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JMJ

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 3 = THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Happiness of Him Who Puts His Confidence in God

“But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand.” St. Luke 21:28.

Terrible will be the coming of our Lord to judge the living and the dead. There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars that will fill the world with terror. The powers of heaven will be moved, and the sea will send forth a mighty roaring. All the peoples of the earth will be stricken with fear and consternation. And in those terrible circumstances we are encouraged to rejoice and lift up our heads towards heaven with an assured confidence that our redemption is at hand. Yes, truly, says our Lord; even in those terrible circumstances you, my faithful servants, must rejoice. Even when the wicked are pining away for fear, “lift up your heads;” then must your joy and hope be all the greater; then must you look forward to your redemption with still greater confidence. If we always kept in the friendship of God, and if we had, moreover, a lively hope and confidence in Him, how much trouble, anxiety, and sorrow we should avoid! We often sigh and groan under the miseries of this wretched life; wherever we turn we find hundreds of dangers and necessities of soul and body. Ah, only serve your God! Have confidence in your God! Therefore, if we wish to be happy,

I. Let us not trust in man, but

II. Let us live piously and trust in God.

Although Christian hope aims chiefly at the invisible and spiritual goods that we confidently expect from God in the necessities of the soul, yet this hope can and must also be extended to temporal goods. Hence we can and should hope and trust to be preserved from temporal calamities, or to be freed from them if we are actually suffering them. It is of this latter hope that I now intend to speak. Happy is the man who in all temporal necessities puts his whole hope and confidence in God. For, where can I better place my confidence than in Him who, as I know for certain, will console me in my troubles if I fly to Him for refuge? Now, such a person as that must have two things: first, he must have the power, and, secondly, the will to help me. If one of these be wanting, my confidence is badly placed; nor shall I be able so find the help I hoped for. Thus, if in poverty I were to put my trust in a poor workingman, who has hardly enough to keep himself and his family from starving, and to look to his help to become rich, every one would say that my hope is a foolish one. His will may be good, but he wants the power of making me rich. On the other hand, if I were to place this firm confidence in a rich man who is a noted miser, and never gives anything to the poor, my hope would again be an

ill-founded one; he is able, of course; but the will is wanting. Hence both are required, the power and the will, to make my hope and confidence assured.

Now, my dear brethren, we can find hardly any one on earth in whom we can thus trust, since men are wanting either in the power or in the will to help us, or even in both. For, no matter how great may be the power that some possess, it still remains a limited one, dependent, defective, which weakens itself by rendering assistance to others. What I give to another I take away from myself, and so make myself unable to give as much in future. The powerful ones of this earth are kings, princes, and sovereigns; but they are still only men, that is, if they have power, they are not almighty and therefore David warns us: "Put not your trust in princes, in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation" (Ps. 144:23). Right was the answer given by king Joram to the widow who appealed to him for help in the famine. "Save me, my lord, O king," she said; and he said: "If the Lord doth not save thee, how can I save thee?" (Kings 6:26, 27.)

And even when the good will to help is found amongst men, it is very inconstant and changeable, and is little to be relied on. A sour look, an incautious word, may deprive you of your seemingly best and most faithful friend. The promises and offers of service that people make are mostly empty compliments, uttered in the spirit of worldly policy. When the hour of need comes, those fine words vanish into thin air. You entrust a matter of importance to some one who is under an obligation to you, and who has offered his services; you rely on his ability, but hardly are you gone a few steps away from him, when he forgets you; out of sight, out of mind. When Joseph was in prison in Egypt, he told Pharaoh's butler that he would soon be reinstated in his former position, and begged of him to say a good word to the king for him. Joseph's prophecy was fulfilled; after three days the butler was restored. Truly, it would seem that Joseph had now good reason to hope for a speedy release; but days, weeks, months, nay, two whole years passed by, and Joseph was still in prison. Was it perhaps because the butler's prayer had no influence on the king? No; but when he regained his freedom he forgot all about Joseph. So little reliance is to be placed on the promises of men. And even if they do not forget, they still often refuse to help when they could do so, because it might cost them some trouble, or expose them to danger if they kept their word. When Sedecias was besieged by the Chaldeans in Jerusalem, he expected Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to help him, and asked him to send at once as many soldiers as possible to his assistance. Pharaoh set out rather late, but when he saw the army of Nabuchodonosor, he was afraid to risk his soldiers' lives against it, and went back, while Nabuchodonosor continued the siege. Jerusalem was taken and plundered, and Sedecias, after his eyes were put out, was led captive into Babylon.

