

V4_1st_of_Advent= Duties of the Young to God

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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 + + +

Volume 4 - THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Duties of the Young to God

“Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep.” Rom. 13: 11

Yes, now is the hour for you to awake, and arise from sleep. Youth is inclined to be heavy-headed; youth is prone to be slothful; but to-day, when we begin to make ready for the advent of the Divine Child (your special model and pattern). You, my dear children, must also begin to study and to understand your duty and your obligations to God. Consider,

- I. That to serve God and love him in your youth, is a bounden and most special duty, the fulfillment of which renders you highly pleasing to God; and*
- II. That you act very unjustly towards God, if you refuse him this service, and give it to another.*

I. God, who is the beginning of all things, has an especial pleasure in the firstlings of his creatures, and desires them to be consecrated in a special manner to his service. This is proved by many laws given to the Jews. “Thou shalt carry the first-fruits of the corn of thy ground to the house of the Lord thy God” (Exod. 23: 19). “You shall separate first fruits to the Lord” (Numb. 15: 19). And: “Sanctify unto me every first-born, as well of men as of beasts (Exod. 13: 2). In the very beginning of the world he regarded the sacrifice of Cain with displeasure and disgust, because what Cain offered were not the first fruits; Abel, on the contrary, offered the first, not the second fruits.

Even amongst men, my dear brethren (as you only need to be reminded), the first fruits are the most pleasing and acceptable. According to the general opinion, the first fruits of a tree are the best of the season. The first fruits even of common vegetables, such as potatoes, turnips, peas and beans, may be set before the greatest lords, because they are the first fruits; although when these things grow older and larger they are not valued. What trouble do not gardeners give themselves, and how do they not boast, if they succeed in producing the first of any kind of flower!

From this you will easily see that God commands and requires of us, in a special manner, to devote the time of youth to his love and honor. For, what is youth but the first fruit of human life? It is the flower of life, as St. Augustine says, speaking to young people: “To you my words are addressed, young people, who are in the bloom of life;” and St. Thomas Aquinas says: “A young man offers whatever he gives to God from the best part, the flower and vigor of his life;” while, on the other hand, he adds: “An old man offers the dregs of his life.” What, then, could be more agreeable to that Lord, who, in the Old Testament, so expressly excluded unclean animals from being offered to him in sacrifice, than the service of still unspotted innocence? How often has not the world experienced, in difficulties and dangers, that when an angry God refused to be appeased by processions, or fasting, or alms, he yielded at last to the prayers of little children, and, moved with pity, restrained his hand from chastising?

Hence it is that the devil, the enemy of God and man, directs all his efforts to rob the Creator of what is most pleasing to him; to make the first fruits of life a sacrifice to hell. Therefore he lays many a private and public snare for the young. Bad company, bad books, papers, and pictures, a thousand dangerous occasions and corrupt examples are his chosen instruments to this end. On this account, the time of youth is not inaptly called the time of temptations and of combat. But from that very circumstance, it is evident that youth is something very precious and valuable, since the proud spirit of evil makes so many attacks on it, and tries so hard to overcome it.

It is evident, too, that they who remain true to God during their youth, and preserve their innocence, offer a most agreeable sacrifice to him. What wonder is it for an old man, who has lost all taste for pleasure, to live a chaste, retired, and temperate life? The near approach of death shows such a one the vanity of earthly joys, and directs his thoughts to eternity! But to fly and avoid sin at a time when everything invites to sin; to love God in those years in which the freshness of youth inclines us to love creatures; to avoid dangerous occasions and bad company, when others of the same age invite us to go; to live temperately, when others spend their time in drinking and gambling; to remain modest, humble, and chaste, although the fire of youth excites the majority to freedom, vanity, pride, and sensual pleasures—in a word, not to sin when sin is so easy, to serve God when there are so many temptations to abandon him, that is a proof of solid virtue, and a sure sign that we really love God above all things.

Consequently, it is no wonder that they are loved most tenderly by the Almighty God, that he protects them with fatherly care, and bestows on them his choicest graces. They are

like Benjamin, of whom the patriarch Jacob said: "The best beloved of the Lord shall dwell confidently in him; as in a bride-chamber shall he abide all the day long, and between his shoulders shall he rest" (Deut. 33: 12). What great tenderness and favor our Saviour showed to the young during his mortal life! "Suffer the little children to come unto me; and, embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them" (Mark 10: 14, 16). Who was it of whom we read: "And Jesus looking on him loved him"? (Ibid 21). It was a young man, who came to him and said: "Master, all these things (the commandments of God) I have observed from my youth" (Ibid 20). Who was it whom Jesus loved most among the twelve Apostles? (John 13: 23.) Was it not John, the youngest and most innocent of all? Three persons Jesus raised from the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus; and all of them were young. In a word, he had as much care for the young as for his own person; "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me" (Matt. 18: 5). And on the other hand, he threatens most severely those who give scandal to even the least of the little ones that believe in him. It were better for them to have a millstone tied round their necks, and to be cast into the sea (Ibid 6). "O young people, who are in the bloom of age," I must repeat with St. Augustine, see how much God loves you! See, how concerned he is for your salvation, and how much he desires to be served, honored, and loved by you! Do you not see

