

V1_4th_of_Lent= The Shameful Malice of Those Who Injure their Good Name by Excessive Drinking

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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. I = THE BAD CHRISTIAN

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

The Shameful Malice of Those Who Impoverish Themselves and Injure Their Good Name by Excessive Drinking

“Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?” John 6: 5

Poor people who were reduced to such extremities that they were hungry and had not bread to eat! And yet it was their zeal in following Christ, in order to hear his word, that brought them to such a pass; therefore, our Lord, who never abandons his servants who trust in him, took pity on them, and wrought a miracle to supply them with food. How many there are nowadays who bring themselves to the direst poverty, so that they must cry out: “Whence shall we buy bread that we may eat?” Not through zeal in following Christ, but through a willful desire of satisfying their inordinate appetites, through which they and their families must often suffer the pangs of hunger. Certainly God will not work a miracle to help such people! I allude to those inveterate drunkards who drink until they reduce themselves and those belonging to them to beggary. For

I. *There are many who drink more than their incomes allow.*

II. *There are many who drink more than is good for their honor and reputation.*

I. An industrious father of a family, who lives decently according to his condition, but practices due economy, can save a great deal and support himself and those who depend on him with very little expense. It is quite the contrary with inveterate drunkards; they squander away all they have, until they are not able to meet their household expenses, and have to be satisfied with very poor fare in the end. “He that loveth good cheer shall be in want; he that loveth wine and fat things shall not be rich” (Prov. 21: 27).

For he who drinks frequently and copiously, must often pull out his purse. Besides, a drunkard can never repair his losses; because, even if he got his drink for nothing, he makes himself incapable of attending to his business, by which he has to support himself and his family. A drunkard is unfit for any kind of business; he is good for nothing but drinking and spending money. What can this lead to but ruin? No matter how great a treasure is, if there is something taken out of it every day, and nothing added to it, it must soon be exhausted.

What madness it is to pour down one's throat in a day what would suffice to supply one decently with food and drink for three or four days, and to exhaust in a few years by excessive drinking what could have supported one's self and family for a whole lifetime! And here I must express my heartfelt pity for those men who have a wife and family to support, and have no other means of doing so but their daily labor, but who, being given to drink, take the wages they earn to the saloon, and generally drink in one Sunday all they have earned for the week; who drink in one day the labor and sweat of many days; meanwhile they have hardly a decent coat to their backs, or bread and water enough to keep body and soul together during the week; and when they come to old age, or sickness comes on, so that they are unable to work, they have not a penny in their pockets to buy a piece of bread for themselves and their families.

But far greater is my pity for the unfortunate wives and families who are brought to extreme poverty by those drunken men, and who have to suffer hunger and thirst at home, while those who should provide for them are swilling wine or beer in the saloon, thus verifying the words of St. Paul: "And one, indeed, is hungry, and another is drunk" (I Cor. II: 21). What a crying injustice that is! They to whom God has entrusted a wife and children, to be supported as well as possible according to their condition, are the very ones who make away with what belongs to their wives and children, and reduce them to beggary! And, unfortunately, that is of only too common occurrence! If it is a sin of injustice to steal even the least thing from a rich man, who would not miss it, what a fearful sin it must be for a father thus to rob his own children, whom he has begotten, and his wife, with whom he should be one body and one soul!

Even if temporal poverty and distress were the only evils you cause, it would not matter so much. But your cruelty goes farther than that; you bring eternal death on your families and occasion the loss of their souls, a not infrequent result of your drunken excesses. I do not speak now of the scandal you give when you come home in a state of intoxication, and curse and swear and ill-treat your wives and children; nor of the sins into which your children are led by your neglecting to give them a proper Christian training; I speak only of the contempt that they must feel for you, although they are bound to honor you; of the hatred they must have for you, although they are bound to love you; of the curses they call down on your heads, although they ought to pray for you; of the little care they will take of you, when they have succeeded in raising themselves by their diligence, out of the poverty into which they were plunged by your drunkenness and intemperance. For how could they have any affection for a father who has shown so little love and tenderness to his own flesh and blood? How can they act as children to him who has not been as a father to them? How can they acknowledge their obligation to support and help him who, by his drunkenness, has left them nothing but poverty and misery as their portion?

II. Honor and life are generally looked upon as of the same value; nay, many a one values his good name more than his life, so that he is ready to expose his life to a thousand dangers for the sake of preserving or gaining his honor. No one, unless he is the most degraded of men, will allow the least stain to affect his honor.

