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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 AFTER EPIPHANY

The Examination of the Sinner in Judgment

"But the men wondered, saying: Who is this, for even the winds and the sea obey him?" Matt. 8:27.

The same question shall one day be put to us: Who is this? Where does he belong to? To heaven or to hell? Woe to us if the answer we give is not a favorable one for our salvation! The examination of man in the judgment is the subject of today's meditation.

I. Each one of us shall be examined in the judgment; oh, what answer shall many be able to make?

II. The question and answer shall be given before the whole world.

In the judgment we shall be questioned about all we have thought during our lives. "The books were opened, and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Apoc. 22:12). All the secrets of men's hearts and consciences shall then be displayed in a most vivid light. "Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16:2), shall be said to each one. Come here, oh, man! give an account of all that has occurred in your household during the time of your life. Account for the thoughts that were in your mind! Thought is free, we generally say; no worldly jurisdiction has any control over it, not even the Church herself, unless one reveals his thoughts to her. God has reserved this right to himself alone: "The Lord is the weigher of spirits" (Prov. 26:2). What filth shall then come forth from the hearts of many who now show no mark of it on their foreheads! All the envious, hateful, angry, vindictive, suspicious, rash-judging thoughts you entertained against your neighbor; all the vain, self-conceited, ambitious thoughts with which you flattered yourself: your beauty, or your skill; all the unclean thoughts, desires, and longings that you kept in your mind about unmarried or married persons, the desires you had that others should have an unlawful passion for you; all the impure emotions you experienced in willfully looking at another person; in assisting at an immodest play; in looking at an unchaste picture, all these things you will have to answer for in order, and confess when, how often, and how long you were guilty of them.

"Give an account:" answer for all the words that you have heard and said during your life; how many imprecations and curses; how many words of abuse and invective, of sarcasm and contention you have spoken against others; how often you have injured Christian charity and your neighbor's reputation by talking, fault-finding, tale-bearing, and detraction; how often you have disturbed the peace between friends and relations,

brothers and sisters, husband and wife, by carrying stories backward and forward; how often you have indulged in or willfully listened to impure conversation, or sullied your own purity and that of others by indecent allusions, double-meaning expressions, and unchaste songs and discourses; how often you have taught others to sin, and instructed the innocent in things they should never have learned; how often you have taken false and unnecessary oaths, or made false promises; how often you have told injurious, deliberate, or jocose lies; how often you have boasted of yourself or of your sins in the company of others; nay, how often you have spoken idly and to no purpose. Alas! what account shall we be able to give for our idle words, and what shall we be able to say about the sinful words we have uttered? Yet our Lord tells us: "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36, 37).

"Give an account;" answer for all the actions of your whole life; what evil you have committed alone, with others, in secret, publicly, in youth, in manhood and age, up to the last moment of your life? What evil have you done at home, in that room, in that garden, on that walk, in that street, in that hidden corner? What injustice, impurity, intemperance have you been guilty of against yourself, against your neighbor, against God and his commandments, with eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet? Ah, how will you be able to account for all these things? But one day you will have to do it. Give an account of all the sins you have caused others to commit or given occasion to by advice, command, approval, toleration, flattery, allurements, deceit, bad example, indecency in behavior, manner, dress, conversation.

Give an account; answer for all that you have omitted during your life that you could and should have done. It is not enough to abstain from what God has forbidden; one is also obliged to do what he has commanded, and will be questioned about the one as well as about the other. For instance, the Judge will not condemn you for having robbed your neighbor and stolen his property, but he will condemn you for not having helped the poor according to your means: "I was hungry and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink." He will not condemn you for having taken away your neighbor's reputation, but he will condemn you for having encouraged uncharitable remarks by your silence or your approval, and for not having stopped them when you might have done so.

Give an account: answer for all the years, months, weeks; days, hours, minutes, moments that you have lived on earth. Now you have lived for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years; how have you employed all that time? For your eternal salvation, for which alone they were given to you? or for your eternal damnation? How much time have you spent uselessly in play, amusements, and other triflings? In what manner, to what purpose have you during all that time employed the natural goods bestowed on you by God: your health, your money and wealth? How have you used the gifts of grace? What profit have you derived from the use of the Sacraments, the many opportunities of doing good that were given to you in preference to others, the many sermons you heard or might have heard if your slothfulness had not prevented you, the many examples of pious Christians who walked before you on the path of virtue?

