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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 4 - THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Choice of a State of Life

"Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke 2:49.

This is the end and object for which all of us are created; for this alone we are in the world that we may know God, love and serve him, and finally be eternally happy with him. Christian children, I have often told you what your duty is to God with regard to your Father's business, and taught you that you must be pious and zealous in the service of your God. But you will not always remain children. A time will come when you must make a choice of a permanent state of life in which it is the will of God that you should serve him during your lives. Do you think of that? It is a matter that you must early begin to reflect upon seriously and carefully. And certainly, you require good advice in it. I will give you the best advice:

I. It is with God alone that children and parents should often and carefully take counsel in the choice of a state of life.

II. Many parents and children never think of consulting God in this matter, to the great detriment of both.

I. What shall our son or our daughter be? Is the general question of parents? What state of life shall I enter on? Children sometimes ask themselves. Father, mother, children, do you know what depends on this question, and what sort of a business is concerned in it? Is it about hiring a servant, investing money, gaining or losing property? No, a much greater and more important business is concerned in this question. It is not enough for the daughter to find a rich husband in the married state, or for the son to obtain a rich office or situation, nor is it enough for the son or daughter to enter a well-regulated and holy community in the religious state; all this will not give a satisfactory solution to the question. The question is about a state of life, on the choice of which generally depends either heaven or hell for all eternity; the eternal happiness of those young people, or their eternal misery in everlasting fire. And how is that? Cannot God bring all men to heaven? Of course he can, and will do it, too, if we only earnestly ask him to do so. Can we not save our souls in any state of life? Of course we can; but remember that not every one can work out his salvation in any state, because a certain state of life is a certain way in which divine Providence, ordering all things in number, weight, and measure, leads a certain man to eternal salvation; and to this state God gives for that man suitable helps and powerful graces, which would not be found in another state, and without which that man, although, absolutely speaking, he could, but generally speaking, would not persevere in good and save his soul, or would do so only with difficulty. It is

evident, then, that our salvation does not always depend on the holiness of the state we make choice of, but on the conformity of that state with the will of God, and with the arrangements of his Providence that he made for us from all eternity. Thousands of both sexes have saved their souls in the ecclesiastical state; but that boy or that girl would be eternally lost in it. Thousands of both sexes have lost their souls in the secular state, and yet that boy or that girl will gain heaven in it. There are thousands now in hell, who, if they had embraced another state of life, would be in heaven; and there are thousands now happy in heaven who would have died miserably and lost their souls, if they had not chosen the state appointed for them by God. Even at this moment there are thousands leading bad lives, who will die an unhappy death and be lost, because they disregarded the divine will in embracing a state of life. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!" (Rom. 11:33.) and at the same time, how just!

There is great need of counsel and deliberation for parents and children, when the question is asked: What shall my son or my daughter be? What state of life shall I embrace? What state has God called me to? In what state can I save my soul according to the decrees of Providence? Who can tell me this? Who am I to ask about it? Whose advice shall I seek? Who can give me salutary counsel in such an important matter, so that I can accept his decision? It is God, and God alone who has all the necessary knowledge, and who sees clearly what is good or bad for the soul of each one at all times and in all circumstances. He it is also who uses his knowledge for the greater good of man, when he calls him to a certain state of life. It is God, and God alone, who has prepared for each one a special grace, called the grace of vocation, by which he will lead each one to the proper state of life. It is God, and God alone, who has reserved for himself the office of decreeing the state of life that each one must embrace, and he never allows any one else to perform this office. An earthly father can and must look after the Christian education of his children; he must have a care of their support, nourishment, goods, and property; but in what concerns their own persons, that is, their free will in the choice of a state of life, no one but God can direct and ordain therein!

Why is it looked upon as such a great sin to select a state of life without being called to it by God? Certainly, because all states, with the sole exception of that appointed for us by God, are very dangerous and injurious to our salvation; and the man who is where he is not called by God is out of his proper place. I do not say that it is a mortal sin not to follow the call of God, but I must maintain that it is placing one's self in great danger of future sins, and, consequently, of eternal damnation; thus incurring the danger of hearing the terrible sentence: "I called and you refused. You have despised all my counsel. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock. When sudden calamity shall fall on you and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand... Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear; ...because they did not consent to my counsel" (Prov. 1:24). All this forces me to the necessary conclusion, I repeat, then, that it is God, and God alone, whom parents and children must often and earnestly ask: Lord, what dost thou will my child to be? He is in thy hands, under thy guidance; thou alone art the Father of his soul; we leave the disposal of him to thee; lead and guide him to that state in which thou wishest him to serve thee! The necessary consequence, too, is that it is God alone from whom children especially must ask counsel, and for a long time, by frequent, earnest, and zealous prayer, and, prepared for everything, they must cry out with the apostle: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6.) Give to my understanding that light thou hast promised to those who ask it of thee, so that I may know how and where I am to live according to thy vocation and holy will! Oh, if all children acted thus with regard to their state of life; if all parents left their children to be thus disposed of by God, what a heavenly life would each one lead on earth, in the state appointed for him by God! How many souls would then go to heaven!

