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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

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Purgatory after Death

“And his lord being angry delivered him to the torturers, until he paid all the debt.”—St. Matthew 18: 34.

What a hard sentence for that servant! Yet it was a merciful punishment for that merciless, ungrateful man, who deserved to be treated with far greater severity, for though he was to be punished, yet it was only until he should pay the whole debt. Hence this punishment was not to last always, but till he should have paid all he owed his lord. Thus he had the hope of being one day freed from prison and torture. Here we have a vivid picture of the prison which we Catholics call Purgatory, in which the souls of those who have not sufficiently satisfied the justice of God for their sins are confined, that they may be tortured, not forever, but only for a time and until they have completely paid all they owe the divine justice. Each one of us should think, how will it be with me after death? Shall I be immediately translated into heaven, or shall I be sent to the prison of Purgatory to be tormented? In all probability the latter will be the case. This thought should urge us to do all we can to help the Poor Souls, who are actually there now.

I. Every one of us has just reason to fear a severe punishment after death.

II. Every one of us should show mercy to the Poor Souls; because they who refuse to do so may expect a Purgatory without mercy.

I. There is no one who does not daily do something to earn purgatory; for what are we, and where are we now on this earth? Poor, frail mortals, inclined to evil, exposed to countless dangers and occasions of sin, nay, we stain our lives with many actual sins and faults; for we are of the number of those of whom St. John says: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1: 8). In truth if we go through the whole day, from morning till night, we shall hardly find a quarter of an hour that is quite free from some fault or another. Curiosity of eyes and ears, sensuality of taste and touch, want of restraint over the tongue, idle, flattering, lying, fault-finding, quarrelsome, sarcastic, contradictory talk; proud, ambitious, suspicious, impure thoughts, that are fully or half deliberate; intemperance in eating, drinking, and sleep; discontent and impatience in adversity; a wrong intention in outward actions; vanity in dress, manners, and demeanor; want of restraint and consideration in company; human respect, that drives us to do or omit what we should not do or omit; useless squandering of precious time, culpable ignorance, neglecting the duties of our state although in small things; not fulfilling

the obligations of Christian charity; leading others into sin; giving scandal through carelessness, rejecting the divine inspirations, etc. These are small things according to our ideas; but our lives are filled with them; they are as it were the daily bread of even pious Christians. Wherever one turns he finds some fault or other that he has committed. And how many sins do we not commit that escape our notice, that we do not acknowledge and are not aware of, although they are all clearly recognized by the all-seeing eye of God and written down in the great account-book in their minutest details. Even our good works will be found to be mixed with faults and imperfections. Prayer said with fully or half deliberate distractions; devotions performed with coldness and tepidity; hearing Mass, and receiving holy Communion with little reverence, or fervor; these pious exercises that we daily perform to honor God, to increase our merit, and to gain heaven—these very works serve at the same time to fan the flames of purgatory in order to chastise us.

I will say nothing of the grievous sins that are committed from the first dawn of reason, through the succeeding years of youth and manhood; sins of all kinds in thought and desire, in word, and act, and conversation, and omission. How many adults are there who can say that they are of the number of those happy souls who have never been guilty of a mortal sin in their lives? I will suppose that we have blotted out of the book of God's justice all the mortal sins of our past lives, so that we are now admitted to the favor and friendship of God. What becomes of the terrible temporal punishment we still owe the divine justice for those sins that we have committed and repented of?

The God of holiness and justice requires for these and even for the small daily faults we fall into, the most complete and perfect satisfaction, no fault is so small as not to deserve its punishment. If we do not make this atonement during life, we must atone for those sins in the next life by suffering in our own persons and by purgatorial punishment. For no one can be admitted into heaven and to the sight of God who is not perfectly free from even the least stain. Alas! what will become of us? Is there any one who will dare to say that he shall escape purgatory?

And what do we imagine we shall have to suffer for those almost countless sins and faults? Do we think they are but small matters, and that God does not consider them so exactly? Ah, no! The God of mercy and goodness, even in this life, where mercy holds the foremost rank, where punishments willingly endured are united with the infinite merits of the Passion and death of our Lord, and therefore have a great atoning power over and above their own merit—even in this life God has sometimes punished most severely small sins committed by his faithful servants. Thus, for instance, the half deliberate doubt on the part of Moses, who hesitated about striking the rock with his rod, was the cause of his being excluded from the promised land; an act of curiosity on the part of Lot's wife, who looked round to see the burning city of Sodom, was enough to cause her to be turned into a pillar of salt. The carelessness of Oza in putting forth his hand to support the ark of the covenant drew down on him the punishment of a sudden death. The silly vanity of David, who wished to know the number of his people, brought the plague amongst them, which in three days carried off seventy thousand men. Now, I say, if God, who is otherwise so merciful, inflicts such severe punishments on even his faithful servants for small faults, alas! how strict will he be in the next life, where his justice alone, untempered by mercy, shall wield the rod? where suffering is not united with the merits of Christ, but is simply endured by a mere creature, a suffering that, no matter how keen it is, can hardly be compared to an offence offered to God.

For that very reason we should be more active in helping the Poor Souls, for they who show no mercy to them shall be punished without mercy in purgatory. "For with the same measure," says Christ, "that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6: 38). If you have shown no charity towards the suffering souls, there will be no one after your death who will think of showing mercy to you. There are many examples to prove this. We read of souls that have been over a hundred years in Purgatory and had not one to pray for them, and that through a most just decree of God; and of souls for whom many prayers and masses were offered without doing them any good, because they had not helped the Poor Souls during their lives. Remember this: Not every good act that is done for the benefit of a

certain soul actually helps that soul, otherwise the rich, and especially kings and princes, would be well off indeed, for sometimes a thousand masses are said for them. Ah, no! quite different is the distribution made by the justice of God, who is not bound to accept the payment offered by a stranger for the debt contracted by any soul. You, he will say, who during your life did so little for the Poor Souls, you do not deserve this mass, this alms, those prayers that your friends are now sending after you; all these things shall be given over to others who are more deserving of them on account of the charity they practiced during their lives; but you must pay at your own cost the debts you have incurred.

It is related of a soldier who on his death-bed asked his grandson to sell his horse, and have masses said with the money for the repose of his soul. The grandson, partly through neglect and partly because he wished to keep the horse for himself, as it was a fine one, did not fulfill his grandfather's request. After a lapse of six months the deceased appeared to him; "you faithless fellow," he said to him with an angry countenance, "on account of your negligence I have had to suffer in Purgatory all this time, and now the mercy of God has caused me to find help elsewhere. But as for you, by a just decree you will die soon, and your soul will come to this place of torments, where it will suffer until you have atoned, not only for your own sins, but also for mine, for you will have to complete the punishment that I should have suffered, if God's mercy had not found means to help me." This threat was fulfilled to the letter; the grandson died soon after. This should be a lesson to those children and heirs who neglect to carry out the pious wishes of their deceased friends, or for some cause or another defer complying with them. In the same measure will chastisement be measured out to them. "Judgment without mercy to him that bath not done mercy" (James 2 : 13); Purgatory without mercy to him who has not shown mercy to the Poor Souls.

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