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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 +++

VOL. 5 - THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Judge as Our Model

“And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace, with God and men.” Luke 2:52.

Jesus was true Man, and a Man like to us in all things, sin alone excepted. He grew up as we do. When he was twelve years old his parents, Mary and Joseph, lost him, just as a little child is lost in a large town or in a great crowd of people, and cannot find its way home again. He increased in age, understanding, and wisdom, just as all men are wont to become wiser as they advance in years. “He advanced in wisdom and age.” Although in the very moment of his conception he was infinite wisdom and holiness, yet he increased in those; that is, he gave more outward evidences of wisdom and holiness in order to serve as a pattern for all, that we, by following his example, may advance daily in grace and virtue before God. Hitherto we have considered Jesus our future Judge as God and as Man, and in both cases we have had to confess that he will be an exceedingly terrible Judge for the sinner; for as Judge he will be a God without mercy, and as a Man he shall become quite changed and without pity. There is still another circumstance connected with the same Judge which is not less terrible, namely that he is a man like ourselves.

To be judged by Christ, a Man like ourselves, shall be a source of the most terrible pain for the sinner.

To insure the conviction of a criminal, so that he will not have a word to say against it, there is no better means than to appoint one to try him who is either of the same standing and condition, or otherwise has known the accused for a long time, and is well acquainted with his manner of life and the various wiles he employs to carry out his plans. Now, Christ is Man, and because Christ is Man, like us, the sinner's judgment shall be all the more severe. Why so? Because the sinner, to his great shame, shall be irrefutably convinced that he could and should have led a better life. If we heard the sentence of condemnation from God alone, on account of having transgressed his commands, we should be indeed convinced that we should have kept the commandments; but since that same sentence shall come from the lips of the incarnate God, it will convince us that we could easily have kept the commandments. Before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, a Man like to ourselves and subject to the law as we are, before such a Judge, what excuse could we put forward? The example he gave us in our own nature shall close our lips and clearly prove to us that we could and should have kept the divine commandments and lived according to them.

Christ will confound and convict the sinner by his examples. Imagine that you hear the dread sound of the last trumpet calling you before the tribunal of this Man: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! "Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16:2). Where did you get the audacity with which you wantonly trampled me under foot? Who has given you the courage to persecute and insult even to death me, your Creator, your Redeemer, your Sovereign Benefactor? Give an account! Answer me! Now sigh forth again: Ah, Lord, remember that I am a poor mortal, clothed with flesh, and subject to many

weaknesses and frailties! Thy law was altogether too hard for me, and therefore thou shouldst forgive me for not having observed it! What! The Judge will reply, am I a stock or a stone? Am I not a Man like you, and clothed with flesh as you are? It is true that as Man I could not sin because I had a full knowledge of the Godhead which was united to my humanity; but were you obliged to sin because you were at liberty to do so? Was my grace, my help, ever wanting to you? Was it not always ready to assist your weakness in temptations?

You still try to excuse yourself, proud man! I, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, have not disdained to become like to you; but you, wretched worm of earth, were ashamed to resemble me. I took the form of a servant to teach you humility: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart;" but you have not been content to remain in the limits of the station allotted you. I have worn during my whole life a poor garment; but nothing could content you but a costly dress, with which you did make a display before the world. I came to serve others; but you were filled with anger if anything happened to be wanting to your comfort. I have prostrated myself on the ground in prayer to my heavenly Father; but you, even in church, in my very presence, did refuse to bend both knees, although you could bow and scrape easily enough before a mortal. Where is your excuse? Have you anything to allege in your favor? "Tell if you have anything to justify yourself."

Oh, unjust man! Were my commandments too difficult for you because you were a weak mortal? Then look at me, your Model, a Man like to you. I, to whom heaven and earth belong, have become poor in order to show you the way to heaven. I was so poor that I could not point out a foot of land as belonging to me during my whole life; I was poorer than the birds in their nests, the foxes in their holes; I had not even a stone whereon to lay my head; naked I lay in the crib, and naked I hung on the cross; but you were not content with what I so generously bestowed on you. Your greed for gold was insatiable, and to gratify it you have had recourse to dishonest means, and have robbed your neighbor. You have lived in luxury, and when I came before you in the persons of my poor brothers and sisters you have not given me a farthing. You have gratified your gluttony, indulged in immoderate drinking and gambling, conformed to the vain customs of the world, and given away money enough to the object of your sinful passions. What excuse have you? Your weakness? As if I did not know you, nor ever experienced in myself what a man can do and bear! "Tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself."

Come, impure man! Wanton, dissolute woman! Whose god was your corruptible body, whose thoughts and imaginations were filled with foul pictures, with a thousand sinful desires, with unlawful looks and touches, and other shameful things that may not be named, and who were occupied in such filth day and night; look at me and see what a man can suffer! See the cross, the nails, the thorns; they condemn thy fastidiousness. See this mouth which so often bore hunger and thirst, and spent forty days without food or drink; it condemns thy luxurious living. See my body gashed with the scourge, and the still open wounds that cry out against your unchastity. I did not wish to enter into my glory except by the rude way of the thorns and the cross; and you have tried to enter heaven by a pleasant road strewn with roses! Where is your excuse? "Tell if you have anything to justify yourself."

