in a word, that there should be perfect equality of states and conditions of life? But if every one were placed in the condition in which he desires to be, would people be satisfied then? I do not think so; for their imaginations would then suggest something else to be desired.

Suppose that we are all equal, as we wish to be; what is the consequence? What a state of things there would be then! How many years, nay, how many months or weeks do you think the world could last under such circumstances? Who would till the ground, or reap the corn? Who would thresh, and bake bread? Who would cut wood and stone to build houses? Who would make hats, shoes, stockings, and clothes? Who would be a servant? But, you think, I would be rich enough, I could have everything for money, and might employ people to do all that for me. What people? Other people, you say, who wish to earn money. But they are as well off as you, and no doubt they will study their own comfort, too. Do you think that if I am not in want of you, I am likely to attend on you, or to work for you? If I am as great and as rich as you, what do I care for your money? And again, if you expect others to work for you while you remain idle, what becomes of the equality you are so anxious for? See what confusion you would cause if you had your way. Every one would know all the trades and professions, and every one would be master, and have to wait on himself; every one would be a ruler, and at the same time a baker, a mason, a shoemaker, and a tailor. In a word, every one would be wretched with that imaginary happiness, and the world would soon go to ruin.

Acknowledge, therefore, that such a wish would be wrong and foolish, and that it would be of no service to the welfare and preservation of the human race, while the manifold differences and distinctions that exist amongst men are absolutely necessary. Learn from this to admire the wisdom and foresight of our heavenly Father, who bestows His gifts in

unequal measure, but so that all are benefited by them. To one He has given much, to another little, and to a third hardly anything (I Cor. 7: 7); so that one being subordinate to another, they may be mutually dependent on and helpful to one another. The rich and the poor are two different kinds of men, who cannot do without each other. If there were no rich people, the poor could not live. If there were no poor, the rich would have no one to work for them. The servant depends on his master for his support; the master depends on his servant for the work he expects him to do. And there is no one, no matter how poor and lowly he may be, who cannot sometimes be of assistance and help even to the greatest lord of the land. We learn that from the fable of the mouse and the lion. The mouse had received a kindness from the lion, and out of gratitude promised to help him on the first opportunity. The haughty lion laughed at the idea of a little mouse ever being able to help him. But not long after he was caught in the hunter's toils; he foamed with rage and threw himself from side to side in his efforts to get free, but the more he tried, the tighter became the ropes that bound him, so that, believing himself on the point of being made a prisoner, he commenced to howl and lament bitterly. The mouse hearing the noise, ran up, and seeing what the matter was, commenced gnawing at the ropes until they were all loosed. The lion was thus set at liberty, and he doubted no longer that a poor little animal could render him a great service. This fable shows that even the lowest, poorest, and most despicable of men can be sometimes useful and even necessary to the service and support of the richest and greatest, and therefore should not be despised.

Yes, some will think, it is easy for you to talk; I know that there is a necessity for having different stations in life, but why is mine such a lowly one? Why am I so unfortunate as to be obliged to live in poverty, hard work, and trouble of all kinds, although we are all alike as far as our nature is concerned? How could it injure the general welfare if I were in a better and more comfortable position, and if I, who am to-day so poor, were to become rich to-morrow; if I, who have now so much labor, care, and anxiety, were enabled to live henceforth in peace and quiet? Now, you make out a very good case indeed; but you think only of yourself in the matter; how would it be if every one were like you in that respect? It would be the case of equality over again, for you have no more right to those things than others, nor can you bribe the Almighty God to pay more attention to your fancied claims than to those of others. Be careful, then, that while you wish to be better off than others, you may not become the most miserable of all; and while you have to remain in your poor and lowly condition, since God will not change, on your account, the order he has established, you do not make that condition far worse by your impatience and discontent. You are in a lowly condition, because God has decreed so for you, and not for others. But why for you? That is a question you must ask God Himself, if you dare do so. I admit that others are better off than you; one is rich, another is a great man; and they have as little claim as you to a better position, on account of their merit before God; but as the matter stands, it is in accordance with the divine will; the will and decree of God are the sufficient reason for it. But, that I may give you a more consoling answer to your question: Why has God placed you in that state, and given you, as you think, such an unhappy lot in life, I tell you that that very state, no matter what it is, has been given to you by God for your own

greater good, and the same is true of every one; so that all should rejoice and be comforted in their state. That is what I shall prove just now.

