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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 + + +

Volume 3 = THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Doing the Will of God Exactly in All Things

*“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.” St. Luke 10:27.*

Love does not consist merely in *words*, in saying, I love you. Nor does it consist in the heart alone, in wishing well to a person. True, sincere love must show itself *in work*, namely in doing what we know will please the object of our love, and in abstaining from what we know would displease him. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.” You must love the Lord your God, therefore you must do what you know to be pleasing to him. But remember, too, that you must love him with your whole heart, not with half of it; with your whole soul, not with half of it; with all your strength, not with half of it merely; and with all your mind, not separating the least act of it from the love of God. Therefore you must do all that the Lord God wishes you to do, and you must abstain from all that is displeasing to him, and that he does not wish you to do. There are gross faults committed in this way even by many who appear to be good and holy, and who fulfill the will of God in many things, though not in all; here and there is something small that we keep for ourselves in which we do not wish to do the will of God; here and there we keep something small for ourselves that God does not wish us to do, and that we do not wish to give up. It may be a trifling thing, but it is enough to interrupt the union and harmony of our will with the will of God; nor can the soul that does not fulfill the known will of God, even in the smallest thing, please him. To deter still more all here present from this hateful manner of dealing with God, I now say—

*Not to fulfill the known will of God, even in the smallest things, is very dangerous.*

God has prepared many great chastisements and calamities, both for soul and body, and has decreed from all eternity that they should be the punishment of all transgressions, even those that seem very small, against his holy law; so that he who acts against the will of God in this or that small matter, as we call it, or who neglects to fulfill the known will of God, brings down on himself these punishments, and sometimes, too, thus makes a beginning of his eternal ruin; not, indeed, that a small offence deserves the pains of hell, but because by a just decree and permission of the Almighty those small things are followed by more serious faults, which entail everlasting death and damnation on the soul. Hence if you experience a slight perturbation of mind, do not despise it because it is slight, but consider what great harm it does you. We often think and say: this or that is a small thing; it does not matter whether I do the will of God in this particular or not. But I say, although they are small, trivial, insignificant things, yet they are at the same time very dangerous. Do not despise small sins, but reflect on the injury they do.

How often do we not read in the holy Scriptures, as we actually experience in daily life, that God allows great, monstrous, terrible crimes to go unpunished in this life; nay, that, when they have been repented of, he forgets them forever, while he punishes the small faults and transgressions even of his holiest servants very severely in order to warn us that we must not deliberately go against his holy will even in the most trifling things? King David had been guilty of a shameful adultery with Bethsabee, he had murdered the innocent Urias, and he spent a whole year in the guilt of those two sins without repentance, aye, even without thinking of God, from whom he had received so many benefits. Who would look on the premature death of David's little son as sufficient atonement for such sins? And yet the prophet Nathan, after having represented to David in a parable the crime he had committed, and received his humble acknowledgment of guilt in the words, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2. Kings 22: 13), announced to him as the sole punishment of his crime: "Thou shalt not die;" but, "because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (2 Kings 12 : 24). On the other hand, when the same David had counted his people by which act he did not the least injury to any one, for he acted, seemingly at least? as a king ought for the good of his subjects—and in any case, he was guilty of nothing worse than a sin of vanity, which he at once repented of as soon as he thought of what he had done: "I have sinned very much in what I have done; but I pray thee, O Lord, to take away the iniquity of thy servant, because I have done exceeding foolishly" (2. Kings 24: 10), what followed this act of vanity? It was announced to him in the name of God by Nathan that he had to choose one of three evils, either a seven years' famine, or three months' persecution from his enemies, or three days' pestilence among his people; and as David humbly resigned himself into the hands of God, choosing the latter punishment, "there died of the people from Dan to Bethsabee seventy thousand men" (2 Kings 24: 15).

Aaron, the high-priest, had sinned grievously against God in the absence of Moses by making for the people a golden calf, which they adored as the true God, amid dancing and singing, eating and drinking; yet we do not read that the least punishment was inflicted on him, or that he was threatened in any way on account of that gross breach of duty. But when the same Aaron, with Moses his brother, was guilty of not perfectly fulfilling the will of God (he had merely doubted for a moment whether striking the rock with the rod he held in his hand would cause the water to flow from it, according to the promise God had made him, which was only a venial sin on his part), how terribly he and his brother had to expiate their fault! "Because you have not believed me, to sanctify me before the children of Israel, you shall not bring these peoples into the land which I will give them" (Num. 20: 22). Therefore he was excluded from the Promised Land and died on Mount Hor. For the Lord said again to Moses: "Let Aaron go to his people: for he shall not go into the land which I have given the children of Israel, because he was incredulous to my words at the waters of contradiction" (Num. 20: 24). You must bring Aaron, and his son to Mount Hor, and there having stripped the father of his vesture, you shall put it on his son Eleazar, in the sight of the multitude. "Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and die there" (Num. 20: 26), a sentence that was at once carried into execution.

