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Jesus left his image on Veronica's veil. What will His face look like when we see Jesus as our Judge, the moment we die?

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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 + + +

Volume 5 - THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Judge as God

"Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty." Luke 21:27.

Terrible shall be the coming of the incarnate Son of God on that Day of Judgment! Signs shall be seen in the sun, moon, and stars; the swollen sea shall fill all hearts with dread by its roaring and rushing waves; men shall wither away with fear! But all that should not frighten us. These things are mere forerunners of the general fear that is to follow. "Then they shall see the Son of man coming with great power and majesty;" that is the sole cause of the dismay that must fill our minds. With reason does the Church sing: How men shall shudder at the coming of the Judge! And who is that Judge? He will be an exceedingly terrible Judge, especially to those who have a bad conscience.

I. A terrible Judge, because he is God.

II. A terrible Judge, because he shall then be a God without mercy.

When Adam had lost his innocence, the voice of God in Paradise filled him with such awe that he hid himself among the trees of the gardens. Although the Israelites were the chosen people and were called the people of God, yet when they heard his voice from afar coming out of the dark cloud, "being terrified and struck with fear they stood afar off, saying to Moses: Speak thou to us and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die" (Exod. 20:18, 19) through excessive awe and terror. Thus they preferred to deal with a mortal like themselves in preference to God, whose greatness and glory they feared and could not endure. Oh, if mere men were to judge me at the end of my life and on the last day, I should not be half so much afraid of the judgment, for I should have some hopes of making out a good case for myself and escaping condemnation. But he who will then be seated on the throne is not a weak, fallible man, but God, and therefore an almighty and all-knowing Judge. "Then they shall see," says the Evangelist, "the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty" (Luke 21:27) He will be the Judge of whom Moses has said: "The Lord is a man of war: Almighty is his name" (Exod. 15:3). A God whose might no one can withstand, whose hand no one can escape. "A God whose wrath no man can resist" (Job 9:13). A God who will not except any man's person, neither will he stand in awe of any man's greatness.

The mighty power of this Judge was not visible when he was amongst us on earth as a poor, weak mortal, like to us; but it will appear on that day, when he shall be seen seated on a throne with great power and glory. When

he was subject to the judgment of men the world did not know him; but he shall be known when all men shall have to submit to the sentence he pronounces on them: "The Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments" (Ps. 9:17), when he shall exercise his authority as Judge of the whole human race. Who knew what a great, mighty Lord he was when he was bound in chains and led before the high-priest, and when he stood so humbly before Pilate and Herod? But the day shall come when all mankind, assembled in the valley of Josaphat, shall shake with fear before his tribunal: "The Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments." Who saw any trace of Almighty Godhead in him when he was condemned to death as a poor sinner amid the jeers and laughter of the Jews, and nailed to the shameful cross? But wait till he pronounces the sentence of condemnation on the judges, kings, and emperors of earth: then "the Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments." He still abandons himself, as it were, to the wantonness and contempt of wicked men, as if he were unable to defend himself or to restrain their malice; but let them fall into his hands on the day of his wrath: then they shall feel whom they have been fighting against, and what a mighty Lord he is whose anger they have provoked. "If thou shalt see the oppression of the poor, and violent judgments, and justice perverted in the province, wonder not at this matter;" be not surprised at the prosperity of the wicked, the persecutions the just have to suffer, the oppression of poor widows and orphans, the pride and wantonness of the rich; "for he that is high hath another higher" (Eccles. 5:7), who will one day justify his judgments before the whole world, and they who seemed to bear the globe on their shoulders shall have to bow down before him.

