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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

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Judge as Our Redeemer

"My hour is not yet come." John 2:4.

Christ had determined to show his divinity to the world, and to confirm it during his life on earth by many miracles; but this was not to be done until the proper time came; then he began to change water into wine, to heal the sick, to cleanse lepers, to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and to raise the dead to life. Whoever asked him to perform such wonders before the time was answered in the words: "My hour is not yet come." He had determined for the salvation of mankind to give himself up to the rage of his enemies, to allow them to mock, scourge, crown him with thorns and nail him to the cross; but this was not to happen till the appointed time. The same Saviour has determined to revenge himself on his enemies, and to condemn wicked sinners to the eternal flames of hell; but the hour appointed for that is not yet come. Now he bears many insults from them with the utmost patience; he shows himself to them as their Saviour and Redeemer; he is constantly offering them his grace, if at any moment they will only resolve to turn to him. But when his time comes he will appear with great power and majesty to judge the living and the dead. Sinners! Do not wait till that hour of the Lord, for then that meek and gentle Saviour will pronounce the final sentence on you and condemn you to eternal damnation! Nay, he will condemn you all the more because he is your Saviour and Redeemer.

I. On account of his fidelity to you which you have neglected.

II. On account of the love he has shown you which you have despised.

I. Absalom, after having murdered his brother, was forced to fly; Joab, the General of the Army, succeeded in reconciling him with his angry father, so that the latter recalled him, under the condition, however, that he was not to see him any more. But when that undutiful, disobedient son rebelled against his father and set fire to the field of Joab, he had no more determined enemy than that same Joab, who was before his warmest patron and advocate. Joab had neither rest nor peace until, even against the express command of David, he pierced the heart of Absalom with his lance. So fierce does anger become in one whose fidelity and friendship are despised.

The Mediator and Advocate between God and men is Christ: "One Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all" (1Tim. 2:5, 6). "My little children," writes St. John, "these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just, and he is the propitiation for our sins," Oh, sinner! How often have you not during your life experienced

his faithful and loving desire to help you? As often as you deliberately committed a mortal sin you made God your enemy, and deserved to be tortured in the terrible fire of hell forever. The sentence was already pronounced against you; your case was utterly lost as far as it depended on you; there was nothing more to be done but to carry out the sentence. And who saved you from that misery? Was it not Christ, who acted as your mediator and advocate when he lent you, as it were, in the holy Sacrament of Penance, the infinite merits of his Passion and death, and offered them up for you to his eternal Father, thus restoring you to the grace and friendship of God? And not only once did he do that for you, but perhaps numberless times. As often as you have fallen again into the sins you confessed, so often have you thrust Christ out of your heart, and said: "We will not have this man to reign over us." I will not have Christ as my Advocate; I do not want his intercession. Nevertheless that same Saviour has hitherto been your constant Friend, and he will remain your Friend as long as there is a breath in your body. But woe to you forever if you despise to the end this Friend, who will then become your sworn enemy, to avenge on you his slighted friendship and to act as your accuser. How does a man feel when a suit in which he is interested is left to the decision of a judge whom he has deeply offended, and who, as he knows, is his worst enemy? Ah, he would think, now there is no hope for me! Yet in worldly judgments there is some way of escaping out of a difficulty like that, by refusing to have such a one as judge on account of his partiality and hostility, and appealing to another whose decision will be unbiased. Try that, oh, sinner! When you come before the divine tribunal, and there see Jesus Christ, whom you have outraged and made your enemy; tell him that you will not have him as your Judge; that you appeal to another because you know that he is not favorably inclined to you. But your appeals and protestations will be of little service to you. That same Jesus Christ and no other will be your Judge, and will decide your fate for all eternity. Alas! What will be your feelings then?

What was the consternation of the brethren of Joseph when they found that he had become viceroy of Egypt, and heard him say those few words: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold" (Gen. 14:4). He does not say: I am Joseph, your lord and judge, and you are my prisoners: your lives are in my hands. He did not upbraid them with their former cruelty toward him, nor say to them: Do you remember how you acted to me when I implored your mercy on bended knees, with streaming eyes, and you put me into a pit, and then sold me, like a dumb beast, into Egypt? I am now your lord and you cannot escape me, and I am able to take what revenge I please for the injury you have done me. No; that was not necessary to touch their hearts. The few, sweet words, "I am Joseph, your brother," were enough to fill them with dismay, although he spoke them with the greatest tenderness and with tears of affection. "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Be not afraid, and let it not seem to you a hard case that you sold me into these countries: for God sent me before you into Egypt for your preservation. Yet his brethren could not answer him, being struck with great fear" (Gen. 14:3-5).

Hear the voice of your brother, oh, sinners! When he shall cite you before his tribunal, and says to you: "Do you know me now? I am Jesus, whom you insulted." And these words he shall then pronounce, not with a smiling, friendly countenance, or with tears of tenderness, like Joseph, but he will call them out with a terrible voice so that all the world may hear. I am Jesus, he will cry out, who meant so well with you, but whom you have rejected and persecuted! I am Jesus, whom you, vile worm of the earth, have despised; whom you have abused; whom you have so daringly provoked to anger! Here I am now, and you stand before me. I am Jesus; do you know me now? But I know you well! I am he for whom you lost all respect in church, to whom you were ashamed to bend your knees because you knew that I was hidden under the humble appearance of bread! I am he whose holy name you have often invoked as a witness of your falsehood. I am he whom you have so often sold for a piece of money, a vain breath of popular favor, a brutal pleasure! I am he who created you for the sole purpose of serving me, and you have misused me as your servant in the most shameful actions. I am Jesus, the Judge of the living and the dead, the Lord and Master of a twofold, long eternity; I am not now your meek and gentle Redeemer and merciful God, but your merciless, but just, and inexorable Judge.

