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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

VOL. 4 = THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Necessity of Friendship with God in the Married State in Order to have Temporal Happiness.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field." Matt. 13:24.

What a pity! What useless and vexations labor it is for a man to scatter the seed and reap no profit from it, but to have an enemy come during the night and to oversow cockle? How much unprofitable labor of this kind do we not undertake! And yet most of our labor is in vain because we do not understand nor attend sufficiently to the words of St. Paul: "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is anything, nor her that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (I Cor. 3:6, 7). If God does not help us in our business, if his influence and assistance are wanting to us, all our labor is in vain. And what wonder is it that we do not always prosper? I have proved that for a marriage to be happy, as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend; now I have to show that

For a marriage to be happy, even as far as temporal happiness and prosperity in business are concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend.

What is the object of temporal business in the world, especially in the married state? It is to keep the wealth that one has, to increase it by gaining what one has not, in order to clothe, feed and educate one's family, children, and one's self decently, and to preserve a good name before men. That is a laudable object, and when it is directed to our last end, in accordance with the divine will, it is meritorious of eternal life. To gain that object, men use different means: some make use of their trade or profession, others are merchants and shop-keepers, others employ their learning in legal matters, others are farmers, others lend their money, at interest, others go to law to preserve their property, or to replace what they have lost; in a word, every one works as well as he can to live and keep his family according to his state in life. But for the office, the trade, the shop, the farm, or the lawsuit to turn out successfully, what an amount of things are required! Good sense and understanding, bodily health and strength must form the foundation of the building, and these are exposed to many dangers and accidents: the influence of the heavenly bodies, the changes of worldly usages, the rise and fall of the market, heat and cold, noxious insects, and a host of other things can injure or benefit our business, and they do not at all depend on our free will. To speak only of our fellow men, we very often are in want of their advice, favor, or friendship; we require their help in business; sometimes we must try to prevent them from injuring us; in a word, we have a thousand things to take into account, to foresee, to weigh, to guard against, to fear, to love, to use, and to reject; if we make a mistake in any one of them, our business is ruined.

Suppose, now, that a man has all these things prepared and arranged according to his wish; what is to be done then? Has he done enough for his business to prosper? By no means; he has, so to say, nothing but the sand, lime, and stone, the mere materials and tools for the work. In addition to these, he must have an infinite wisdom to plan out the edifice, an infinite power to work at it, under the direction of infinite wisdom, if his employment, trade, business, or lawsuit is to begin, continue, and end prosperously. The chief Architect is still required: I mean the great God, the Lord and Master, who rules and directs all creatures. Without *his consent*, no creature can be used in the service of man; nothing will make the least movement for our advantage, until it gets the command of its Creator to do so. Without *his will*, no man, nor any other creature, can either do good or harm; without *his help* and assistance all our cares and plans, all our foresight, labor, and trouble, and all the friendship and favor of others, cannot be of the least use to us. “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Ps. 126:1). David speaks here, not only of a material house of wood and stone, but rather of that which constitutes good housekeeping, namely, the temporal prosperity, happiness, and good fortune of the family. You may labor and toil for this, day and night; you may strain your mind as much as you please; you may call on all men for help; if the Lord is not favorable to you, your labor is in vain: “It is in vain for you to rise before light” (Ps. 126:2), to seek your profit; unless the Lord helps you, and blesses your undertaking, you may plague yourself to death before you advance a foot toward prosperity.

But why should I say all this to Christians? Their faith teaches them that nothing can happen in the world, except sin alone, without the permission of God. “The prosperity of man is in the hand of God” (Ecclus. 10:5). “Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God” (Ecclus. 11:14). Can there be any greater folly than that which most men are guilty of, who, in their undertakings, trust solely to their own cleverness, cunning, prudence, industry, and labor, and never ask help from God, as if they stood in no need of him? Who ever thinks of being reconciled with God, if he is in the state of sin, or of praying to God for help, before undertaking an important business? How many are there not in the world who try to succeed in business by means that are directly against God and his commandments, and who hope to secure prosperity by offending and insulting him! Adam in Paradise thought that by disobedience he could exalt himself and make himself like to God; and that very disobedience was the cause of unhappiness to him and his descendants. Joseph was sold by his brethren and sent to Egypt as a slave, because they feared that he would one day rule over them, and by that very means they made Joseph their ruler, and were compelled afterwards to bow down, trembling, before him. King Pharaoh wished to destroy the Israelites by hard treatment, fearing that they would grow too powerful for him: he oppressed them in all kinds of ways, but what was the result? The more he oppressed them, the more they increased, and Pharaoh himself and his people found temporal and eternal death in the Red Sea when pursuing them. Saul sought to kill David, so as to preserve the crown in his own family, but all his plans and schemes resulted only in giving David more influence among the people and in placing him sooner on the throne. The Jews, wonderful to say, thought that they would lose their city of Jerusalem and their temple if they did not put Jesus to death; and that very crime brought upon them the evil they dreaded.

There is no wisdom, no prudence, no counsel against God, no prosperity nor happiness without God!

