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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-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Death Will Come Unexpectedly

“That you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice.” — Phil.1: 10, 11

St. Paul has left us a beautiful exhortation in those words: “This I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding.” To what end? “That you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice.” “Unto the day of Christ;” that is, the day when our Lord will come to take us from this world by death. It is certain that the Lord will come to take each of us from the world by death; and therefore we must all prepare in time for his coming for much depends on it. It is certain that he will come but once; therefore we must prepare with great care, so that that one occasion may be fortunate for us. It is certain that we do not know the time at which this one coming of the Lord will occur; therefore we must be always ready for it. And he will come not only at a time that is unknown to us, but also when we least expect him and are least thinking of his coming; or:

- I. *We shall die at the hour when we least expect it.*
- II. *We must use all diligence to be always prepared for death.*

I. We must die, and, generally speaking, when we least expect. A few Saints who were always resigned to the Will of God and prepared for death, and criminals led forth to the place of execution, excepted, there is hardly one who dies but at a time when he thinks he shall not die. This is a truth taught by daily experience, and by the inspired word of God. “Be you then also ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come;” therefore he will come at a time when he is not looked for. Our Lord’s whole wish was to impress this truth as deeply as possible on our minds; for he repeats the warning so often, partly by himself, partly by his apostles and disciples: “Take ye heed, watch and pray “(Mark 13: 33). “Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life: and that day come upon you suddenly” (Luke 21: 34): lest it come upon you when you think it far off. “Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands” (Luke 12: 35).

Hence the Lord sometimes compares death to a thief. “The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night” (1 Thes. 5: 2). No thief is so daring as to venture to attempt a robbery in place that he knows to be well guarded. If he sees the owner of the house on watch at the door as he is passing by, he salutes him as if they were old friends, and says to himself: there is no use in trying to steal anything there; the people are on their guard. But when all the household is sunk in sleep, not suspecting any danger, then is the

thief's opportunity; then without making a noise he breaks through the wall, or the window, slips into the house and brings away all that he can lay hands on, and when the master of the house awakes in the morning he finds that he has been robbed. "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night." He will steal in when a man is least on his guard and take away his life when he was still in hopes of living for a long time. Sometimes death is compared to a butcher: "I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter" (Jer. 41: 40); they will be merry and joyful in their prosperity, and live without forethought, nor will they be aware that death has already sharpened his knife to pierce their hearts in a short time. Sometimes he is compared to a fisherman and to a fowler: "Man knoweth not his own end—but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them" (Eccles. 9: 12). The fish snaps greedily at the bait, the bird at the corn spread for it. Why? They wish to enjoy the food prepared for them, in order to preserve their lives. Meanwhile the one swallows the hook with the bait, and the other is caught in the net while eating the corn. Thus both find death where they expected to find pleasure and the means of prolonging their lives. "So men are taken in the evil time;" so it is with us; when we think we are benefiting our health and lengthening our lives, we are hurried off by a sudden and unforeseen death. This is the hour in which Balthasár, who seemed so happy in the midst of his riches and pleasures, read that terrible sentence that he was so far from expecting, which put an end to his life and kingdom. This is the hour in which the proud Aman, before he had time to look around, was hurled from the highest pinnacle of honor, and hanged on a gallows. This is the hour in which Holofernes was killed by a woman in his sleep on his own bed. This is the hour in which Sisara, also during his sleep, was slain by having a nail driven through his head. This is the hour in which Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea, Absalom pierced to the heart as he hung on a tree, Amnon murdered as he was carousing at table. But what is the use of raking up mouldering bones, and seeking for examples from ancient times? Look at the world of our own days, consider the dying of whatever age and condition they may be; few of them, nay, hardly one of them but is surprised by death in some way or other, and dies at a time when he thought he would live longer.

One can die in childhood or youth, or in the prime of life, or in old age. Children often die when neither they themselves nor any one else expects. If a man dies in the prime of life, at thirty or forty, who would have thought of it? They say of him. He was so strong and healthy; and now he is dead! Yes, indeed, he is dead; although neither he himself nor any one else expected it. How many old people are there to whom one dares not speak of death for fear of annoying them? And the older they get the more confidence they have of living for a long time. Even the oldest think they have still a year of life left; and nothing will persuade them that the year they have begun may be the last for them. There is no one so old who does not promise himself another year of life. And then there are those who die after a long and tedious illness. Most of those even die when they least expect it. For show me, if you can one sick person who, no matter how bad he is, does not at least hope for another day of life? How many sick people are not deceived by their own children, domestics, and friends, who are unwilling to speak a word to them of any danger of death for fear of troubling them? Every one who visits them tries to encourage them; you must hope for the best, they say; there have been many far worse who have pulled through all right; you must not be anxious; the doctor is a clever man, and he will surely be able to help you. Is it not so? And how often are sick people only too ready to believe such flattering suggestions, since they have a natural love of life and fear of death, and thus put off receiving the last Sacraments until they are at the last gasp?

II. It is, then, and remains true that the Lord will come when we know not, and that we shall die at a time when we expect not. "At what hour you think not the Son of man will come." What follows from this? That we must be always prepared for death. Unhappy sinners who neglect this; who, unarmed and unprepared, spend whole years as carelessly as if they were never to die. Therefore they remain in the proximate occasion of sin; therefore they refuse to restore ill-gotten goods; therefore they put off doing penance; therefore they are tepid and cold in the divine service; all because they imagine that the hour of death is still far from them.

How happy are just and pious Christians in this respect! How peacefully they can sleep at night! How joyfully they can go through their day's work! For they always have a good conscience and bear about with them sanctifying grace and the friendship of God. Death may come upon them in public or private; he can do them no harm, but rather good; and whether they die suddenly or after a long illness they are never taken unprepared, and therefore they need never fear death. Even holy servants of God have died suddenly when they did not expect death; but their deaths were not on that account unhappy, but rather holy. There is a difference between an unforeseen and an unprovided death; the latter is bad, but the former is not always so. What a difference there was between the five wise and the five foolish virgins! Yet the former, as well as the latter, slept when the bridegroom came. "They all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 25: 5). The sole reason why the former were admitted to the nuptials and the latter excluded was that the wise virgins had their lamps well provided with oil when the bridegroom came unexpectedly, whilst the five foolish virgins had to go to buy oil. Once for all, he who is not at all times and in all places ready and prepared with a conscience adorned by sanctifying grace has reason to dread lest death should surprise him at any moment and hurry him into an unhappy eternity. Once for all, he who leads a good, Christian life need not fear death at any moment. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. 14: 13). Say to yourselves: alas! Unhappy me! If I am but a moment too late with my conversion! Therefore I will delay no longer. Now I will begin with God's help and grace, that during the rest of my life I may serve him truly, and die a happy death. Amen.

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