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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
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Gaining an Increase of Heavenly Glory in This Life

“And it came to pass, as they went they were made clean.” St. Luke 17: 14.

Why did Jesus send those ten lepers to the priests? To show that He does not always wish to dispense His graces and gifts immediately, but that, in order to receive them, we must do our part of the work. God might of himself alone free us from our past sins, but He does not do so in the present arrangements of His Providence, since we must contribute our share, too - namely, repenting of our sins and confessing them to the priest. God could of himself alone make us eternally happy, but He does not wish to do so, since we have to work with Him and, by diligently practicing virtue, gain heaven as a reward. That is a circumstance that should cause us to rejoice, for thus by our own efforts we may ascend higher in heaven, and by our work here on earth make our future glory there all the greater. This consideration should encourage us to practice good works daily and without giving way to weariness, for we can say to ourselves: Heaven, everlasting joy and glory, could any labor or trouble be too much for me to possess and increase you! To the end that we may have thoughts of the kind always ready to arise in our minds, I shall make the glory of heaven the subject of our instruction, not considering that glory as it is in itself, but how it can be constantly and indeed easily increased during this life, if we only wish to do so.

I. We can always add to our future glory in heaven;

II. In what consists this increase of the glory of one blessed soul above another.

I. The substance and essence of perfect happiness and of the eternal glory that is prepared for us in heaven consists properly in the perfect possession and enjoyment of the supreme Good through the beatific vision, and the perfect love of God and peaceful joy in God that spring from this vision. This glory is essentially the same with all the elect in heaven; for they all see their God clearly, all love Him with their whole hearts, all rejoice in Him eternally, and thus all are happy together in the perfect possession and enjoyment of the supreme Good.

Meanwhile St. Paul says: “One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead” (I Cor. 15 : 41, 42). That is, just as one star differs from another in brilliancy, so in the resurrection of the dead the elect shall differ from each other in glory; so that, although they shall all see God, yet it shall not be in the same manner, but one shall behold and possess Him more, another less, and in that way one shall have more glory than the other. The reason of this is because glory shall be measured out according to the degree of merit and the sanctifying grace accumulated by merit, and on that scale it shall be apportioned out and appropriated to each one for eternity. Now, as the merits and sanctifying grace of the living on earth are greater or less, so also must the reward and glory of the blessed in heaven who have attained their end be different. Who can doubt that the glory of Mary, the Mother of God, is incomparably greater than that of any of the Seraphim or any other saint? That the glory of St. Peter or St. Paul far excels that

of the newly baptized infant who died in its cradle after having received the Sacrament of Baptism? But this diversity does not occasion the least dissatisfaction among the elect, because in the state of perfect happiness there is no room for envy or sadness, since all love each other perfectly and rejoice in each other's happiness just as they do in their own; and that because each one knows that a higher degree of glory than he enjoys would not be suitable or becoming for him; therefore each one is quite content with his state.

From this it follows that, as each one can add more and more to his merits on earth daily, hourly, nay, every moment, by sanctifying grace, so also can he increase more and more his future glory in heaven and add to it almost infinitely. Degrees and dignities in heaven are on a far different footing from those on earth. In heaven the ladder is endless in length; no matter how high you may go, you will never come to the last round, so that you shall be able to say: Now I am at the top, and cannot go higher. No; the good we shall possess in heaven is the infinite God, an uncreated, immense, fathomless ocean of all imaginable delights and joys; no matter how deep you drink of it there will always remain more and more delights that can be enjoyed by a greater light of glory. What an immense, indescribable good is such an increase! The least degree of heavenly glory, such as that apportioned to a child who dies just after Baptism, is an immensely greater and more precious good than all possible goods of the whole world, even if God were to create millions of new worlds, and fill them with all sorts of delights; so that, if the choice were given me between the supreme authority of all these worlds, with all the power, dignity, wealth and pleasure that can be imagined in order to enable me to fill such a position, for not a hundred but a thousand millions of years in perfect peace, without trouble or annoyance of any kind; if I had to choose between this and the very lowest degree of glory in heaven, then without the least hesitation, if I acted rightly, I should take that lowest degree in preference to all this authority and prosperity on earth. The reason of this is evident: countless worlds with all their goods are, after all, only natural and finite things, but the good that is possessed and enjoyed in heavenly glory is the infinite God himself. Now, if the lowest degree of glory is so valuable, what shall we say of twenty, a hundred, a thousand, of millions of degrees of greater and greater glory in heaven, which any one as long as he lives may work for and attain by the grace of God? Who can, then, understand or grasp the immensity of that good which consists in the increase of merit on earth and of eternal glory in heaven?

Although the heavenly citizens are incessantly occupied in acts of the most ardent love of God, they shall never on that account ascend a finger's breadth higher in heaven for all eternity, because death has deprived them of all power of meriting. But we, as long as we are on the way to eternity - that is, while we are in this mortal life - have the power and opportunity by fervor in doing good, and by patiently bearing adversity, of adding every moment a new degree to our future eternal reward. Oh, priceless time of grace! that we blind mortals so often misspend in idleness, and sleep, and frivolity, although we might gain endless treasures by it! Oh, deplorable state of sin! in which most men are for weeks, months, and years without doing penance, and meanwhile, since they have not sanctifying grace, they are not able, even by works that are in themselves most holy, to add the least iota to the goods of heaven! How careful, diligent and thrifty we are when there is a question of making a few shillings and increasing our temporal wealth! Should we not employ at least the same amount of energy in adding to our eternal glory in heaven? But in what does this increase of glory properly consist which distinguishes one saint from another?

