



13. Mary, Jos

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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

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

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

VOL. 5 - THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

Sunday after Christmas

### The Happy End of our Years

*“When the fullness of the time was come.”— Gal. 4: 4.*

These words have been used and will be used of all men as long as the world lasts. Thus with the child the fullness of time may come in two or three years; that is the end of its years.

The fullness of time for the youth or maiden may be in ten or twenty years, for the man or woman in thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years; then comes the end of their years. The same words shall one day be used of us too; but we cannot say how many years must elapse till then. Happy shall we be if the end of our years is a happy one. And that is what I wish myself, you, and every one from my heart at the end of this year. Namely, I do not wish in the common mode of expression, a happy end of the present year and beginning of the next, but I wish for you and myself:

- I. *A happy end of our years; the object of this wish is a happy death.*
- II. *That it can and should be realized by every one, and how that is to be done.*

I. Friends generally wish one another many years of life and happiness on this day; but I speak of the end of your years. Do I then wish you to die? That is a thing that most men cannot think of without fear and trembling; a thing that is looked on generally in the world as the most terrible of all. For then we must separate from all men, leave all that we loved

in the world, and thus, stripped of everything, go into the unknown land of a long eternity. My wish is a melancholy one. I repeat it, and wish you and myself from my heart a happy end of our years. I wish to each one the end of his years, but a happy end; I wish you death, but a happy death, and one that shall not come until the years of life determined for each one by the all-wise providence of God shall be accomplished; then I wish you a just, holy, and happy end of your life, that your death may be precious in the sight of God and of his Saints. Could I desire anything better for you than this? Is there anything in the world more important for us than a good and happy end to our lives? For what else do we live and spend our lives in this world than that we may die well and happily?

At the end we must leave all things; but what is the value of all that trumpery if we receive eternal goods instead? The loss of a dollar is a grievous one for a poor workman who has a wife and children to feed, and to rob him even of that small amount is as much as to condemn him to fast for the whole day; yet if the good man was sure of gaining a hundred dollars for the one dollar, would he much regret the loss of it, or be very unwilling to pardon the thief who stole it from him? No, indeed! he would be only too glad to suffer such a loss every day on similar conditions. We readily suffer an old coat to be torn if we hope to get a new one in place of it. Now, what is it that we must leave behind us on earth, when we come to the end of life? The most precious thing of all that death takes from us is life, and that is very short, uncertain, and inconstant. St. James compares it to a vapor that is seen for a time and suddenly disappears. It is a life of misery and suffering: "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries."

What else is taken from us by death? He who dies has been either a poor or a rich man. If he has been poor, he leaves nothing he need trouble about. He who has nothing can lose nothing. Has he been rich? Then, though his wealth was enormous, and, like Solomon, he had all the pleasures of the world, he has to bid good-by to everything; but what is that to him if he has lived piously and has a happy end? What is all he has left compared to what will be given to him in eternity?

We love the world, and have a natural inclination to love it more than we love God, although he is our true Father, from whom we receive everything, and from whom we expect an eternal inheritance in heaven. What is the cause of that? Because we have but a dim knowledge of God by faith. We acknowledge, indeed, that God is to be loved more than all the world can give us; we show this, too, in reality when we serve God and keep his commandments, and profess that we are willing to lose all rather than offend him grievously; because we have been taught this from our youth upwards and have heard it so often. Yet, as far as the natural inclination is concerned, we fear and shudder at the idea of being separated from the world and its goods, no matter how worthless they are, and of going to our Father in heaven.

But when the eyes of the mind are properly opened for the first time at the end of life, then we shall see and know how wretched and miserable life is in this world. And he who dies a happy death will then be able to say with joy: oh, how vile the things I leave behind me; and how precious the treasures I am about to receive in exchange for them from the

faithful God whom I have served! My money and all my possessions I willingly leave to those who are to come after me; I have brought nothing into the world, I shall take nothing out of it. But, oh, what happiness! In a short time I shall hear the joyful invitation of the Lord: “Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (St. Matthew 25: 21).