II. When the time comes for many young persons to choose a state of life, they are like ships with their sails set: they let themselves be driven in any direction, wherever the wind wills. They think not, reflect not. The first opportunity that offers seems good and acceptable to them; it is a vocation for them. Their state may be either Religious or worldly, it may lead their souls to heaven or to hell. Some evening, in pleasant company, a young woman attracts the attention of a young man, an attachment begins, each party hopes that love is mutual. There is a favorable wind, let the ship go: I know what to do, I will get married. Thus in a moment the choice is made, the resolution fixed, in a matter on which the whole of one's after life, as well as eternity, depends. Whether that marriage so blindly contracted will have a good or bad effect on the soul's salvation, or will give good

opportunities for saving one's soul, that question is never even dreamt of, much less is it maturely considered during waking moments, until the time comes when the state is chosen for life, and reflection is too late.

There are others who wish to act more prudently: they think and reflect for a long time beforehand and very carefully on the state of life they shall choose; but not with him whom they should consult first of all. They ask: What shall I be? But whom do they ask? Their parents, whose will and pleasure alone they want to know, or their relations or companions, whose advice and example they wish to follow. They never consult God, who alone knows the state of life suited to them, nor ask him for counsel. And what a miserable shipwreck will be the result! What useless repentance and profitless complaints will be sure to follow! What an unhappy, discontented, and wicked life, and what a miserable death must be the result!

Still it seems easier to excuse young people in this matter, on account of their want of experience. But should not the parents, at least, supply what is wanting in their children, by their care and instruction and experience? Should they not often exhort and compel them to have recourse to God, and to pray earnestly for light in such an important matter, and show them how to pray? But, unfortunately, they are often wanting in this duty, in this parental obligation, so strictly enforced by God. Not only do they fail to exhort their children to recommend the matter to God, but they take the selection of a state for their children into their own hands, without taking any account of God. They settle the whole affair, and the poor children, thus predestined by their parents before they are grown up and able to judge for themselves, have to agree and to enter in the state pointed out for them by their father or mother, whether they like it or not, whether it is good or bad for them, whether it is their vocation or not.

We are not living in the days of Abraham, when the sacrifice of children by the hands of their parents was a rare and prodigious event! Nothing is commoner in the world in our days, than for parents to imitate Abraham: they joyfully sacrifice their children to God; they do not even wait for a command from on high to do so; they do it before God requires it of them; they sacrifice their children, although he has not asked for such a sacrifice and will not accept it. They sacrifice their children to God, not according to his counsel, nor for his service; but they force them on him, so to speak, with violence, in order to satisfy their own avarice, or evil inclinations, or for some other temporal motive. Abraham received exceeding great praise and an eternal reward for his ready obedience. But you, parents, what kind of a reward do you expect for the sacrifice you offer through self-will?

Christian parents, leave to their Creator alone the selection of a state for your children! I do not mean that you should give yourselves no trouble about it; that would be indeed a great mistake, and those who are careless of what becomes of their children must answer for their neglect, if they allow the latter to choose the first state that comes into their heads. No! It is your duty to help your children with advice and exhortation, and to assist them to the best of your ability to enter on the state to which God has called them. Your duty is, if your child wishes to undertake anything rashly, to restrain him, until he has thought the matter over. Your duty is, if your child chooses a state in which there are evident dangers of evil, or if his motives are not good, or if he wishes to enter on it by unlawful means, to use your parental authority, and to prevent him, even against his will. The whole lesson that you have to learn from today's sermon is this: You must not determine on a state of life for your children without first deliberating maturely and taking counsel with God, and you must frequently exhort your children to do the same.

And you, children, to whom your vocation is of the greatest importance, remember the advice: "Pray to the Most High that he may direct thy way in truth" (Ecclus. 37:19). Think, and think often: What shall I be, a saint in heaven, or a reprobate in hell? Oh, certainly I ought not to hesitate. I must and will save my soul, no matter how the world may go with me; I will go to heaven. Even if I must leave my parents, I will go to heaven. Even if I must sacrifice all my goods and pleasures, I will go to heaven. I can do without my parents and friends for all eternity, but I cannot do without heaven. I can live poor and without sensual joys, but I cannot burn in hell forever! I am resolved, and firmly; I will go to heaven. Therefore I must not choose a state of life in order to grow rich, nor to enjoy life, but to go to heaven. Therefore I must and will choose that state which will most surely lead me to heaven. And what state is that? No other than that to which God calls me.

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