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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
THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Summoning of the Dead to Judgment

“And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west.” Matt. 8:11.

They will come from the east and the west, but what a vast difference there shall be between them! Some shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while others shall be cast into the exterior darkness. When shall this coming, this crisis take place? On the last day, when Jesus Christ shall summon all mankind from the four quarters of the globe before his tribunal, to judge every one according to his works. We have already considered the Judge as God, as Man, as our Saviour, and as our Model. But in a judgment there are many persons besides the judge: there is the accused, who is cited before the tribunal; there is the chief question on which he is to be tried; there are the assessors, who examine the case; there are the accusers and witnesses, and finally there is the sentence pronounced by the judge, which either absolves or condemns the accused. All these circumstances are a source of consolation for the just, but a terror for the wicked. The summoning of the accused before the tribunal is the subject of this day's meditation, which shall consist in the answer to this one question:

Who are those who shall be summoned? All men, without exception.

I. Faith tells us that all men shall be summoned to judgment. To prove that we and all mankind shall be summoned before the tribunal of the Almighty nothing more is necessary than the words of our Lord himself, the divine Judge: “When the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty: and all nations shall be gathered together before him” (Matt. 25:31, 32). All, without exception, from every country in the world; great and small, rich and poor, men and women, all who have ever lived on earth shall meet there. In the four quarters of the globe shall be heard the awful sound of that trumpet which re-echoed in the ears of St. Jerome day and night: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!

Now I wish to place before your mental vision a spectacle of terror and surprising change. Quick, ye angels! Heavenly messengers, blow the trumpets! Sun be darkened! Moon hide thy light! Stars fall down from heaven! Skies send down the fiery rain! Everything on earth must be burnt up and reduced to ashes! Now, angels, sound the call: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! Behold, says St. Paul, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:52), the graves shall all be opened, the mouldering bones shall come together, each soul shall enter into its body, “the dead shall rise again incorruptible” (Ibid.). The dead shall come forth living. What an awful spectacle! In earthly judgments the accused is warned some time beforehand, and a certain day is fixed for the hearing of his case, so that he may be able to prepare for it. But here all is to happen

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without any forewarning; when the summons comes the accused must appear. In earthly tribunals the accused is allowed to bring his advocate with him, to speak for him and plead his cause as best he may; here each one shall have to appear alone and speak for himself and answer the questions put to him. Here one man is as good as another, as far as respect for persons is concerned. "He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep," that is, the just, "on his right hand, but the goats," that is, the wicked, "on his left" (Matt. 25:32, 33).

What a great change shall take place in many minds when the dead shall arise out of their graves and hear the trumpet that summons them to the tribunal! Just souls! What a joyful sound that will be for you! To you alone does our Lord say the words: "When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand." Arise, ye dead! These words, pious Christians, shall bring nothing but joy to you; they will be the loving invitation of the Spouse to his bride: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, for winter is now past, the rain is over and gone" (Cant. 2:10, 11). Come and thou shalt be crowned!

Arise, ye dead! Arise, wicked sinners! Arise, you proud and ambitious man, you unjust, avaricious man, you impure adulterer, you drunkard, you vindictive man, you blasphemer, you curser, you vain, sensual man! Arise, slothful, wicked servant, and come to judgment! Imagine the feelings of a criminal who, on awakening in the morning, sees, to his great surprise, the executioner awaiting him with the rope in his hand, ready to lead him to the gallows. Some have suddenly become gray with terror when they heard the bell toll as the signal for their execution.

Wicked Christian! Woe to you if, more deaf than the mouldering bones which at the sound of the trumpet shall rise at once out of their graves, you close your ears to my voice, or rather to the voice of God, who speaks to you by my mouth! Woe to you if the meditation on that dreadful day, in which all nature shall be disturbed and men shall wither away with fear, does not inspire you with a salutary fear, and with the resolution of at last amending your sinful life! But if you now refuse to listen to me, who am only saying what is for your eternal salvation, you will one day against your will have to hear that terrible voice whose only utterance for you will be the sentence of your eternal damnation. Therefore I advise you, in the words of St. Paul: "Rise thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead" (Ephes. 5:14); arise and put on the mourning garments of true contrition for your sins, so that when the trumpet calls out: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! You may arise with joy and exultation to eternal life.

2. Again, what a change shall take place in the minds of many, of the just on one side and of the wicked on the other, when the souls of both shall rejoin their bodies, which in the case of the former shall be glorified, angelically beautiful, and brighter than the sun; but in the case of the latter, deformed, hideous, and exhaling a foul odor. With what joy will not the souls of the just welcome their bodies and lead them into everlasting happiness! Come, the just soul shall say; come, my dear companion, and share in my glory which thou hast helped me to gain! Come, now, and let us enter together into the joys of heaven, where we shall never be separated from each other again! And, on the other hand, with what horror, with what curses and blasphemies, the soul of the reprobate shall rejoin its foul carrion and drag it down to eternal flames! Accursed body! The soul shall say; how can I remain united to this putrid mass for all eternity? Art thou that sink of corruption that I have so much loved and petted? For whose pleasure I have lost the glory of heaven that I was created for? For thy sake, that thou mightest enjoy thyself and live in luxury, I am lost forever! Accursed soul! The body shall exclaim, thou shouldst with reason have held me better in check, and refused me what was bad and injurious for me! Oh, rather let me lie in the grave, consumed with worms, than accompany thee to hell!