II. A higher degree of glory in heaven consists in a clearer vision of God.

1. Each and every one of the blessed beholds the face of God and the full plenitude of the divine essence; yet one sees this far more clearly and perfectly than another, according as the greater or less degree of his merits affords him a greater or less light. Just as on earth any eye, even that of an ignorant person, can see the firmament and remark its size and roundness, its stars and clouds; but the astronomer with his glass can have a far clearer and more extended view of it. Any mind can grasp a truth along with its fundamental reason, but a cultivated mind will see it far clearer than an ignorant and unlearned one. Thus, speaking with due proportion of the blessed in heaven, it is also with the beatific vision, according to the greater or less amount of light that accompanies it.

2. From this clearer vision and knowledge of God comes another advantage: the blest soul who enjoys it is more like to God in beauty and knowledge. So great is the power of the sovereign Good that it absorbs and, as it were, transforms into itself him who beholds it in glory. So speaks St. Paul: "But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face are transformed into the same image" (2 Cor. 3: 18). "We know," says St. John, "that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is" (I John 2: 3). Now, if that transformation and likeness to God takes place even in the least of the elect because he sees God, how much more perfect will it not be in one of the greater Saints, who see Him much clearer and have His likeness more deeply impressed on them? Oh, mortals! who are sometimes so bewitched by a perishable beauty that your whole heart is ensnared by it, ah! raise the eyes of your mind to the beauties of heaven, and rejoice that you are furnished with ways and means of attaining even to their utmost perfection, if you only will.

3. Or perhaps you are ambitious and strive for a high place among men? Then again raise up your eyes and your honor craving heart to the kingdom of heaven, and behold there the third advantage, the indescribable honor to which he shall be raised in the city of God, before the whole court of heaven, who by the greater amount of merit accumulated in this life has prepared for himself a higher degree of glory, and a place so much nearer to the throne of the divine majesty. Oh, what an honor to have the preference for all eternity in the kingdom of God! Here on earth we see how the Saints are honored in all Christendom by churches built to their memory, and splendid altars, and magnificent statues, and by all sorts of offerings, vows, prayers, and hymns; we see how princes and kings bend the knee before their relics and humbly beseech their intercession; but what must it be in heaven, where their dignity and holiness are far better understood and appreciated and more fervently loved? It is a great honor to be held in esteem by many men, by men of understanding and learning, and especially by great men; and the greater the number of those who show the honor, the more is the honor itself increased and prized. What, then, must be the exceeding great and unspeakable honor of the saint who is raised above others in heaven? For he is admired, prized, loved, praised, esteemed by a countless multitude of the wisest, noblest, most mighty of the elect of God. Ah, vain children of the world, why do you run so foolishly after a petty, empty honor that exists only in the false ideas of men? Why do you go to such trouble to beg for a worthless title, a nod of the head, a rank that seems to place you a finger's breadth higher than others in the social scale? "Oh, ye sons of men! ... why do you love vanity and seek after lying?" (Ps. 4: 3.) Do you really wish to gratify your ambition? Then you have a most glorious opportunity of so doing; it is in your power, by increasing your merits daily, hourly, and every moment, to raise yourselves higher and higher in true honor in heaven. But, alas! who thinks of this?

4. Lastly, the difference of glory in heaven consists in the greater happiness one saint shall have above another in the eternal possession of God. For just as in hell, although all the damned lie in the same fire, yet their torments are different according to the debts they have incurred and sins committed, so the blessed in heaven shall share its joys and delights according to the measure of their merits, although they shall all see the same God. Of the blessed in general David says: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure" (Ps. 35: 9); so that they shall swim, as it were, in an ocean of delights and pleasures. Now, if there is such an inundation of joy in the vision and love of God, even in the case of those blessed souls who have brought only one degree of sanctifying grace, received in the Sacrament of Baptism, with them out of this life into eternity, how immense must not be the eternal joys of a saint who is higher in bliss, who kept on increasing sanctifying grace and thereby everlasting glory in heaven every hour, nay, every moment sometimes, for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years, during which time he lived in the state of grace on earth?

So it depends on ourselves, then, if we only choose, to make the eternal joys of heaven always greater and greater for ourselves? Should one not be willing to toil and labor incessantly for that object? But, oh, fools that we are, and forgetful of our own interests! Hitherto our chief care and labor have been devoted to temporal things that cannot be of any use to us in eternity, while that infinite good has had but little place in our thoughts! But in future we shall know how to look after our interests better; no minute of the

precious time that still remains to us shall go by without merit, that we may always raise our throne in heaven higher and nearer to the throne of God, so that we may behold our God all the more clearly, love Him all the more perfectly, and rejoice in Him all the more. Amen.

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