I leave what I have hitherto loved: parents, children, friends, and relations; I have seen them for the last time in this mortal life; but, after all, that is no great hardship! For what delightful company awaits me in Heaven in the many millions of angels, holy martyrs, confessors, and virgins, who rejoice together with the most perfect mutual love in God! I shall see Mary, the most pure virgin, my dearest Mother, whom I have so longed to behold; nay, I shall rejoice forever in the most intimate friendship of infinite beauty, God himself. I shall no longer see the light of the sun with my bodily eyes, nor have sensible experience of how my descendants shall fare on earth after my death; but everything that occurs in heaven and on earth I shall know and understand incomparably better by the beatific vision of God. My body, that has hitherto served my soul as a sort of garment, and is torn by death, and the life that I have tried so hard to preserve by minding my health, these shall be taken from me; but neither is that a great hardship. For my soul shall be clad with the shining robe of glory and will live forever without fear of illness or fatigue. Farewell, then, oh, world, with all your fripperies! I leave you with joy! Go forth, my soul, from this emaciated, miserable body; leave it to the earth to be eaten by worms in the grave. The time shall come in which this very body shall rise up out of the dust in the general judgment, to be again united to thee, and to share forever in thy eternal joys. Good-bye to everything on earth! My banishment is at an end; the business of my life happily accomplished; I am going to the land of joys, where it shall be always well with me! See the end of your years that I wish each and every one of you from my heart. Such an end we can all have if we only strive for it earnestly, no matter what our state or condition; that we may all do this is the wish I shall briefly express.

II. I say to you, married people, parents, fathers and mothers! pay attention to these words of St. Augustine: “Know and understand that you are not Christians to think of this world alone, but to have your thoughts always fixed on the next life;” your sole care should not be as to how you can live and bring up your children, and clothe and feed them according to your station, but you are Christians especially that you may prepare for the next life. For that reason the supreme Lord of heaven and earth has placed you over your domestics as masters and mistresses, and over your children as parents, that you may so rule them and bring them up that not one of them may be lost at the end of his years through your fault. Ah, parents! think of it often, and think on it deeply: what a dreadful thing it would be for a loving father or mother to bring a child into the world that is to fall into the clutches of the devil at the end of his days! And what should not parents do to avert such a dreadful calamity! And what a happiness it is for a loving father or mother to bring into the world a child that at the end of its days shall be brought by the Angels into heaven! What should

not parents do to secure such happiness for their children! Make a resolution to work for a happy end of your years, and it will keep you up to your duty with regard to your children. Let the husband, then, often say to his wife, and parents to their children: Dear wife! we are now living together, but we know not for how long; the time shall come when we shall have to separate; one of us must go first and the other follow. But, wife, what a terrible thing it would be for us to be separated at the end of our years forever, for one to be in heaven and the other in hell! Children, if I have a happy end and you an unhappy one, what a terrible separation that would be! God has given us the means of living well and respectably; but how will that help us at the end if we do not now make good use of those means? If, on the other hand, we now suffer poverty, what worse shall we be for that at the end, if we only serve God truly in our want? Let us so live together that we may have a happy end, and rejoice together forever in heaven.

Young men and women, “remember thy last end” is the advice given each and every one of you (Ecclus. 7 : 9); in all your works, in all your days, think of what you would wish your last end to be. That thought will make you careful to avoid the occasions of sin, to keep away from dangerous places and company, to restrain the outward senses, and especially the eyes and ears, that you may do nothing even in thought or desire that could make your end unhappy. That thought will remind you to take timely council with God regarding your future state in life, and in the choice of that state, on which generally depends the happy or unhappy end of your years, not to be led by the senses or by what seems agreeable to you, but to consider what state is the most likely to make the end of your years happy. In all doubts that occur to you, as to whether you should do this or that, or permit it, go to this or that place or company, act or not act according to this or that worldly fashion—in all such circumstances think of the end of your lives; ask yourselves: will this company, or conversation, or fashion bring me comfort on my deathbed, or make me more sure of heaven? or will it, on the other hand, perhaps increase my deathbed anguish?

Joy and consolation for you, widows and orphans, desolate, sorrowful, and afflicted Christians! Daniel, describing the many tribulations and afflictions that were to visit different peoples, adds: “And this until a time” (Dan. II: 24). Poor, oppressed souls! be patient and resigned to the will of God! What you are now enduring shall last only until a time; it will soon come to an end! Your poverty and want shall last only for a time; they will come to an end; your sighs and tears shall last only for a time: they shall come to an end; and if you keep always in the friendship of God it will be a most happy end. For there is no other way to heaven but the way of the cross, of penance, of mortification, of self-denial, of humiliation. Oh, with what joy will you be able to think on your deathbed: now I have suffered what God willed me to suffer; it is all over now, and I am going into heavenly, eternal joys that shall never end!

Sinners! you who are still in the state of sin, do you think you will be able to say the same on your deathbed at the end of your years? Truly you will then know how little is that which you now esteem so highly, for the sake of which you leave your God. It would be

well for you if you had nothing to expect after death, if your souls were capable of crumbling into dust with your bodies! But where shall you go then? Alas into poverty without end, into hunger and thirst without end, into wailing and gnashing of teeth without end, into hell without end, into that lake of burning pitch, into everlasting fire amongst the demons! See, that will infallibly be the end of your years, if you finish your lives in the state in which you are now. Will you persist in that state? Ah, no! Rather make the resolution with the new year to begin a new life. Then I confidently promise you what I wish from my heart: a happy end of our years! Amen.

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