In the history of Greece we read that the hero Agisilaus was small of stature, but great in mind and valor, skilled in arms and generalship, and one of the greatest heroes of his time. King Agis had a great desire to see one of whose exploits he had heard so much, but when he met Agisilaus he began to ridicule him, and said in a mocking tone: "I behold an ant, when I thought I should see a lion." Ready and clever was the answer Agisilaus gave the proud king: "I seem an ant to you," said he, "but one day you shall find me out to be a lion." The same answer is suited to those who now during life do not fear the great God, despise him, sin recklessly, and remain obstinately in sin as declared enemies of God. They see in our churches pictures or carved images representing our divine Lord in a very lowly and apparently despicable state, as a weak Child in the crib, or as a dying Man hanging on the cross, or else they know that he is concealed under the white Host, from which no thunders or lightnings flash forth to announce his majesty, and from this they conceive a low idea of God, and do not fear to offend him by transgressing his commandments. But he whom we now treat so contemptuously shall one day appear as a lion, and fill all creatures with awe by the might of his greatness. He who will judge us is an almighty God, and consequently he is able to defend us against those who now oppress us, and it is from him that we have to expect our reward. But, on the other hand, woe to us, oh, sinners! If we fall into the hands of this Judge burdened with debt. There is no chance of escape from him, because he is the Almighty God!

Nor can you hope to hide anything from him, because he is also an all-knowing God, from whom nothing can be concealed, with whom the rule, "deny, if you have done anything wrong, until the crime is proved," will be of little avail. When a man commits a sin he does not believe, or perhaps thinks not for the moment, that the all-seeing eye of the Judge is on him. "Who seeth me?" he asks with the wicked man: "darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me; whom do I fear?" (Ecclus. 23:25, 26.) I am shut in between four walls, and no one is aware of what I am doing. If I have a secret hatred against my neighbor, and try to do him harm here and there when I have the chance, who knows anything about it? I show nothing outwardly; I greet him in the most friendly manner. If I have betrayed my neighbor, and caused him to suffer loss by craft, or bribery, or false testimony, who knows of it? It is all hidden under the mantle of the law. If I avail myself of all kinds of underhand practices in buying and selling, if I lie and cheat in business, who can find me out? So far no one has detected me. If I fish in troubled waters and make unlawful profit here and there, who can accuse me of it? If I amuse myself with all sorts of evil thoughts and desires, and wilfully entertain them, who knows anything about it? No one can suspect me of such a thing. If I entertain an unlawful intimacy and commit many sins in secret, not a soul can know of it; no one can read my guilt on my forehead. My husband thinks that I am true to him at all times; my parents believe that I have not lost my first innocence, that I know not what sin is; in the presence of others I am able to act as if I could not bear the sight of a certain person; all is kept quiet; there is not the least suspicion of anything. So thinks the sinner. But he does not understand that God's eye seeth all things; that the eye of the omnipresent God beholds all things, and that the all-knowing Judge allows nothing to escape him, but writes everything down in his great account-book.

We must therefore lead pious lives, since we act before the eyes of a Judge who sees all things, a Judge who knows all our thoughts, intentions, desires, words, and works. Oh, mortals! Think and judge of me as you please, I hold with St. Paul: "To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you. He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:3, 4). Think and say of me, if you wish, that I am a good-for-nothing, wicked man; he who has to judge me is an all-knowing Lord. Happy me if I am found good in his sight! Think and say of me that I am a holy man; he who is to judge me is an all-seeing Lord. Woe to me if I am found wicked in his sight! "Therefore, fear him to whom everything is known; "fear that Judge who is an almighty, and, at the same time, an all-seeing God, and who, when he shall judge us, shall be a God without mercy.

II. How can that be? A God, and without mercy? Is it possible to conceive the idea of a God without mercy? Does not the Catholic Church sing: "Oh, God, of whose mercy there is no measure, and of whose goodness the treasures are infinite"? Does not David call him often a God of mercy, a gracious God? "The Lord is gracious and merciful, patient, and plenteous in mercy. The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Does not St. Paul call him "the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort"? It is true, and therefore we often flatter ourselves that we need not fear being too presumptuous with him. But the mercy of God is only for the time of our lives here on earth; that time past, it has fulfilled its office and gives way to justice alone. Now, there is no sin so great that he is not ready to forgive at the first moment of repentance; but hereafter there will not be the least fault that he shall not examine and punish with all the strictness of his justice. Nothing shall remain unavenged (Ps. 74:3); every farthing must be paid; not an idle word shall be passed over or forgiven without satisfaction. Even the works of the just shall with difficulty be allowed to pass. "When I shall take a time," says the Lord, "I will judge justices."

