



A reminder that December 7th is a day of Fast and Complete Abstinence, unless it falls on a Sunday, and December 8th is a Holy Day of Obligation. Renew your Holy Slavery to Jesus through Mary on December 8th to gain the special Indulgence.

Listen to the MP3 audio file for this sermon by clicking on this link:
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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 + + +

VOL. III

THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

We Must Place our Confidence in God Alone.

“Art thou He that art to come, or look we for another?” St. Matthew 11:3.

What answer did Christ make to this question? “Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again.” This should suffice to show that I, and no other, am the Messiah; for it is only by the almighty power of God that such miracles can be wrought. My dear brethren, we have an almighty God, whose least sign all creatures must obey; who alone can free us from all our necessities and sorrows, and who has given His promise to help those who put their confidence in Him and call upon Him. Therefore, we should place all our hope and trust in Him, and indeed in Him alone; for there is no other who has the same power and good will to help us that He has. But now I imagine I hear some exclaim: Yes, but I have now been hoping and trusting for such a long time; I have prayed and sighed so often, but I am none the better for it all; I am just as badly off as I was at the beginning. Now do you know why you have not been helped? I will tell you

I. You were expecting assistance from some one else.

II. You did not place your hope and confidence in God alone.

I. God wishes us to use our diligence and the natural means we may have at hand to avert calamities, but in such a way as not to place our hopes of safety in those human means, but in God alone; for He alone has given those means the power of helping us, and without His assistance all our efforts would be fruitless. The sick man must not ascribe his restoration to health to the doctor, the tradesman or man of business must not attribute to his own industry the success that has crowned his efforts; no, the success is to be attributed to God alone. For, as St. Paul says: “Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1. Cor. 3:7).

1. A proof that we do not place our confidence in God alone is the fact that in impending calamities our first thoughts are directed to what we can effect by our own industry or by the help of others; and if we see that we can do little or nothing, then, more through despair than through child-like confidence, we appeal to God by prayer as the last resource. Thus you may hear some sick people sighing forth, after they have spent months and years in bed: Alas, I have done everything now, but all is of no avail! I see that I must try something else, and rely on God; He will be my best friend after all. Thus God is made the last resource in an emergency. Ah, unhappy we, exclaims St. Bernard with indignation: Why do we hesitate to cast away all miserable, vain, useless, and deceitful hopes, so that we may place our confidence in Him who alone can and will help us?

2. The weakness of our hope in God is shown when we experience no relief nor help after having prayed and made use of natural means. Then we lose heart at once, and if we are encouraged or consoled either publicly in sermons, or by inward spiritual inspirations; if we are told to continue praying, to hope in the Lord, and not lose confidence in Him, we often think with a sort of chagrin: Yes, no doubt prayer is good; hope is good; confidence in God is good; but! And what do you mean by that wretched “but”? Nothing else than that you are wanting in true hope and confidence in God, as if He either could not or would not help you. And can you imagine that such a weak faith as that will move the Lord God to assist you?

Now, the very reason why there is neither help nor consolation for you, and why God does not hear you, is that you do not fly to Him with a real confidence; you do not trust in God alone; you rely more, or at least in the first place, on creatures, on your own industry, on human means; and therefore, I repeat, God does not and will not help you. Read the Holy Scriptures, and you will see that, as a general rule, He abandons those who put their trust in men.

Naaman, one of the richest and most influential princes of Syria, was infected with a loathsome leprosy. Physicians vied with one another in their efforts to relieve him, but to no purpose; until at last Naaman acted on the advice of a servant maid, dismissed the physicians, and went to see Eliseus, the prophet of God. The prophet told him to wash seven times in the Jordan. Hardly had he done so, when “his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was made clean” (4 Kings 5:14). Who made Naaman a leper? It was God. Why did He not cure him before? Because Naaman trusted too much in the skill of men. God wished to show him that help and counsel can be had only from the Lord, and therefore that we should place our hope in God alone in all our necessities. And Naaman acknowledged this after he was made clean. “In truth, I know,” said he, “there is no other God in all the earth, but only in Israel” (4 Kings 5:15), from Whom alone we must expect help.