Tepid, slothful Christian! You have disregarded many beautiful examples that might have helped you to do good and save your soul, and neglected them through sheer sloth; you have wasted many hours, weeks, and years in which you might have gained heaven at any moment; you have missed many Masses and sermons in which I could have brought you to the knowledge of your vices, to amend your life to greater zeal in my service, and that you have done simply to indulge in sloth and love of sleep; you have consumed your precious time in eating, drinking, and gaming. Could you not have been more diligent and zealous? Have you not often heard that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away"? "Tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself."

Who shall be able to hear such a convincing Judge? Sedecias, the king of Israel who was taken prisoner by Nabuchodonosor, gives us a slight idea of the sad spectacle the sinner shall present when he appears before his

insulted Judge to be put to shame. The city of Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the Assyrians; all the people took to flight, and Sedecias was captured, bound in chains, and brought to Babylon. There the unhappy king had to see his children slaughtered before the throne of Nabuchodonosor; his eyes were plucked out, and there was nothing more left him on earth to see or care for. Thus deprived of sight, childless, helpless, without consolation or hope, his most bitter torment and greatest shame was to know that he had to lay there a prisoner and slave to a king like himself, who was now his conqueror and sworn enemy. That was worse to him than his imprisonment, his blindness, nay, even than death itself! But still more unhappy are you, oh, sinner, if you have to stand with open eyes before a Man like yourself, and hear him convict you as your implacable Judge!

For the same Man, when he was taken prisoner in the garden, patient as he was then, by merely uttering the words, "I am he," so terrified the shameless rabble and fierce soldiers that they fell to the ground in fear. The same Man, when he showed a few rays of his beauty and glory to his disciples on Mount Tabor, although they knew him well and he was friendly disposed to them, filled them with dismay. The same Man, when he engaged in works of mercy and was healing the sick, frightened with one question the woman we read of in the Gospel of St. Mark: "A woman who was under an issue of blood twelve years," says the Evangelist, "when she heard of Jesus, came in the crowd behind him and touched his garment," with the firm hope that she would be freed from her infirmity; meanwhile "Jesus, turning to the multitude, said: Who hath touched my garments?" Whereupon the poor woman fell to the ground in terror: "But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him."

If the mere voice of the then loving Saviour, when he was actually distributing his benefits, could inspire such fear, how will it be on that day when the same Man shall come in all his majesty and glory, surrounded by a thousand times a hundred thousand Angels, having laid aside all his mercy and compassion, and resembling a ravening lion in his wrath and anger? How will it be when he shall have the sinner bound before his throne, and shall speak to him in a terrible voice, upbraiding him with having neglected the example of his Saviour's most holy life? Oh, "who shall stand to see him?" Will you be able to do it, wicked Christian? Let the heavens thunder and send forth their lightnings on that day in the most awful manner; let the sun be darkened and turn day into night; let the moon lose her light and become blood-red; let the stars in confusion fall from the heavens, the sea roar and pass its bounds, and all the living things on earth grow mad with terror; all that will not frighten me so much as one look of that Man, Christ Jesus. Oh, that I may not have to face him! Hell would be more tolerable to me than the sight of that Man! "Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me till thy wrath pass?" Thus holy Job speaks in the person of the sinner before the sacred humanity of our Lord in the tribunal of judgment. "Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell?" Eternal Father! Protect me; hide me! What, accursed sinner! Why should I protect thee? Where should I hide thee? Ah, in hell! Let me go there! In hell? But that is the place of all imaginable pains and torments. No matter! Let me go there! Cover me with flames! Mountains, fall upon me in pity! Hills, bury me in your mercy! "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: fall upon us; and to the hills: cover us."

There you have your future Judge as God, your future Judge as Man; our Judge who, in whatever way you consider him, is all-seeing, and therefore nothing can be hidden from him; almighty, and no one can escape him; infinitely just, without mercy, without pity, without respect for persons, who will pronounce final sentence on each one according to his deserts. It is indeed on the last day of the world that the sentence will be made known which decides the eternal happiness or misery of each individual; but now during this life is the time in which the trial is going on; all that we now do, think, or say, we shall then see written in the great account-book; what we now sow we shall then reap. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels: and then will he render to every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). Ah, above all things let us do what we can to ensure a favorable termination to our suit. If we have sinned and sinned often, and grievously even, let us not despair on that account. As long as we are in this life we have time to regain what we have lost, and to wipe out our sins, so that they will not be brought up against us in the judgment.

Sinners! I have said nothing yet of the terrible sound of the final trumpet which shall summon the dead out of their graves; nothing of the examination that shall take place in the judgment; nothing of the accusers and witnesses; nothing of the public manifestation of consciences and the intolerable shame of sinners before the whole world; nothing of the final sentence that shall call the just to the kingdom of heaven and condemn the wicked to the fire of hell. I have hitherto spoken only of the Person of our future Judge, and this in itself is

terrible enough, so that the bare remembrance of that Judge should fill even the most pious with fear and anguish. But there is yet another point which to my mind is still more terrible. What is that? It is this, that, namely, after all that we have heard about our divine Judge and meditated about him, to conceive a greater horror of sin, nevertheless most people still persist in their old vicious ways: the unchaste return to their filthy pleasures, the blasphemers to their cursing, the uncharitable to their detraction, the drunkards to their intemperance, while the unjust refuse to make restitution, and the vindictive lay aside their hatred. Thus the sermons they hear about the divine justice only serve to make them more hardened in vice, and less excusable before the tribunal of the Almighty. Amen.

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