II. Our eternal salvation or our eternal ruin depends on a certain state of life and on certain circumstances of it; so that he who will save his soul in one state, would lose it in another. Besides, God does not wish all men to serve Him in the same manner. Our great King wishes to have different kinds of servants and ministers in His court. He requires one kind of service from married people, who have to look after their families and to bring up their children to serve Him; another from the unmarried, the sick, the rich, the poor. Therefore, it is certain that God does not lead all men to heaven in the one way, but in as many different ways as there are different states, obligations and duties; so that He wishes one to save his soul in one way, and another in a different way. And we must be very careful to remember that our salvation does not depend on the holiness and excellence of a state, nor on the occupations of a state in themselves, but on the conformity of the state and its occupations with the will and decree of God, who has appointed it for us from all eternity by His all-wise providence. Finally, there is no doubt that God, who takes care of the sparrows of the air and of the smallest worm of the earth, takes care also of our eternal salvation; for His wish and desire is our sanctification (I Thess. 4: 3); He wishes that all men, for whom He has shed His Blood, should save their souls. Nor can it be doubted, I repeat, that by His decree, He has placed us in that state, in those circumstances, in which we can best and easiest serve Him according to His intention, and thus work out our salvation and gain eternal happiness, if we only really wish it.

We are then forced to conclude, when we consider all this, that no state, no circumstances in the world could be better for us than that in which we now are by divine decree. For what better thing could we desire than to be in that place, in that way, in which we can best serve God as He wishes us to serve Him, and work out our salvation with the greatest facility, since it is the state that He has selected as the means of leading us to eternal happiness? What better would we be if we had the most holy or most excellent state, if we were not in it according to the will of God? Of what use would the whole world be to us, with all its riches, honors, and pleasures, if we do not go to heaven? Therefore, we must live contentedly and peacefully in the state appointed for us by God, and, no matter what it is, we must thank Him for having placed us therein. For otherwise, we poor mortals must understand better than the Almighty what is most useful for ourselves; or else we are blind in what concerns our souls; or we doubt divine Providence, as if it did not concern itself about our eternal welfare. Any of these thoughts would be blasphemous in the highest degree.

Learn from this how wrongly you act when you complain of your state, and how foolish they are, who, wishing to lead good and Christian lives, disturb and disquiet themselves on account of their piety and their wish to do good and save their souls. If I were rich, says the poor man, I could do more good, go more regularly to church, and practice the works of Christian charity and mercy better; as it is, I must remain at home and work for my living. Ah, unfortunate people that we are! says the married woman, when she now and

then visits a convent, or sees some one who can spend her time quietly praying at home—the whole day I am busied with my children and with a thousand household cares; I wish I had become a nun, or had remained unmarried; then I could attend to my soul better, serve God with more zeal, and be more sure of going to heaven. All these are nonsensical complaints. Do what God requires of you in the state in which He has placed you, as well as you can, with a good and supernatural intention for His sake, and be content in that state, and while performing its duties, with God and with yourself. Then you will be truly pious, you will serve God as He wishes you to serve Him, and you will work out your salvation according to your state, so that you will be on the right road to heaven.

If you were all to live thus content with your position, according to the will of God, what an agreeable heaven this earth would soon become! What happy and fortunate times the years would bring about with them! I wish you that happiness with all my heart. Serve God as He wishes you to do in your different states. You are enough for God, let God be enough for you. If God is satisfied with your person, your state, and your occupation, do you also be satisfied with His decree. If a man lives as God wishes him to live, and has God as his Friend, what more does He want? He certainly should have enough. I conclude with the words of St. Paul: “And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4: 7), until we are called away from the state in which God has placed us, to meet together in that happy state, in which there will be eternal peace, contentment, and joy. Amen.

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