Even the most faithful servants of God have sometimes been left quite desolate when they placed their confidence anywhere except in the Lord. Well known is the innocence of Joseph; how obedient and respectful he was to his father Jacob; what a sincere love he had for his brothers, wicked as they were, and how angelic he was in his purity, which he kept untarnished in the midst of the most violent temptations and allurements, —all virtues that are most dear to the heart of God. Yet he was falsely accused as an adulterer, thrown into prison, bound with chains, and kept there for some years without hope or help, although no doubt he often called on God during the time, for he loved God with his whole heart. There you have an example of a just and innocent man, abandoned, as it were, by God in the most dreadful misfortune. Ah, that is truly the case, would the wisdom of the world say; unhappy Joseph, of what good to you now is that virtue and piety with which you so earnestly strove to gain the favor of God? He now leaves you in the lurch. If you had obeyed your mistress, you would have been secure of her protection, and would fare much better than you now do in that wretched prison. See now how vain and idle your hope is. Oh, foolish reasoning of the senseless world! Cannot the God of infinite power deliver one who puts his trust in him from the gloomy dungeon? Cannot the Almighty place even a slave on the throne, if He pleases? And such was in reality what He did for Joseph. Yet I cannot help thinking with astonishment: Why did the wise, almighty, and faithful God allow innocence to languish in a dungeon for such a long time? Why did He not liberate His beloved Joseph long before? Do you wish to know the reason? It was because Joseph had not deserved to be freed before; because he had not placed all his confidence in God. How was that? Joseph had prophesied to the chief butler of Pharaoh that he would soon be liberated and be restored to his former position; and then thought to himself: Now is my chance; now I shall have some one to intercede for me. “Only remember me,” said he to the chief butler, “when it shall be well with thee, and do me the kindness to put Pharaoh in mind to take me out of this prison; for I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here without any fault was cast into the dungeon” (Gen. 40:54, 55). Hear what Joseph desires; his

wish now is to be helped by men; but for that very reason God will justly refuse to help him. Now, Joseph, so does the Lord seem to address him, do you hope and rely on men, as if my providence alone were not enough to save you? You will see, then, what it is to put your trust in men. For the butler, once things prospered with him, forgot all about his promise, and the unlucky Joseph had to remain some years still in prison, through a decree of divine providence, because he had relied too much on human help. But when at last Joseph, having found his hopes frustrated, no longer relied on men, but trusted in God alone, how did things go with him then? From being a prisoner and a slave, he became, viceroy of Egypt.

II. God has promised His help and assistance only to those who trust in Him alone. “Because he hath hoped in me,” He says by the Psalmist, “I will deliver him; I will protect him because he hath known my name” (Ps. 90:14). To encourage us to this undivided confidence, our Lord gives us a beautiful exhortation when speaking to those timid and pusillanimous people who are always in dread lest the necessary food and clothing should be wanting to them. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin; “and yet the Lord clothes them with a snow-white and beautiful garment, that no art can imitate, so that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of them. “How much more you, O ye of little faith!” (St. Matthew 6:28, 29.) How much more readily will not your heavenly Father provide for those who trust in Him?

King David understood this well, when he said to the Lord: “Give us help from trouble, for vain is the salvation of man.” The forces of the Syrians, the Ammonites, and the Idumeans had united against David, and were prepared to attack him. He had an army powerful enough to resist all those foes, and generals who had been always victorious, and so could have easily hoped for a complete victory; yet he did not think himself justified in trusting his army. My soldiers, he thought, are indeed not used to flee before the enemy; they have been always victorious hitherto; but still they are only mortals, and can easily fall into disorder and be vanquished. If I, then, put my trust in them, I shall run the risk of finding myself disappointed; but if I trust in my God, I can be certain that I shall not be overcome by my enemies; therefore “Give us help from trouble, for vain is the salvation of men.” He, of course, made use of his army; but all his confidence he placed in the almighty protection of God. As we owe adoration to no one but God alone, so also we should not place our confidence in any one but God, the Lord of all things.

Hear this, ye afflicted souls, who complain that you are abandoned by all men, and that you can see no means of deliverance from your misery, ah, all the more favorable is the opportunity you have to place all your hope in God. Believe that you do not say too much when you exclaim: I have no one but God to look to. But in having Him you have all; and even if it seems to you that you are abandoned by Him, you must still continue to hope that He will not leave you, or that He has left you only for a time, provided you keep your confidence in Him and remain in His grace; for that is an infallible sign that He has not forgotten you, since He never forgets those who put their trust in Him. Only fear God, love Him with your whole hearts, and cast yourselves and all your miseries into His fatherly hands. Amen.

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