3. What a change there will be in the minds of many when all mankind shall behold themselves huddled together without any respect for persons: kings and princes with lowly peasants, high-born ladies with vulgar kitchen-maids, all assembled before the judgment-seat of God, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: "I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne!" (Apoc. 22:12.) You must not think that on that day people will pay no heed to rank and privilege, and that the proud, after suffering the humiliations that shall then be common to all sinners, will not feel the confusion to which they shall be subjected. No! On the contrary, the wicked, as they left this world with their bad passions and inclinations in full vigor, shall rise again from the dead with the same passions; the proud man shall have his pride and ambition as formerly; the impatient man shall still feel all the rancor of his ill-humor; the passionate man shall be still subject to his feelings of rage; and

hence what despair shall possess them when they see themselves so humiliated, despised, mocked at, and rejected by those over whom they were so much exalted during life! Piso, a noble Roman, was led before the judge, clad in a shabby robe, to be tried for some offence of which he was accused; seeing the people staring at him, some in scorn, others with pity, he felt so keenly the humiliation of being thus degraded before the common herd that he drew a dagger which he had concealed under his cloak, and in a fit of passion stabbed himself to the heart. The consideration of this truth should now help us to practice true Christian humility. If one is inclined to think too much of the rank that exalts him above others, he should say to himself: on that day there will be no question of rank, and who knows whether I shall not have to take my place even amongst the lowest?

4. The same thought should bring consolation to you, pious Christians, who are content with the will of God, although you are poor, desolate, despised, humiliated! Your trials shall last only for a time, and a very short time; and on the last day everything shall be changed, just as it is in a mirror. Look at yourselves for once in the glass; not for the sake of gratifying your vanity, in which useless occupation much precious time is often lost, but for the sake of learning a salutary lesson for the good of your souls. You will see your person represented therein as you stand, but with this difference: that your right hand shall be on the left side in the mirror, and your left hand on the right side; then think to yourselves: here in this life I am on the left hand, rejected, looked on as not worth anything, nay, hardly looked at at all, while others and even the wicked are held in high esteem. Thy will be done, oh, God! I can wait till thy great day comes, when thou shalt exhibit our lives to the whole world as in a glass; then we shall find our places changed.

5. Finally, what a great change shall take place in the minds of many when the separation shall be made according to the words: "The Angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just!" (Matt. 13:30.) Wicked man! The Angels shall say, what are you doing here amongst the sheep of Christ? Away with you! This is no place for you! You belong to the reprobate goats. Alas, how bitter and full of confusion shall then be the separation of one friend from another, of one acquaintance from another, of one fellow-countryman from another, of one neighbor from another, of one member of a household from another! One shall be on the right hand, the other on the left. "Then two shall be in the field," says our Lord, two who have worked together their lives long; "one shall be taken, and one shall be left" (Matt. 24:40). Two are living in the same house; "one shall be taken and one shall be left:" one shall be on the right, the other on the left hand. Two are in the same occupation; one of them shall be on the right, the other on the left hand. Two in the same family; one of them shall be on the right, the other on the left; the wife, for instance, on the right, the husband on the left; the father amongst the sheep, the son amongst the goats; the daughter amongst the Angels, the mother amongst the devils; the sister amongst the elect, the brother amongst the reprobate; the scholar amongst the pious, the teacher amongst the wicked; a layman amongst the Saints, a priest amongst the accursed; the penitent amongst the blessed, the confessor amongst the damned; the hearers in heaven, the preacher in hell, or quite the reverse. Alas, I think, be this as it may, the separation will be a sorrowful one for the unlucky part, the change terrible!

Ah, where shall we be? On what side shall we stand? Shall we all be at the right hand? May God grant it! And, if so, how we shall rejoice with and congratulate each other! Shall some of us be at the left hand? God save each and every one of us from such a fate! If any were so unfortunate, how pitifully they would look at their former companions, from whose society they are now excluded! Say now to yourselves: Now is the time to choose and prepare the place in which we shall wish to be on that day. We are all horrified at the idea of being on the left hand, and we all wish to be on the right. Then let us rise up from this meditation, which we shall often make, especially in the time of temptation and danger of being led into sin, let us rise with the firm determination to serve zealously with our whole hearts, for the uncertain time that still remains to us, our God, who is worthy of all our love; to be obedient sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd and follow it, and never on any account to commit a willful sin, for that alone is able to place us amongst the accursed goats on that day! Such is our unanimous resolution, is it not? And with God's help we will keep it, so that when the trumpet calls us to the last judgment we shall be all together, to our great joy and mutual happiness, at the right hand of the Judge, and not one of us on the left. Amen.

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