Give an account: answer even for all the good works you have done in the course of your life. Of what kind were they? "When I shall take a time," says the Lord, "I will judge justices." Now bring forward your good works, your prayers, fasting, alms-giving, hearing of Mass, confessions, Communions, mortifications, works of mercy and charity, the daily duties of your state of life. Perhaps you have a great heap of them; but answer and say whether they were always performed in a proper manner, with due devotion and zeal, as becomes a Christian? Oh, how many of them you will find to have proceeded from a bad source: from hypocrisy, vainglory, and self-complacency! How many were performed without the good intention, without being directed to God, out of human respect, through a natural taste, or self-love? How many were without all zeal and devotion, attention, and reverence: tepid, cold, distracted, performed negligently? If all these faulty good works that deserve punishment rather than reward are separated from the remainder of your justices, how many shall then remain?

II. Now I bring you in thought into an amphitheatre infinitely greater and vaster than any that the Romans and heathens ever saw in Rome. Imagine that you see above in the clouds Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead, surrounded by countless armies of Angels, as Daniel foretold: "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him" (Dan. 7:10). Beside him stands Mary, the

Queen of heaven; all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs are seated around in choirs as assessors; below are legions of devils, who, as executioners of divine justice, await the sentence of the Judge, panting like bloodhounds meanwhile with eagerness. On the right hand are the just in their brightness and glory; on the left the wicked all in confusion, like goats driven together in a disorderly flock. In the midst of these, on the public stage is brought forward the sinner to hear and answer for all his wicked actions. What do you think will be his feelings on the occasion?

In their presence, says the Lord: "I will discover thy shame, and will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms. And I will cast abomination upon thee, and will disgrace thee, and will make an example of thee" (Nahum 3:5, 6). Shall, then, all that you have thought, spoken and done be made manifest there? Yes; I will discover it all. Even what you have done in the dark night, in hidden corners, and tried to keep from the knowledge of every one? I will discover it; all shall be made manifest. Even those sins that filled you with shame when you were committing them alone? Even those that you should die with shame to be barely suspected of? Even those that you would not reveal to your dearest friend to escape death? Shall all those be made manifest? Yes! I will discover them all to the whole world; they shall be seen written on your forehead, with all their circumstances, the place, the time, the number, the intention you had when committing them. "Thou didst it secretly," said the Lord to David by his prophet, of the adultery he had committed, and the same shall be said to all sinners; thou hast secretly caused Urias to be murdered, and taken Bethsabee to wife that no one might suspect thy guilt; "but I will do this thing in the sight of all Israel, and in the sight of the sun" (2 Kings 12:12) thy shame shall be made known to the whole world.

If any one in the world was ever put to great shame it was surely the case with the ambassadors of David, who were ill-treated by the Ammonite king Hanon, who caused their heads to be shorn as if they were slaves, their beards and their garments to be half cut away as if they were fools, and in this shameful guise he had them brought into his court to be made the laughing-stock of his courtiers and ministers; he then had them led through the streets through a great crowd of people who were staring at them. They must have been so ashamed that they hardly knew where to turn their eyes, and they would certainly have preferred to have their heads cut off by the executioner than to be thus treated. Honorable maidens of this city! if one of you, whose fair fame has hitherto been unsullied, were convicted of having given birth to an illegitimate child, and publicly pilloried, or had to stand this morning at the door of the parish church, clad in white, with a candle in her hand, so that all the people should see her, what would you think of that? Would you not rather die than suffer such ignominy? A young woman through foolish passion sinned against holy purity, and no sooner did she notice that she could not conceal the fruits of her sin than, filled with fear of the shame that threatened her, she ran at once to her lover and begged of him on her knees to help her to make away with herself, as she could not bear the shame of having her crime made known; the man agreed, gave her poison, and sent her soul to hell. Unhappy soul! you chose rather to suffer the eternal torments of hell than to have your sin known in only one town! But what is that, Christians, compared to the confusion of the sinner at the last day? Do you understand the exceeding greatness of it? For that very girl and every impenitent sinner, shorn and ragged like the ambassadors of David, shall stand in the pillory surrounded by demons, and that, too, not in the sight of one town, but before all men, Angels, and devils, and all their most secret crimes shall be made public.

