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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 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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Judge as Man

"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Luke 3:6.

The Son of man, Jesus Christ, is to be our Judge on the last day, the day of general judgment, when all flesh shall rise from the grave. If so, why did I in a former sermon cause such alarm to myself and you by representing our Judge as a strict and merciless God? He is man, like to us, and has loved us even unto death. So it is, dear Christians. Rejoice, for we have a good Judge; our case will be tried under favorable circumstances. Rejoice, then, pious Christians, who by your virtuous lives remain always in the friendship of your Judge. But sinners, alas! as far as you are concerned, you have just as much reason to fear as ever unless you turn from your evil ways. He who will judge us is Jesus Christ, a Man like ourselves, that is true; but the sinner has no less reason for fear on that account.

I. *Because the Man who will judge us shall then be quite different toward the sinner from what he now is.*

II. *Because the sinner who is to be judged shall then be unworthy of pity or mercy from his Judge.*

I. Amongst all the titles that are given to our Lord in the Gospels there is none more common than "the Son of man." He himself hardly ever speaks of himself otherwise than as "the Son of man." Why? To show that, as he had assumed our mortal nature, and become man like to us, he has also taken on himself the same tenderness, sensibility, and mildness which urge men to have compassion on those who are suffering. And truly there never was and never will be a man so mild and compassionate, so friendly and meek, as Jesus Christ, the Son of man, that is, of Mary. The holy precursor St. John cried out as soon as he saw him: "Behold the Lamb of God!" What is meeker or milder than a lamb, in which there is no guile? When the Prophets describe the future Messiah they all give that as the first mark by which he is to be known, his mildness. "He shall not cry," says Isaiah, "neither shall his voice be heard abroad." He will not even open his mouth to speak in a loud voice. He will be a Man, says David, "that hath no reproofs in his mouth." "He shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer," says Isaiah again, "and he shall not open his mouth." Of his own virtues, Christ proposes for our special imitation his meekness and humility. "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." What else has his whole life been but the constant practice of meekness? When did he ever show the least anger or indignation, except in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, when there was question of his Father's honor? What patience did he not show in his daily intercourse with his disciples, who were still very ignorant and full of imperfections? How

friendly and lovingly did he not deal even with the worst sinners, without ever upbraiding them for their wickedness? How often did he not prove the sensibility of his heart for the woes of others, when he met with people who were afflicted and in trouble; when he actually mingled his tears with theirs? Not a single word of complaint did he utter even in his cruel Passion against his torturers, but rather prayed for them while he was hanging on the cross, and begged of his heavenly Father to forgive them. And to prove still clearer that he has the greatest love and affection for us, he calls himself our Friend, our Father, our Brother, our Spouse. To give hope and courage to sinners, he says that he is their Pledge, their Advocate, their Mediator with his angry Father; that he is the Intercessor between God and man to repair all that is broken. "There is one God," says St. Paul, "and one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all" (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). Oh, sinner! Hear the consoling words of St. John: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ." No matter how great your sins are do not despair; have good hope and courage, for we have as our Advocate the only begotten Son of the Eternal Father, who has gone bail for us, and offered himself as full atonement: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2).

So that we might imagine we have no reason to fear him as Judge. But he shall then be quite changed toward the sinner. All his mildness and tenderness shall be turned into severity and bitterness; all his pity into sternness; all his meekness into anger and indignation, when you shall behold him coming in his power and glory. All the titles he has assumed out of love for men shall then be no longer used by him; it will not then be said of him: "Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:20), but rather: behold "a lion ravening and roaring" (Ps. 21:14), who comes to devour his enemies!

Alas, how different that is to what he used to say! "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Yes, that was true; but it is so no longer; the Man has changed. How often he has said: "Go, then, and learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13). True, such was the case then; but it is so no longer; now I am come to judge the living and the dead; now I am come to call the just to heaven, and to condemn the wicked to the everlasting flames of hell. You yourselves, oh, sinners, must acknowledge that when the crime in question is clearly proven and the perpetrator of it convicted, and he himself confesses his guilt, and when, moreover, the crime is clearly one that deserves the gallows, then there is no longer place for grace or mercy; the judge has no power to pardon, but is forced to sentence the criminal according to the rigor of the law, even if it were his own son whom he has to condemn to the extreme penalty. Now, on that day, when the great account-book is opened, in which all our thoughts, words, and actions are written down; when, moreover, the consciences of all men shall be laid bare before heaven and earth; when, besides, as we all know, the divine law condemns to hell all who are found guilty of mortal sin that they have not blotted out during life by sincere repentance, what else can the Son of man as the Judge of all men, appointed to that office by his heavenly Father, what else can he do but punish the guilty according to the strictness of the law? All the circumstances of the case are evident, and nothing remains but to pronounce the terrible sentence: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). If a judge appointed by the sovereign has not the power of showing mercy to the convicted criminal, yet we know that that power is held and is often used by the sovereign himself. Now, the Son of man is the King of kings, and the only law-giver. Can he not, then, respite a poor mortal in this case, and save him from eternal torments, or at least sentence him to a milder form of punishment? No! "I am the Lord, and I change not" (Malach. 3:6). I am the Lord, and never retract from what I have once uttered: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," nor be frustrated. And suppose that our Lord could change his law, and as supreme Judge show mercy on the last day; to whom should he show it? To the sinner who departs this life without repentance? But for what reason? There must be some motive to urge the Judge to be merciful in such a case. And no such motive is at hand; for the sinner who is to be condemned shall then be utterly unworthy of any favor or mercy from his Judge.