II. How unjustly you act when you refuse him this service, honor, and love, and give them to another?

The modern idea impressed upon many is that more liberty should be allowed to the young than the old in the matter of idleness, sensual amusements and carnal lusts. Such is the opinion of friends, relatives, nay, even of parents themselves. The boy, the girl, they say, is still young, and can well be allowed some license. Old, prudent, and often sensible men and women speak in this way; what is the use of troubling about it? When we were young we did the same (more's the pity!). Young people must have their fling. The sooner they sow their wild oats, the better! With like vain talk young folks encourage each other. We are still young, they say, with the fool in the Book of Wisdom: "The time of our life is short" (Wisd. 2: 1), who knows how long it will last? "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments. Let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered. Let no meadow escape our riot" (Ibid 6, 7, 8). We are still young: We can serve God afterwards.

What fiend has taught you to draw such false conclusions? For God, to whom you owe your whole life, you reserve your old age, or that part of your life in which everything will conspire against virtue and piety. Bodily discomforts increase day by day; vicious habits and inclinations always grow stronger with age; the manifold cares of business and domestic concerns multiply as life advances. Is this the time, I ask you, that you reserve for God? Do you consider that honorable? None of you likes to have an aged servant, nay

you often dismiss your servants because they are too old, and hardly able to attend to their duties, seeking for others who are young and strong. How much more does not God require the service of youth, so as to have the first fruits of life? How displeased, too, he will be, if one who has exhausted the vigor of his youth in sin, gives only the residue and dregs of his life to virtue. The pure gold is given to the world, the flesh, and the devil, while the dross is reserved for God. The devil gets the precious pearl, God only the empty shell; the world the flour of the wheat, God only the husks and chaff; the flesh gets the vigorous strength and freshness of youth, God has no service from it until it becomes dried up and withered. In a word, my young friends, you wish to serve God when you are tired and wearied of serving the devil, and when you have lost all taste for sensual pleasures. That is not offering to the Lord a spotless young lamb, but rather a foul pig.

If the Lord has before now cursed those who kept the best of dumb animals for themselves, and brought the worst to be sacrificed, what a dreadful curse must they not expect, who deliberately give to God the rotten sheep of their old age, after having promised in Baptism, by a solemn vow, to consecrate their whole lives to the service of God? Will you begin to live to God, when you are about to leave this life, gray-haired and broken down with sinful years? Read the narratives of Holy Scripture, and see what became of Her and Onan, Amnon and Absalom, Ophni and Phineas, and you will discover that they were all stricken by the hand of God in the midst of the vices of their youth, and had no time left to work out their salvation. But even if God has patience with you, and allows you time to do penance, to amend your life, to serve him in your old age, and go at last to heaven, will all your good works atone for the injuries you offered to God in your youth? No matter how great your penance, how sincere your amendment, it will still remain true for all eternity, that you have shamefully offended God, who loved you so much, that you have robbed him of the best part of your life, and given it to the devil. When the penitent David thought of this, he cried out in grief and sorrow: "Every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears" (Ps. 6: 7). O my dear young friends, while you have it in your power, will you not save yourselves the necessity for such tears? Will you not save yourselves from being forced to cry out one day to God, full of sorrow and repentance: "The sins of my youth do not remember" (Ps. 24: 7). From being forced to lament: "Oh, beautiful time of youth, what has become of thee! Where are the best years of my life gone? Hours and days have been spent mostly in useless play, in vanities, sensual gratifications, fopperies, idleness, and impurity! The flower and vigor of my life I have given to the devil, although it belongs to God alone by right! Oh, Lord, remember not the sins of my youth!" My whole youth is lost, and I must say with St. Augustine: "I went about in my youth, and the more I grew in age, the more shameful did my vanity become." Ah, most loving God, too late have I known thee, too late have I loved thee!

Hear, therefore, all ye who have not yet begun to love God as you ought, what the great Creator wants from us: My dear son, my dear daughter, give me your heart. You have left it long enough in the power of my enemy; am I never to find any place in it? "Give me thy

heart;” begin now, at least, to serve me. Hearken to me, pious youth, guileless little children! Strive with all your power to preserve your innocence unstained and to remain faithful to God. One day you will fully know what a desirable and precious privilege it is to serve God from childhood. What a happiness it will be, after ten, twenty, thirty years of this mortal life, to be able to say to the Lord, with the young man in the Gospel: “I have observed all these things from my youth!” (Mark 10: 20.) Amen.

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