Such is the way of the world; every one seeks his own advantage, and even those whom you think your best friends will deceive, betray, and abandon you if they find their own interest at stake. Even if there is one or another who has both the power and the will to help, he can use it only in a very limited way and in certain circumstances; there is no human power able to help in every necessity and danger. Thus, my dear brethren, it is to no purpose that we rely on men, and no one can esteem himself happy merely because he has many rich and powerful friends and patrons.

God alone has power to rule everything in the world.

Therefore, place all your hope and confidence in Him.

On Him alone you can fully rely, for it is on God alone that our happiness or misery, our prosperity or adversity, depends. He is the almighty and sovereign Lord of all created things, who can dispose of them all according to his will and pleasure. Everything that happens on earth (sin alone excepted), happens solely because His all-wise providence has so ordained and not otherwise. "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God" (Eccius. 11:14).

He has also the will to help those who trust in Him.

We are children of God; He is our Father. Is it possible that such a Father does not wish to help His children, who love Him with all their hearts, trust in Him completely, resign themselves entirely to Him, and call upon Him in their necessities? Can the promises of a faithful and infallible God be broken? Promises that He has so often and so clearly renewed, assuring us that He is willing to help those who trust in Him? Are not these words clear enough, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me"? (Ps. 49:15.) "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you" (St. Matthew 11:28). "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you" (1. Pet. 5:7). Does He not say often enough: Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and the door shall be opened to you? "For every one that seeketh,

findeth” (St. Matthew 7:7, 8). Is not this enough to convince us that God has an earnest will to help in all his necessities him who trusts in His providence?

God cries out, not once, but a hundred times: Come to me, all you; ask, and you shall receive. Hope in me, and I will save you. Whatever you ask, only have confidence, and you will obtain it. These are the words of God, who is almighty and can keep His promise; of God, who is infinitely good and has the will to keep it; of God, who is infinitely faithful and must necessarily keep it; and yet we cannot be persuaded to put our whole confidence and hope in Him! What, in God’s name, is the cause of that? Ah, nothing else but the want of a lively faith, on which hope is grounded. We do not believe firmly; we do not bring before our minds undoubtingly and in lively colors the almighty power, goodness, and faithfulness of God, and therefore we are so often despondent. How many of us do not deserve the reproof that our Lord gave to St. Peter when he was on the point of sinking into the waves: “O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?” If we are suddenly overtaken by some calamity, what sighs and lamentations, what fears and despondency we give way to! And if the first “Our Father” we say has no effect, how slothfully we say the second, thinking that all will be of no avail. O thou of little faith, why dost thou doubt? You do not believe as you ought, and therefore your hope sinks to the ground.

Read the history of the patient Job. It is well known into what poverty, misery, and desolation that pious man fell; how he was robbed of all his property, and infected with an ulcer that covered his body from head to foot, so that he had to sit on a dunghill and scrape away the matter that was flowing from his sores; yet he not only regained his former wealth, health, and prosperity, but received from the Lord twice as much as he had before. Why? Because in all his troubles and sufferings he never lost for a moment his confidence in God. Hear what he himself says: “Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him” (Job 13:15). By which he means to say: If God were to afflict me to such an extent that death was already before my eyes, yet my confidence in Him would not be lessened, but I would still continue to hope that He would preserve my life.

Happy, then, he who places his hope in God with a firm confidence! “Blessed be the man, that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence. And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture: and it shall not fear when the heat cometh. And the leaf thereof shall be green, and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit” (Jer. 57:7, 8). There you have a lively picture of the Christian who loves God, has confidence in Him, and in the time of necessity calls on Him for help. Blessed will that man be in heaven and on earth; blessed amongst men on earth; blessed by the Angels in heaven and the elect of God; blessed by the sovereign God Himself, whose help and grace he is assured of whenever he wishes. “In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded” (Ps. 30:2). Amen.

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