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Remember Christmas Eve is a day of FAST and complete ABSTINENCE.

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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. 4 - THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Duties of Subjects to Their Spiritual and Temporal Superiors

“And he was subject to them.” Luke 2:51.

The Son of God subject to man, subject to Mary and Joseph! He who a short time before was teaching the doctors in the Temple, and amazing them by his wisdom, now allows himself to be instructed by a poor Virgin, and by a lowly carpenter, just as if he were an unreasoning child, incapable of governing himself! He whose nod the Angels in heaven are ready to obey, according to whose will the sun, moon, and stars pursue their ordinary course, allows himself to be ruled and commanded by poor mortals! And why? Because, as the son of God who came into the world, to do the will of his heavenly Father in the most perfect manner, he recognized and honored that father in the persons of his Mother and foster-father. Therefore, was he subject to them. Children, learn from the example of Jesus Christ, how humbly and readily you should obey your parents. Servants, learn from it to obey your masters and mistresses. Christians, all learn from it that you must show proper submission to spiritual and temporal superiors, for:

- I. Spiritual and temporal superiors having their lawful authority from God, all are bound to obey them.*
- II. Spiritual and temporal superiors represent God in the exercise of their authority; therefore, all are bound to obey them with reverence.*

I. There are temporal and spiritual superiors, who have authority and power over others, and who can make laws for them and punish those who disobey; but there have been some who denied that this authority comes from God. The heathens taught that God is not at all concerned about the world, that he does not govern it, and that he has left men at perfect liberty to live and act as they please; while they attributed prosperity and adversity to mere chance. They founded this opinion on the differences that there are in individuals. Has not God, they said, made us all alike according to human nature? What is the reason of the great diversity in station that there is amongst us? Must we not conclude from it that God has withdrawn his hand from the world, so that he, who is stronger and able to overcome others, can command them and make laws for them? Such was the opinion of the heathens, who not only denied the existence of any authority in human superiors, but also refused to acknowledge the authority of divine providence.

It is true that God has made all men alike; true that we are all descended from Adam, and if human nature had remained as it was first created by God, that is, in original innocence, justice, and perfection, there would not be superiors and inferiors, as there now are. There would be no necessity for any one to make or to obey a law,

because reason itself would have been sufficient to teach every one his duty, since there would have been nothing in us to contradict its light and its inspiration. But, when this happy state was destroyed by the first sin of Adam, which we all inherit, our nature was corrupted, the light of reason was darkened, the beautiful order of things, according to which the flesh obeyed the spirit, and the spirit obeyed God in all things, was disturbed. Evil desires and inclinations began to rise up against reason and against the spirit, and the whole man, from childhood upwards, was inclined to evil. Under those circumstances it was absolutely necessary to appoint superiors to maintain order amid such confusion, to punish evil, and to restrain corrupt propensities by fear of chastisement; and of course it also became necessary for inferiors to obey their superiors. What would become of the world without this arrangement? If each one were at liberty to do as he pleases, how could men live together in community? If the ship is without a helmsman, what will become of her? She will be blown about by the winds, hither and thither, until she is wrecked. If there is no general to conduct the war, what will become of the army? It will simply be a crowd of disorderly soldiers, who work for different aims, and with different intentions. If there is no master in the school to punish the idle and naughty, what will be the case? The school will simply be a room full of willful, noisy, and naughty children. "Where there is no Governor, the people shall fall" (Prov. 1:14). If you take the rulers out of a state, we shall lead a more irrational life than brute beasts; no one will trust his neighbor nor have anything to do with him; no one will be sure of his property, nor even of his life.

No, the God of infinite wisdom governs the world! He has created countless hosts of Angels, and yet has divided them most harmoniously into nine choirs, one above the other, and so that one enlightens the other. In the same order he has created the heavens, in which the sun, moon, and stars have their appointed spheres.

How much more necessary is not such order and harmony amongst men! And certainly the God of infinite wisdom has not forgotten it. From the very beginning of the world, he placed Adam over Eve, when he said to the latter: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee" (Gen. 3:16). Both man and woman were superiors over their children. These latter had authority over their descendants, so that according to the natural law, one was subject to the other, and all had to live in a certain order of superiority and inferiority. In the written law, when men were divided into different nations, God placed a superior over each and published this command: "Thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say, that preside in the place, which the Lord shall choose, and what they shall teach thee, according to his law, and thou shalt follow their sentence; neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor to the left hand. But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, that man shall die and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel; and all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride" (Deut. 17:10). In the New Law Jesus Christ himself has also confirmed this, when he commanded the Jews as subjects to pay tribute to Caesar: "Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21). In these words he wished to refute the erroneous opinion of the Jews, who thought that, as the chosen people of God, they should obey God alone, and not be subject to king or emperor. On another occasion he said to his Apostles and disciples: "The Scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses; all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do" (Matt. 23:2).

II. Therefore, according to the command of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, superiors have lawful authority to govern and command, while inferiors are bound in justice to obey. And whence have they this authority? From God himself. Hear what St. Paul says so plainly: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers;" and he immediately adds the reason: "for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). "Every soul;" no one is exempted; all must obey their superiors, the wife must obey her husband, the son his father, the daughter her mother, the servant his master, the citizen his magistrate, and all subjects their spiritual and temporal superiors. If you ask who made that law, God himself answers: "For there is no power but from God." "By me kings reign, and law-givers decree just things; by me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice" (Prov. 8:15). There are many kinds of superiors; all have their authority from God. The apostle does not say there is no king, no prince, no law-giver who does not receive his authority from God, but: "There is no power but from God," and St. Paul concludes: "Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:2). Therefore, Christians: "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh with fear" (Ephes. 6:5).

