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Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin.

Remember that Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday this week are EMBER DAYS.

Observe the laws of Fast and Abstinence.

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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

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Suddenness with Which the Last Day Shall Come

“Make straight the way of the Lord.” John 1:23.

And what is to happen after all those signs and portents? “Then they shall see the Son of man; “then the last day shall come, and Jesus Christ in his majesty and glory shall appear in the valley of Josaphat to judge the living and the dead. But when? Immediately after those signs, or a long time after? Who can tell us that? It is useless to ask, for no one knows it. All we know for certain about the matter is that

I. The last Day of Judgment shall come upon men quite suddenly and unexpectedly.

II. Therefore we should be ready for it every hour of our lives.

I. There have been many holy friends of God to whom he revealed the day, nay, even the hour, of their death; there have been wicked sinners the time of whose death and eternal damnation has been foretold by the prophets. The heavenly city of Jerusalem was shown to St. John the Evangelist. St. Paul was rapt up to the third heaven, where he saw mysteries that may not be revealed to men. Jesus Christ often spoke to his disciples about the kingdom of God, about the indescribable joys that there awaited them as the reward of their labors: “I have called you friends,” he says to them, “because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you” (Mark 15:15). But concerning the time of the end of the world and the coming of the Judge, no one either in heaven or on earth has ever heard a word. “Of that day or hour,” says our Lord expressly to his disciples after having told them of the signs that are to announce the last day, “no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). With these words he restrained the curiosity of his disciples regarding the time of the general judgment, as if he said to them: why should you desire to know what is hidden from the angels and even from the Son of man himself? These words are to be understood in this way: The Son of man knows nothing about the last day, not that he is absolutely ignorant of it, but that he does not wish to reveal it to any creature; that is, he has not of it a knowledge that he can communicate to others. In the same way a priest, if asked what such or such a one has said to him in confession, can with truth answer: I do

not know. For in such circumstances the words mean simply: I do not know it by a knowledge that I can communicate to others; or else: I am as little at liberty to speak of it as if I were absolutely ignorant of it. Hence the knowledge of the time of the last day is kept most strictly from men, and therefore that day will come quite unexpectedly, and will fall upon men when they are least thinking of it.

Christ has foretold that he will come unexpectedly: "For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27). Lightning, as we know, appears suddenly and before one is aware of it; it shoots out of the clouds and flashes before our eyes; "so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." He will appear to men before they have time to cast a thought on his coming. St. Peter says: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief." A thief would never dare to break into a house when he knows the inhabitants to be on their guard. No; he who is robbed is not aware of it until he finds his things gone. Like a thief in the night, the day of the Lord shall come unexpectedly.

Finally, the same truth is confirmed by the similes used by our Lord to describe the manner in which the men of those times shall live: "And as it came to pass in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." And how did people act then? "They did eat and drink; they married wives and were given in marriage until the day that Noe entered into the ark." And what then? "And the flood came, and destroyed them all." Wonderful was the blindness and stupidity of the men of those days; not the least attention did they pay to the oft-repeated warnings of Noe. He was a hundred years engaged in building the ark; the people went to see his work; they doubtless asked him what the huge structure was intended for; why it contained so many divisions, rooms, partitions, and stables. Noe said to them: do penance; sin no more; appease the anger of God; in a few years the whole world shall be destroyed, for the waters shall ascend higher than the highest mountain, and there shall not be dry land enough left for a little bird to stand on; therefore be converted to God. Oh, fool that you are! They said to him; who put that nonsense into your head? Why do you plague yourself so with that useless labor? Enjoy yourself as we do; eat, drink, and be merry. Meanwhile the time for the flood came; the sky was darkened; the clouds began to collect; the sea swelled up and encroached on the dry land. Poor mortals! Do you still refuse to believe? Yes; they are not the least disturbed; they go on as before. They did nothing but eat, drink, dance, and sing; they had marriage-feasts, and sports, and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content: "And the flood came, and destroyed them all;" while they were in the midst of their sins the flood-gates of heaven were opened, and the water swept them all away. "Likewise," continues the Evangelist, "as it came to pass in the days of Lot: They did eat and drink; they bought and sold; they planted and built; and in the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

"Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed" (Luke 17:30). Should we not think that so many signs would be enough to make the men of that time watchful? But no! When the fear and terror caused by the signs shall be at an end, they shall resume their former mode of life, and when they least expect it, "in the twinkling of an eye," fire shall fall from heaven and reduce the world to ashes, and then the dreadful trumpet shall resound in all places, and the angel's voice be heard crying out: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" And what conclusion are we to draw from this? "Make straight the way of the Lord;" therefore we should now prepare ourselves most carefully for that day.

II. After speaking of the uncertainty of the last day, and saying that no man or angel knows anything about it, Christ adds: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come" (Matt. 24:42). Be ready like to a householder who expects a thief to break in, and knows not when he will come. "Watch ye, therefore." "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch" (Mark 13:37); prepare yourselves for my coming; do penance for your sins; order your lives so now that when the Judge comes he may find you in the state of sanctifying grace; otherwise the fire that consumes your bodies shall be only a prelude to the eternal flames of hell.