Oh, terrible day of confusion and despair! Think, although it is a small matter compared to the other instances we have considered, of the feelings of one who has to tell a shameful sin in confession. The confessional then seems to him nothing but a rack to torture him; his blood stagnates; his heart beats violently; his color changes; he stammers, and can hardly get out the words. I have —, the tongue falters, and he is covered with a cold perspiration. But why does he get into such a state? What is he afraid of? Ah, I need not ask; he has a single sin to disclose to his father confessor, and that is quite enough to fill him with shame and anguish. Oh, my God! if the disclosure of a sin in the privacy of the confessional can cause such shame, how will it be when all sins shall be made known to the whole world? If it frightens one to tell his sins to a priest, who is dumb; to a priest, who often does not know him nor has ever seen him; to a priest, who listens to him with all charity and friendliness, speaks to him gently, and rejoices that a lost sheep has returned to the fold of Christ; to a priest, who will give him absolution from his sins: how will it be if those sins have to be made known to the whole world, before heaven and earth, not that they may be pardoned, but that the sinner may be sentenced to eternal damnation?

Suppose that an angel, to whom all our thoughts are known, stood here in my place in this pulpit. (Let each one now think of the sin of which he is most ashamed.) The angel begins to call out the name of every one in a clear voice; that man has done so and so at such a time; that woman has lived in such a manner; that gentleman whom you see there has committed adultery in that house with that person; that wife has been unfaithful; that young woman has impure desires and has sullied her chastity; that servant has robbed his master; that maid her mistress; and so on, calling out all the sins each one is guilty of: what would many a one do in such a case? How they would hide under the benches in shame and try to conceal themselves! How quickly would they try to get away, and run out of the church lest it should come to their turn to have their names called out! There are indeed many of us here together, but what is that compared to the population of the whole city? What is it compared to the population of the whole world at this present moment? What is it compared to the vast hosts of Angels, devils, and men who ever lived, are living, and shall live on earth till the last day? Oh, my God! I think, if I cannot bear to have my shame disclosed before a handful of people who cannot condemn me on account of my sins, how shall I bear it on the last day before heaven and earth? How shall all sinners bear to have their vices made known to all their friends, relations, acquaintances, and to strangers as well? The husband shall then know the vices of his wife; the wife those of her husband; parents shall find out the hidden crimes of their children, and children those of their parents; I and all men shall know what you have done wrong. See, they will say; who would have thought it of that person, who seemed to be so good and pious? How different he seems now to what we imagined him to be! Now we know what those people are! Ah, it was the fear of this shame that suggested to holy Job that terrible wish: "Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me till thy wrath pass," so that no human eye may see me? It is the dread of this shame that will force the wicked to cry out to the lifeless stones to cover them: "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: fall upon us! and to the hills: cover us!" Ye demons, hurry us off at once to hell, that we may escape such intolerable shame!

Oh, how foolish we are to seek so diligently to hide our wickedness, and to sin so recklessly when we have the opportunity of doing so, in the dark, or in a room where no one can see us! For everything shall be made known in the minutest detail to the whole world by the all-knowing God himself. Go on, then, you wicked deceiver! continue to hide your abominations through shame as long as you may, to conceal sins in confession, and to palliate and excuse them! What good will that be to you? Will you be able to do that on the last day, when the great account-book shall be opened? Ah, have common sense; think of what you are doing! Open your mouth and disclose your sins candidly in a much more merciful tribunal: in the holy Sacrament of Penance, and repent of your wickedness! Henceforth have a still greater horror of all sin, and fear nothing more than to offend God deliberately, lest that intolerable shame should fall to your lot on the last day. Amen.

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