And this is but right; the divine honor requires that a time should come in which the severity of his justice shall be made manifest, as his other perfections are shown to the world. In the creation God showed his almighty power; for with one word, fiat, he made the universe out of nothing. In the government of the world he shows his admirable wisdom, for his providence has appointed many different states for men to live in. In the Redemption he shows his goodness and mercy, for he offered himself as a Victim for the salvation of men, and was nailed to a cross for them, and the same mercy is daily made manifest in the patience with which he bears with sinners. His boundless magnificence and liberality he shows in heaven, where every momentary good work shall reap an eternal reward; his hatred and detestation of sin are made evident in the eternal hell, where he punishes even a momentary mortal sin of thought. It is his justice alone that has not been exhibited to the world hitherto. And God has appointed the last day of the world as the time for showing that special perfection to men; and therefore he calls it: The great day of the Lord; the day of wrath; the bitter day; the day of calamity, on which he shall judge all nations in his justice.

The mercy of God itself requires that severity and merciless strictness in the judgment. Why? It has been and is still so often abused by men during life; and, what is still more insulting to this divine attribute, sinners take occasion from it to offend God with all the more hardihood. Thus countless millions of sins are committed because God is infinitely good and merciful. Is it not right, then, that this insulted mercy and goodness should be fully avenged on the presumption that so recklessly despised it? And that it will surely be. "I have always held my peace," says the Lord; "I have kept silence, I have been patient" (Is. 42:14); but when that time comes, that great day of wrath and anger, I will show them what I am. "I will be to them as a lioness, as a leopard in the way of the Assyrians. I will meet them as a bear that is robbed of her whelps and I will devour them as a lion" (Osee 33:7, 8). They will feel the heavy weight of my justice.

Ah, then we shall see the Son of man coming; then we shall all behold that almighty, all-wise God, but without mercy; just, angry and embittered! And how will it be with us then? What fear and trembling there will be among the wicked in presence of their Judge! Who can stand before him? I hear David, hurled from his throne by a disobedient son, abandoned and hunted by his own people, and wandering about in misery; but I tremble at the same time when I hear him in the midst of his calamities calling out fervently to God, not for help and alleviation of his sufferings, but for grace in the day of judgment, and that, too, out of sheer fright. "Hear, oh, Lord, my prayer; give ear to my supplication in thy truth; hear me in thy justice!" And he adds the reason of his earnest supplications: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified" (Ps. 142:1, 2).

I hear Job on the dung-hill crying out full of anguish and fear in the midst of his terrible sufferings: “What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? And when he shall examine, what shall I answer him?” (Job 31:14.) Answer: “My heart doth not reprehend me in all my life” (Job 27:6). Would to God that I could say that, too, of myself! Answer that after the loss of all thy goods, the slaying of thy children, in the torments thou hadst to suffer, thou hast never sinned with thy lips, wert always resigned to the divine will, and didst bless the name of the Lord. Answer that whatever small faults thou didst commit were most amply atoned for by thy generous alms, and by the sufferings thou didst bear with such patience. Ah, would that I could say that, too, of myself! Answer: “I was clad with justice. I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor,” a comforter of the afflicted. And yet thou art afraid of the judgment of God, and dost not know what to do! Alas! Let me and other sinners ask: “What shall we do?” I hear too a Saint Jerome, emaciated with penances, striking his breast with a stone, and crying out: “When I think of that day, my whole body trembles, and a death-sweat breaks out on my forehead! Whether I am eating or fasting, sleeping or praying, the sound of the terrible trumpet echoes in my ears: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!”

Who will be safe in Babylon if Jerusalem is to be judged so strictly? If the pillars of the church tremble with fear, what is to become of the worm-eaten timbers? In a word, as St. Peter says, “if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Pet. 4:18.) What are we to do? Must we lose courage altogether and despair of our salvation? No; for there is still time for grace and since that is so we must at once appease our Judge with sincere repentance. Now, while the mercy of God surpasses all his works, let us cry out with a contrite heart in the words of the Catholic Church: “Oh, just Judge, forgive us our sins before the day of reckoning comes!” Now, while there is time for amendment we must make friends with our Judge by earnest, sincere repentance, by a thorough change of life, by true humility, by renouncing all vain earthly joys, and by the diligent practice of good works; so that when we shall one day see him coming in great power and majesty, we shall have reason to rejoice. Amen.

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