Josias, one of the holiest of kings, perished miserably in battle. Why? What wrong had he done? Because he did not believe a heathen, barbarous king, who had announced to him in the name of God that he should not fight against him. The unfortunate Oza (who can think of it without a shudder?) merely put out his hand to support the tottering ark, and prevent it from falling. Was that, then, such a great crime that it deserved the punishment of death? Yet it was actually punished in that way; Oza fell dead on the spot. Lot's wife only looked around when she was flying with her family from Sodom. (Is it indeed such a rare thing for a woman to give away to curiosity? Is it not a thing that happens every day, even in church, before the altar, at the Communion rail, when God is about to be received in the Blessed Sacrament, an act that should certainly be performed with the greatest humility and reverence? What more common than to look about to see who is coming in and how they are dressed, even while the lips are still moving in prayer?) And yet (woe to us if God were to be so strict with us!) that little act of curiosity was so

displeasing to God, since he had strictly forbidden it, that the woman was at once turned into a pillar of salt.

But all those punishments were only temporal, and affected the body and its life. If we are free from such chastisements, there is great reason to fear much worse may be in store for us, which will affect the immortal soul and its eternal salvation. And here again I ask, who can explain the wonderful and inscrutable judgments of God, and why he sometimes allows the holiest and most devout souls to fall into the most abominable vices, nay, to die impenitent and be lost forever? If we could see the cause of it, we should find it to be that those sins, and the impenitence and damnation that were their consequence, came originally from slight acts of disobedience and neglecting the Known will of God. Where did the adultery and murder come from that David, that man after God's own heart, committed? From a slight sin or curiosity that he was guilty of by not mortifying his eyes. What was the cause of the abominable idolatry and hardness of heart of the wise Solomon? Vainglory. I shudder when I read of the fearful fate of King Saul. At first he was, "a choice and goodly man, and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he" (I Kings 9: 2). But what became of him at last, and what was the cause of the temporal and eternal misery into which he fell? A single act of disobedience, seemingly an unimportant one, by which he neglected to fulfill the will of God. After he had been consecrated king, he wished to offer sacrifice to the Lord, and Samuel told him on the part of God to go on before him to Galgal, and there to await his arrival, promising to come on the seventh day and to offer sacrifice. Saul went on; the seventh day passed by, but there was no sign of Samuel, while Saul was surrounded by his powerful enemies, the Philistines. What was he to do in such circumstances? Both armies were ready for battle; his soldiers began to murmur and threaten to leave him; he dared not confront such a foe without having first offered sacrifice; everything was prepared, and Samuel had not yet come. At last Saul himself undertook the office of priest, which in the Old Law was permitted to anointed kings; and as he afterwards confessed, he did so out of sheer necessity. Considering all the circumstances Saul was not guilty of a mortal sin in this act of disobedience; and yet, what was the consequence of it? Samuel came up when he had completed the sacrifice, and said to him: "What hast thou done? Unhappy man, how hast thou forgotten thy duty! Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the commandments of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee. And if thou hadst not done this, the Lord would have now established thy kingdom over Israel forever, but thy kingdom shall not continue" (I Kings 13: 13, 14). But the loss of his throne and kingdom was not the greatest he had to suffer, for he lost his soul as well. To protect his crown he persecuted the innocent David, cruelly put to death all the priests who gave him shelter, and fell from one vice into another, until at last he put an end to himself in despair.

Again, the cause of the lamentable fall of Peter, and of his thrice denying with an oath that he knew our Lord, was nothing else but the too great confidence he had in his own virtue, and the boast he made of it before the other disciples: "And Peter, answering, said to him: Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized" (St. Matthew 26: 33) Was it not to Teresa, the seraphic virgin full of divine love, and chosen spouse of Christ, that God showed the place prepared for her in hell, unless she abstained from certain small faults to which she was addicted? Not, indeed, that those faults in themselves deserved hell fire; but because the just God, in punishment of her disobedience in small things, would have refused her the special graces without which she could not avoid great sins, so that she would have died impenitent, and been hurled into hell. If Teresa had continued to commit those small faults, saying to herself, as we unfortunately do: Oh, it does not matter much; a little holy water will soon clear me of those sins—she would not now be a great saint in heaven, but would be among the demons in hell. So important is it for us to be most exact in doing the will of God even in small things.