II. There are three motives which can move the judge to pity, or justify the sovereign in dispensing the poor criminal from suffering the extreme penalty of the law. First, when the crime is committed through accident or misfortune, without deliberation and for the first time. In such a case something is accorded to human weakness; for instance, if a man who is otherwise peaceably inclined happens to be overcome by drink, and in a

fit of passion plunges his sword into the bosom of his friend. Hardly is the crime committed when he bewails his unfortunate friend with bitter tears, and actually gives himself up to justice, acknowledging that he deserves death. All agree that a homicide of that kind deserves compassion, and should be treated far more leniently than one who is always on the lookout for quarrels, and deliberately attacks a man and kills him. The crime of the first was due to sheer misfortune; that of the second to malice. Again, if the guilty person is of importance in the country, or of a good family, or nearly related to the judge himself, he is generally dealt with more mildly, or even released altogether from punishment. But if he is a stranger, unknown, a bad character, caught amongst the hedges and ditches, and convicted of crime, then there is no mercy for him. Thirdly, the sovereign is often moved to pity and pardon, or at least to mitigate the sentence of one who has the tears of his wife and children, or the favor of some powerful man to intercede for him. None of these shall avail the sinner before Christ, because he has sinned willfully and maliciously. Did the sinner not know, not firmly believe that the same God has strictly forbidden each and every mortal sin under pain of eternal damnation? And in spite of all this he has not restrained himself, but of his own free will, with full deliberation, for some wretched thing, to gratify his senses, to make some trifling profit, to please a mortal creature, he has accomplished the sinful act.

Because he had examples enough of people who were condemned for having sinned. Millions of Angels sinned only by a momentary thought, and at once, without mercy, without having a minute granted them for repentance, like lightning they were hurled by divine justice into the abyss of hell. Our forefather Adam sinned against the divine command by eating one mouthful of an apple, and he was at once turned out of Paradise and condemned to eternal death with all his posterity.

We still feel and suffer the hard punishments of this first sin; to atone for it the God of infinite justice and mercy allowed his only Son to be crucified on the gibbet of the cross, and cruelly put to death. Countless human beings have been condemned to hell for their sins, and they are burning there now and will burn forever. And yet it has not had the slightest influence on us; we have sinned without hesitation, shame, or fear. Can such guilt be attributed to mere misfortune? Can it be called deserving of mercy or pity?

And how could we lay the blame of our sins on human weakness if we remained in them without doing penance? It is true that a man sometimes commits a sin on account of a very alluring occasion, or because he gives way to temptation through the violence of his evil passions and inclinations; but after the sin he enters into himself, repents, and heartily detests the guilty action. Such a case indeed deserves pity, and can well be ascribed to human weakness; for “to sin is human, but to persist in sin diabolical.” But not to rise again after the fall, to remain in sin for a long time, to put off repentance and willfully expose one’s self to danger while death is liable to surprise one at any moment, and bring with it eternal damnation; that indeed is devilish, nay, worse than devilish, for the demons have never had a moment granted them in which to repent. And is not this the very state of him who dies in mortal sin? Could such a man lay any claim to pity, mercy, or grace from the Judge whom he has despised?

After death the sinner is no longer related to Christ. All we human beings are members of the same Head, and therefore we must sympathize with the misfortunes of our fellow-men, as St. Paul says: “If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member” (1 Cor. 12:26, 27). As long as a Christian is in this life he is one of the members of Jesus Christ, from whose mystic body he is, so to speak, never separated, as long as he does not apostatize from the true faith; therefore on account of that relationship Christ is always full of pity for even the greatest and most wicked sinners. But after death all relationship is broken off, and the sinner is not merely a rotten member, but is actually and completely separated from the body of Christ. Now an amputated foot, as we know, cannot cause pain; it may rot and be thrown out on the dung-hill, like any other piece of carrion. “Depart from me, you cursed,” shall our Lord say to the reprobate; you are condemned and cast off; I know you no more; you will never have part with me, and therefore I have not and cannot have any pity for you in your eternal misery.

Finally, where are the patrons, the petitions, the sighs and appeals for mercy? Where are the tears that should flow on the last day to implore pardon for the sinner? Unhappy sinner, look around you and see if there is any one to put in a word for you with your Judge! Look up! See Mary the Mother of mercy, the Refuge of sinners; she can do anything with her divine Son; perhaps she may help you. Look up and see the great hosts of Saints, friends and children of God; can they do something for you? Alas, a vain hope! They, too, know you no longer! And there is no one, then, to implore the mercy of the Judge for him? No; not one. But, on the contrary, many

voices shall be raised to embitter the Judge's anger. Your own soul shall cry out against your body and say: this is the wretch that has slain me with its impure desires and love of luxury! And the body will cry out against the soul: this is the wretch that has conceded so much to my sensuality, and not held me in check by its reason, as it should have done. Children shall cry out against their father and mother: my parents are the murderers of my soul; they should have brought me up to thy service, oh, Judge, but they neglected their duty and taught me nothing but the vanity and sinful customs of the world. Your wife shall accuse you of having treated her worse than a servant, and of having spent what belonged to her in drinking and debauchery, so that she had to suffer hunger with her children. All these will cry out in the words of the Apocalypse: "How long, oh, Lord! (holy and true) dost thou not judge and revenge our blood?"

From this we may conclude what sort of a sentence he has to expect on the last day who dies in the state of sin, and whether he has any reason to hope for grace or mercy from the otherwise meek and gentle Son of man. Oh, truly! Neither the Judge, who will then be quite changed from what he now is, shall feel the least pity for the sinner, nor shall the latter have the least title to mercy. Amen.

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