II. The greater the love has been, the greater the anger and hatred that replace it. This comes partly from the fact that a great anger is required to overcome great love, and to effect such a change in the heart that it cherishes no thoughts but those of hatred and revenge against him who was before the object of its sincere affection; and partly because love, when it is scorned and insulted, embitters hatred and anger by the remembrance of the proofs of friendship that were offered to the beloved person, and of the insults that the latter returned for them.

Suppose that a nobleman is very fond of the bride whom he has espoused a short time ago; he returns home after being absent for a whole day and finds her in the act of being unfaithful to him. What a blow that is to him! It seems to turn all the blood in his body into poison! His hand moves spontaneously to his sword to draw it and take vengeance on the guilty one, but the thought of the divine law restrains him; he swallows his rage as best he can and runs off to his king, to whom he confides the secret of the shame he has suffered, and from whom he demands punishment on the adulteress. "Yes," says the king, "I see how badly you have been treated; go now and deal with this matter as you think fit; I invest you with full power to examine into the case, to pronounce sentence, and to inflict punishment." Now, imagine that you are present and see the first meeting of the injured husband and the faithless wife. How his eyes seem to dart fire at her! How she is ready to die with shame and confusion! And how terribly these or similar words resound in her ears: I am your husband, who loved you, shameless wanton that you are, more than my own life; I am the husband to whom you vowed fidelity and love, but you have shamefully broken your plighted troth. Have I deserved this from you? Have I ever given you cause to treat me so? Am I not good enough for you? But now I am your judge, and your life is in my hands! The mere sound of those words should be enough to cause the faithless wife to die of fear.

The love of Christ for men is unspeakably great; and all the greater shall the fear of the sinner be when he shall be upbraided with this love. Where shall I hide for shame? he will say; where run to for fear if I die without repenting of the sins with which I have so wantonly broken faith with this Bridegroom, and have to appear before him when he, filled with anger at my infidelity, shall come as my Judge, invested with full power to avenge himself on me? How the words shall resound in my ears, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." How fearful to hear the voice of him who loved me saying: Adulterous soul, I am Jesus! I am your Bridegroom and Judge, whose honor you have grossly injured! Not once, but often, have I caught you in the act of being unfaithful to the promise you made me on oath in Baptism. I have often forgiven you, and, forgetting the insults received from you, have readmitted you to my love and friendship. But you have rejected me in spite of all! Adulterous soul! Have I deserved that from you? What harm have I ever done you? Have I ever given you the least occasion to desert me and go over to others? "What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it?" What better proofs could I have given you of my love? For the sake of a piece of land or a little money you sold me, who had prepared for you boundless riches and endless delights. To no purpose, then, has my love for you brought me down on earth and nailed me to the cross! To no purpose have I instituted the holy Sacrament of Penance to cleanse you from your sins, and prepared the heavenly Food, my own flesh and blood, to unite your heart with mine! To no purpose have I sent my preachers to urge you to amend your life and to call you to my eternal inheritance! To no purpose have I visited you with trials and crosses that you might enter into yourself, and see what a loving Spouse you had lost! To no purpose have I shown you so many sudden deaths and terrible examples that fear might at last force you to love me! "What is there that I ought to do more that I have not done?"

Would that we often thought of the coming judgment! Would that the thought of it inspired us with the resolution of earnestly amending our vicious or imperfect lives! Ah, let us take deeply to heart and often consider this: if I cannot bear a word of reproof from a mortal like myself, how shall I be able hereafter to endure the bitter upbraidings of the slighted love of my future Judge, Jesus Christ? And, moreover, how many fine promises have I not made to my confessor? How many firm resolutions in secret before God to avoid sin, to shun the dangerous occasions of it, to give up the bad habit of detraction, cursing, and swearing, and to reform my life thoroughly and serve God more zealously in future? But what shall be said about all this at the last day? Fine promises! Beautiful resolutions! See how that man has kept his word! He was just as careless as ever after confession; he remained in the old occasion of sin; he was just as avaricious, unjust, intemperate, unchaste, proud, vindictive, and godless as before. How could you bear to hear such reproofs in the presence of Christ and his Angels? Oh, no! You could never endure them! And therefore, now, at last, this very day, you should get rid of the load of your sins, and serve God faithfully.

How is it that we make so little to-do about the last judgment? The reason is because we imagine that day to be still far away from us, and therefore we think there is no cause to be afraid of it. But how long do you imagine it will be before that day comes? We need not expect to have to wait for many centuries before the world is reduced to ashes and the last trumpet summons the dead out of their graves to appear before the tribunal of the Almighty in the valley of Josaphat. The day of death will be for each one the day of his particular judgment, in

which he shall appear before the same Judge and hear final sentence pronounced on him. Is death, then, so very far away from us? Can we foretell the time in which we shall die? May it not be this very day? Ah, how stupid we are and senseless in what concerns our eternal salvation! Why do we not stir ourselves now, before it is too late, and make use of the faithful service and intercession that Christ, our well-meaning Friend, Advocate, and Arbiter with the angry God, has promised in our behalf if we are only firmly resolved to avoid sin and amend our lives? Why do we not begin at once to love that most amiable lover of souls?

Sinners! I pity you, if, more than the dead, who will rise from their graves at the sound of the last trumpet, you stop your ears to my words; or rather to the words that God speaks to you by my mouth, and if in spite of the consideration of the final catastrophe which shall cause all nature to shudder you still remain in your old sins; if you refuse now to hearken to my words, which are intended only for your good and to induce you to amend your lives, you must hereafter hear another voice, that of your Judge, who will speak to you of nothing but your eternal reprobation and damnation! Amen.

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