Since, then, my dear brethren, we are assured by the Holy Scriptures that the greatest evils of body and soul, nay, eternal damnation, can arise from small transgressions, according to the inscrutable decrees of the Almighty for each individual; and since we know not what evil may arise for our souls from this or that small matter, which we think little of, although we know that it is displeasing to God, and refuse to

mortify ourselves in it—it must then be very dangerous to do the least thing willfully that we know to be contrary to the Divine will. Who knows what God has determined with regard to us, what great graces he is prepared to give us, to what glory he will raise us in heaven, provided we only obey him in this or that seemingly small matter? If we do not obey, we deliberately disturb the order fixed by him, deprive ourselves of those graces, and bring, we now know not, what harm on our souls. We know nothing about this now, but we shall see it clearly on that great day when we shall have to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Oh, what a small thing it was, the elect will exclaim, on which our salvation depended! If we had neglected it during our lifetime, how would things go with us now? If we had not obeyed the will of God in those small things, the whole chain of our predestination would have been broken. On the other hand, the reprobate will cry out: Ah, what a small thing it was that caused us to lose our souls! That trifle that we neglected; that habit of lying; that talkativeness about the faults of others; that curiosity of the eyes; that vanity in dress, which we have either indulged in ourselves or else permitted to our children; that human respect, that desire to please men, in which we refused to overcome ourselves; that sloth that kept us from going to hear Mass and sermons ; the habit of losing our time in unnecessary conversations, by which we neglected the duties of our state ; that known truth which we did not observe for the sake of pleasing God—that was the first cause of our ruin ; that trifle, as it appeared to me, closed the spring of grace; that was the beginning of the mortal sins we afterwards committed ; that was the first link of the chain that dragged us down to hell.

And now you will doubtless say: if such is the case, if my eternal salvation or damnation depends on the observance or fulfillment of the will of God in small things, then, indeed, we must always walk most carefully, and avoid the least willful fault. Eyes, ears, tongue, and our other senses we must always keep guard over, lest they should come across something that would be even a remote occasion of sin to them. We must be suspicious of everything that could be in the least displeasing to God, and avoid it at once; nor must we allow the smallest inspiration of God to go by unprofited of. But how many are there who will make that resolution? How many who will keep it? They who do so must live in quite a different manner from that which is common in the world. And what a melancholy affair life will then be!

True, my dear brethren, your first assertion I cannot deny: “He that feareth God neglecteth nothing” (Eccles. 7: 19); he who fears God and loves him sincerely will neglect not even the smallest thing that belongs to his service. Such, too, is the exhortation given us by St. Peter: “Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election ; for doing these things, you shall not sin at any time” (2 Peter 1: 10). Is not the God of infinite beauty worth that we should do all he wills, and carefully avoid acting against his will in anything? Is heaven not worth that trouble? Not worth all the pains we take to gain it during this short and uncertain life? To this our Lord himself expressly exhorts us in the Gospel of St. Luke, when he says: “Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able” (St. Luke 23: 24).

2. Your second assertion, that few men live in that way, is unfortunately only too true, also; and therefore we read: “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. Narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!” (St. Matthew 7: 3, 4.) Truly, we must live differently from the manner which now prevails in the world if we wish to please God and place our souls in safety. “Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him” (I John 2: 15). “Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God” (James 4: 10). “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive” (St. John 14: 16), because my Spirit cannot exist with the spirit of the world and its vain usages. Therefore you must live in the world as if the world were nothing to you.

3. Your last assertion, that a life of this kind must be a melancholy one, is not at all true; the contrary is the truth. For no one leads a more pleasant and joyful life in the Lord than he who being always united

with God, endeavors to fulfill his will exactly, although he now and then commits a fault through human frailty and with only half advertence. On the other hand, there can be no true peace, consolation, or rest for the man who, although he is resolved to escape hell, and abstains from grievous sin, as he imagines, and performs great works of virtue, yet knowingly acts contrary to the will of God even in one thing. For his own conscience constantly reproaches him in the midst of his good works, and says to him: you do not do all that God wills; there is still something in you that is displeasing to God; this or that God would be pleased to see you freed from, but you are still attached to it; you do not love God with your whole heart. Therefore, if we wish to lead in this world a life that is joyful in the Lord, we must attend to that first and greatest commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind; that is, you must do without exception all that God wills you to do; you must abstain without exception from all that is displeasing to him and contrary to his will, no matter how small it is, and you must regard it with an unconquerable hatred.

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