Very probably we shall not live till the last day. But, although the world may last for another thousand years, it behooves each one of us to be always on guard, and to prepare most carefully, so that all may go well with us in the general judgment; for in whatsoever state of life the end shall find each one, in that state, too, shall the last day of the world find him; for as a man dies, so shall he be judged on the last day. If we die in the state of grace we need not fear judgment, but rather rejoice at it; the kingdom of heaven, the society of the elect, is surely open to us. If we die in the state of sin we have nothing good to hope for on the last day; the fire of hell among

the reprobate is and will be our lot forever. Therefore the judgment that awaits us on the last day depends on our death and the last day of our lives; hence, as we should always be prepared for that day, so, too, should we be always ready for the hour of death. Now, who can tell us when that hour shall come, or where it shall find us? God alone knows that; to no purpose should we expect a messenger to be sent to warn us. We know not whether it will be after ten or twenty years, to-day or to-morrow, or even in this very hour. One thing we know, and that is that the Lord has warned us and all men: "Wherefore be you also ready: because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come" (Matt. 24:44). In the hour when you are not thinking of it death will come and take you out of the world before the tribunal of God to the particular judgment, and whatever sentence you receive then and no other shall be the one you shall hear in the general judgment.

Therefore, the conclusion is evident: every one of us who values his soul and its salvation should and must now be ready for the coming of the Judge. And I say, "be ready;" for it will be too late to begin to prepare when the Judge knocks at the door; and it will be forever too late. "Watch, therefore," our Lord says, because you know not what hour your Lord will come." And as you cannot know it, be on your guard at all times; keep in the friendship of God; let no one dare to remain even a quarter of an hour at enmity with him in the state of mortal sin; for perhaps during that quarter of an hour death may come unexpectedly and hurry you off to the judgment-seat. "If the good man of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open" (Matt. 24:42, 43). And if we knew the hour of our death, would any one of us be so reckless as not to repent of his sins beforehand and be reconciled to God? But since we do not know that hour, and since any hour may be our last, we must be at all times intent on this important business and be ready for the long journey into eternity. "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."

No one should trust to his youth, and say: Oh, I am not old yet; I am still young, strong, and healthy; I am not in danger of death; there is no hurry for me; I can begin later on to amend my life and prepare for death. Alas, that wretched later on! I am not old! I am still young! How many thousand souls have been hurled into hell by those excuses! Do you mean, then, that young people cannot die? But very few attain old age; most people die in their best years, and no one knows the hour when the Lord will come for him; so that young as well as old should be prepared at all times. You will amend later on, you say. What! Exclaims St. Augustine, later on? He who thinks in that way deceives himself, and treats his death as a joke. Consider the great risk of the last day, and what depends on it. Nothing less than eternal joys or eternal torments! It is no child's play! Is heaven such a trifle that it can be allowed to depend on an uncertain "later on"? Is hell a trifle, that the escaping it can be left to a "later on" that you know nothing about? Do you know what is said of that servant in the Gospel who puts off everything to a future time, thinking to himself: "My lord is long a-coming; I can meanwhile enjoy myself and make merry"? But how shall he fare? "The lord of that servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not, and at an hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

How old are you now? Fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty or more years? Shall you live a year longer? You cannot tell; this very day or hour you maybe summoned before the tribunal of the Almighty. If that happened to you this day or hour, should you be ready? Is there anything on your conscience that you should first repent of and confess? If such is the case, oh, go to confession at once! Perhaps in another day or hour it may be too late! A whole eternity depends on this, and you cannot and will not burn forever with the demons in hell. You are fully determined with God's help to go to heaven and be happy there with God and his elect. Now, your eternity depends on your last hour, on the state in which it finds you. Therefore, be always ready for it. But, you think, these are sad and melancholy thoughts. Not by any means! They are full of consolation for the soul that is determined to work out its salvation; for it must be a great consolation for such a soul to find itself prepared at all times for death. These thoughts are indeed sad and melancholy for those who are not minded to amend; but they should think of the sad and melancholy meditations they will one day make in hell, when they think: I could have been eternally happy, but I did not wish to be so!

In future always keep before your mind your death and the judgment that awaits you. This will be a check on your evil inclinations and desires; it will spur on your sluggish will to zeal in the service of God; it will detach your heart and affections from earthly goods and pleasures; it will sweeten the short-lived trials of this uncertain life, so that you shall bear them with patience and resignation for his sake and to gain heaven; say to yourself:

this cross may possibly last only for an hour, and then I shall go to my God and possess him in eternal joys. Daily live as if you had daily to die, to appear before his judgment-seat. In the morning when you awake make such a resolution as you should make if you knew that at evening your body was to be lying dead in the coffin; and at night, before retiring to rest, purify your conscience as if you expected to be found dead in your bed next morning. Thus you shall be ready any moment to meet your future Judge, whenever it may please him to call you from the world; and you shall meet him not with fear or terror, but with joy and consolation, confident in his promise that at the general judgment you shall be among the elect on his right hand in the valley of Josaphat, and shall hear the joyful invitation: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen.

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