We all know that the ambassadors and representatives of a king are entitled to the same honor and respect that is due to the king himself whom they represent. Now, all superiors, spiritual and temporal, are representatives of God, and exercise authority on earth in his name, as St. Paul expressly says: "Fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister" (Rom. 13:4). And we read that the people were dissatisfied with Samuel, who had been placed over them as judge, and they wished to have a king. Samuel complained of this to God, but God said to him: "They have not rejected thee, but me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Kings 8:7). He showed the same displeasure when the rebellious people rose up against Moses and Aaron: "How long will this people detract me? How long will they not believe me? I will strike them, therefore, with pestilence, and will consume them" (Num. 14:11). In the same sense we must understand the words of Christ: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). Therefore, St. Paul says: "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ; as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men (Ephes. 6:5,7). From all this we must now come to the conclusion that we are bound to show the same reverence and obedience to all superiors, no matter what they may be personally.

We owe honor and obedience to all superiors, although they may be corrupt, wicked, sinful, giving bad example, and are thus more worthy of contempt than honor, for in spite of their unworthiness, they possess authority from God and wield it in his stead. The power that God has given them is not bestowed on their holiness of life; it is given to them on account of the office they fill, on account of the duty they must perform. Therefore, says Christ: "All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do." Of whom did our Lord speak? Of the Scribes and the Pharisees. But could any one more wicked than they be found at that time? Christ has threatened them with eternal woe in the very place where he was exhorting his disciples to obey them. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in you suffer not to enter. Woe to you, hypocrites; because you devour the houses of widows. Woe to you, foolish and blind! Woe to you, blind guides. Because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish; but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Woe to you, hypocrites; because you are like to whited sepulchres. Outwardly, indeed, you appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?" (St. Matthew 23:13-33.) And yet he commands obedience to such people. He has certainly warned his disciples not to imitate their conduct and manner of life: "According to their works do ye not; for they say and do not." Must obedience, then, be rendered to such wicked, impious men, in every command they give? Certainly, answers Christ, for it still remains true: "They have sitten on the chair of Moses." That alone suffices for them to have lawful authority from God, and therefore, whatever they say to you, you are bound to do, although you must not imitate their wicked conduct. Christ himself obeyed Pilate, that most unjust judge, as having authority from God over his person, and he obeyed him with respect, too, when he said: "Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above" (John 19:11).

Finally, we are bound to show honor and obedience to our superiors, even if they are harsh and unmerciful to their inferiors. "Be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward (1 Pet. 2:18). Our Lord himself publicly proclaimed the Pharisees and Scribes to be harsh and forward with the people: "For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them" (Matt. 23:4). Nevertheless, "Whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do." How respectful David was to King Saul, who persecuted him so unjustly and sought so often to take his life! He once had it in his power to destroy his cruel persecutor and be fully revenged on him, when he found him alone in the cave; but he allowed him to go away without doing him any injury.

This should be a lesson for all Christians, who in any way sin against the respect and obedience they owe their spiritual or temporal superiors. Woe to those who set themselves against the authority and order established by God, and who despise the divine majesty in the persons of those who are invested with power! "They have not rejected thee, but me," says God to superiors nowadays, with the same displeasure toward disobedient subjects as in the days of Samuel. They have despised and cursed me. They have murmured against me, and complained of me. They have spoken against me and brought me into disrepute, by their evil conduct toward my representatives, to whom I have given authority.

Kings and princes are not in the habit of leaving unpunished any insults that are offered to their ambassadors or representatives, but exact full satisfaction. And do you think that the great God will allow an insult offered to his representatives to go unpunished? Do you wish to know how deeply he feels such an insult? Read the 11th chapter of the Book of Numbers, and you will see what happened to those Hebrews who complained of the fatigue they were enduring, and rebelled against Moses, their judge. “And when the Lord heard it, he was angry. And the fire of the Lord being kindled against them, devoured them that were at the uttermost part of the camp” (Num. 11:1). The same thing happened to Core, Dathan, and Abiron, when they tried to excite the people against Moses by their murmurs and complaints: “The earth broke asunder under their feet, and opening her mouth, devoured them with their tents and all their substance. And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people” (Num. 16:31,33). And so it happened also to the Jews when they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, on account of their long sojourn in the desert: “Wherefore the Lord sent among the people fiery serpents, which bit them and killed many of them” (Num. 21:6). Christian hearers, we do not hear nowadays of any such terrible punishment being inflicted upon those who murmur against their superiors. Otherwise the world would witness sad tragedies every day. But listen again to the words of St. Paul: “He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” And what has such a one to expect? “They that resist purchase to themselves damnation.”

My conclusion is, in the words of St. Peter, be subject to your masters and to all superiors, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, privately as well as publicly, with proper respect and reverence, as to God himself, because they have their authority from God, and they exercise it in his stead. Honor and obey them for God’s sake, whose holy will and commandment is that you honor and obey them. Honor and obey them for the love of Jesus Christ, who gives us an example of the most humble obedience, not only to his poor Mother and foster-father, but also to all those who had spiritual or temporal authority in his time on earth. Honor them with a ready and constant obedience, so that you may reap the exceeding great reward of obedience in the kingdom of God’s elect, where all superiority will be at an end, and where the Lord alone shall be exalted. Amen.

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