And yet this honor is utterly ruined by excessive drinking; for what is more disgraceful than to have the name of being a drunkard? What more loathsome object is there than a drunken man? A beautiful girl used to amuse herself by playing on the flute, but one day, happening to catch the reflection of her face in a pond of clear water, and seeing how it was disfigured by the flute, she became so disgusted with that instrument that she gave it up altogether. I think that if one who is created to the image and likeness of God, and who, therefore, is made only for heavenly things, could see himself and the actions he does when in a state of intoxication, clearly reflected in a mirror, he would be ashamed of himself, and if he

had a spark of honorable feeling left would give up drinking at once. It was in that way that the Lacedaemonians tried to deter their children from drunkenness; they used to make a slave drunk and let him go staggering about in that condition, in presence of their children; so that the latter, seeing how unbecomingly he acted, and how unworthy of a reasoning being, might have a horror and dread of excessive drinking. And, in fact, if one who knew nothing of this vice were suddenly to see a drunken man, he would take him for a wild beast, or at least for a madman. And, after all, what difference is there between a drunken man and a madman, unless that the latter was involuntarily deprived of the use of reason, while the former deliberately deprives himself of it?

A drunkard is a disgrace to humanity. And what greater shame can there be than to degrade human nature from its dignity? Man is created to the image and likeness of God; he is only a little inferior to the Angels and princes of heaven in dignity: "Thou hast made him a little less than the Angels" (Ps. 8: 6). But when he is drunk, what trace of the divine image can be discerned in him? He is, so to speak, no longer a man; he is not a whit better than a beast; and while he is in that condition, how can he be distinguished from a beast? By his eyes, ears, hands or feet? But wild beasts have all these, too, and they make far better use of them than a drunken man does. It is reason alone, by which we think, and judge, and discern, that raises our nature almost immeasurably above that of the brute creation. If we lose our reason, as is the case with the drunkard, we are no better than the beasts. Nay, one could wish that the drunkard were as good! How much better is an ass or a dog than a drunken man! And why? Because those animals will not drink more than is necessary to shake their thirst; you may beat an ass as long as you please, once he has had enough he will not take a drop more. You can take a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. You, therefore, oh, drunkards, are worse than beasts, for you drink six times, ten times, more than your necessity requires or your means allow.

That is true, they will say; but the vice is so common nowadays that there is no disgrace in it; we are all in the one boat. They even make a boast of it, and think it a fine thing to be drunk. Alas! That the wickedness of the world should go so far as to make a boast of a vice that is condemned by God and by nature, and abhorred by unreasoning animals; and that even Christians should not hesitate to boast of it! It may easily happen that a respectable man once or twice in company gets a little overcome by drink, on account of bodily weakness, or because he is off his guard; he does not thereby disgrace himself, he rather deserves to be pitied; but I am not speaking of such cases as that. I speak only of those who are habitual drunkards, and who are seldom to be seen sober. There is no respectable man who will tell me that those are men of honor and worthy of esteem; and there is no one who will deny that all decent people look on them as disgraced. When the Pharisees failed to find any other accusation against our Lord, they said that he was a drunkard, in spite of his perfect sobriety and temperance; when they saw him at the marriage feast at Cana, at the house of Martha in Bethania, with Matthew and Zacheus, who were public sinners, with the rich Pharisee and many others, they took occasion from his presence at those feasts to try to ruin his character. "Behold," said they, "this man is a glutton and a wine-drinker" (Matt. 11: 19). This false accusation of theirs was the means they made use of to lessen at least his reputation, if they could not take it away altogether. Therefore, he who is habitually addicted to intemperance cannot be esteemed by anyone, except, perhaps, by the companions of his carousals; and that is esteem such as thieves have for the most daring and lawless of their gang. Although the judgments of the world are mostly vain and false, yet there is no one of common sense who does not at once condemn and look down upon him who has the reputation of being a drunkard.

A drunkard, I have said; that is, a drunken man; for I do not dare to suggest even the possibility of that vice being found amongst women. A drunken woman! What a horrible thing even to imagine! There is nothing as disgraceful to a woman as to say that she is given to drink. For, if she is addicted to that vice, what is to become of her household duties, of the education of her children, and of time necessary watchfulness over her servants? How can the mistress of a family perform these duties if she is given to intemperance? Every one sees at once, without further proof, that under the circumstances the ruin of the

family is certain, and hence amongst many nations it was the custom to forbid the use of wine to women under the severest penalties. Christian women, I cannot, nor is it my intention to, forbid you to drink; but if you are determined to enjoy the good things that God has given you, do so, in God's name, without forgetting the temperance that becomes a Christian woman. My only object is to show that all, men and women, who exceed in the use of intoxicating drinks, destroy their health, ruin their families, and bring disgrace upon themselves.

I conclude with the warning of St. Peter: "Be sober and watch, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour (1Pet. 5: 8). Amen.



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