Such, too, is the daily experience of the world. How many are there not who labor night and day, form all kinds of plans and schemes, spare no effort and even deny themselves the proper time for meals, in their eagerness to push on the work, and yet their labor is wasted, and they know not why. The cause is generally sought for in the change of fortune, or in the opposition and envy of man. They exclaim, as in the Gospel of to-day: “An enemy hath done this,” or they attribute it to unfavorable weather, bad seasons. Certainly these things are the immediate instruments by which their prosperity is hindered, and temporal loss is entailed upon them, but who is the Master who has set these instruments in motion? How do matters stand between you and God? Are you in his friendship? or have you treated him with carelessness, and banished him out of your hearts? If so, what wonder is it that your business does not prosper? Do you wish, Christian married people, and all of you, according to your different states, to perform your worldly business prudently, so as to profit by it? Then, first of all, you must be in the favor and grace of God. Do not be so foolish as to think that he who has lost God, the Supreme Good, can gain anything thereby. What profit or advantage can he hope for from all his labor and trouble, as long as he has such a powerful enemy against him, as long as he is hated by him from whom all blessings must come? Therefore, never begin an important business without first making sure of having God on your side. Whatever you are about to do, first of all take counsel with God, and if your conscience reproaches you with anything, go to confession and tell your sins; trust no one, fear all, until you are as certain as you can

be that you are in the grace of God, and that you can count upon his help and assistance. If you do that you will have accomplished the most important part of your business, and may confidently make use of all lawful means to finish it, in such a way, however, that you do not trust to them so much as to God. They must be used as instruments or tools which might serve to destroy as well as to build up. The Supreme Architect must arrange everything, if any advantage is to be derived. If he keeps away from the work, then you have only built upon sand, and your labor is in vain.

Yes, if only the tenth part of all your labor and trouble and planning were thus directed to God, how much more successful would you not be! We think, sometimes, day and night upon some matter of business; that is right and necessary; but if we devoted but half an hour of the time to prayer, or to hearing Mass, that prayer and Mass, although they have apparently little to do with our business, would certainly help more to success than all our wearisome thinking. Very often you are obliged to seek friends and patrons to help you, and speak for you; do so, in God's name; it cannot be helped; but do not forget to gain over to your side the Saints in heaven, the Blessed Virgin, and your angel guardian. They will speak to God for you, and he is able to make those men, whose help you think you require, inclined to assist you. In order to gain friends and patrons, you must make several visits, and offer them a most respectful attention. Do not forget also to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and you will find that the visits you pay to men will have more fruit. You must, sometimes, in order to gain your end, give presents here and there; that also you may do, as long as you are not giving against the law of God; but you should try also to bribe Christ our Lord; give something to the poor and suffering, in whose persons Jesus comes to your door; make some offering for the Poor Souls in Purgatory; such presents will be of greater help to you than any others. In a word, keep in the friendship of God, and say confidently with David: "My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 120:2).

I will conclude my sermon with an interesting story in proof of this, and give it in the very words of the person concerned: "My father," so the story commences, "who was rich in wealth as he was generous toward the poor, showed me once his whole stock of ready money, and said to me: 'My son, tell me truly what you think, which would you rather have me do, leave you all this money, as it is for your inheritance, or give it in trust for you to Jesus Christ?' 'Oh, father,' I answered, 'no one is to be preferred to Christ; I would rather have him, for I might lose the money, but Christ will be my constant, true, and eternal Friend.' My father then gave almost all the money to the poor, and left me but a small sum at his death; so that poverty itself has taught me to place my greatest hopes in Jesus Christ as my Guardian; and I have not been deceived. For, amongst the most respectable citizens, there was one who had a very virtuous wife and an only daughter; the mother said one day to her husband: 'We have an only daughter, and are very rich; what sort of a husband shall we seek for her? If she marries a rich man who is not a man of sense and honor, she will have a miserable and unhappy life; let us rather seek for a pious, modest young man, who will love her for her own sake, and not for her money.' 'You are right,' said the husband; 'if our daughter marries one as rich as she is herself, they will both wish to become great people, and will get too proud and haughty, and if her husband is richer than she, he will lord it over her, and she will be his servant; the best thing we can do is to select a good and virtuous husband for her, although he may not have much of the world's wealth. Above all, we must ask God to help us to find one of that kind. Do you go to church early in the morning, and ask God for light and help to this end; perhaps the first person you will see coming into the church will be the man we are looking for; because it is a good sign of piety to see one going early to church.' The wife obeyed, and while she was praying, I entered the church before any one else. I was immediately asked all about my family, training, and character. I told everything candidly; how my father was a rich man who, with my consent, had made himself poor through charity, and had left me Christ as my Guardian. On hearing this they thanked divine Providence, and gave me their daughter to wife with a rich dowry." All you married people, and you who intend to marry, should learn from this what should be your first care in selecting a partner for life, namely, to see whether the object of your choice is pious and virtuous; and also that piety is the best dowry. Learn, too, to be careful in training your children to virtue and piety. You will do very well, indeed, for your children, if you leave them the fear of God as their inheritance, and Jesus Christ as their Guardian. And finally, learn all of you what I wished to prove, namely, that the fear and love of God are the surest way even to temporal prosperity. Amen.

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