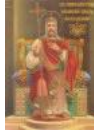




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JMJ

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

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Accusation of the Criminal in the Judgment

“Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn.” Matt. 13:30.

The cockle signifies the wicked; the wheat the just. The reaper is death. The place in which the cockle is to be burnt is hell. The barn where the wheat is to be gathered is heaven. The time in which the cockle is to be publicly tied in bundles to burn, and the wheat gathered into heaven, is the day of the general judgment. If we look at the fields in the springtime we see weeds of different colors - white, red, yellow, blue, coming forth like the most beautiful flowers and adorning the whole field. But when the harvest-time comes the apparent flowers are seen to be but useless weeds, and what seemed to be grass is known now as the fruitful stalk that bears the nourishing food, and is carefully stored away. So it is in the world. If we consider the life of the wicked man, we find in it much pomp and splendor in dress, food, drink, sleep, gaming, amusements, pleasure-seeking, and luxury, things that worldly-minded people desire at least, if they cannot have them in reality. And if we consider the lives of the good, we see in them nothing but humility, modesty, temperance, watching, fasting, prayer, mortification, carrying the cross. But wait a while; let the day of judgment come, and what will become of worldlings then? Away with the useless weeds that have brought forth no fruit of good works! Away with them to the eternal fire! “Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn.” But what shall become of the good wheat? “The wheat gather ye into my barn,” because it has brought forth good fruit. On last Sunday we have seen how the criminal is examined in the judgment, and forced to answer, to his great shame and confusion. But even if he were to keep silent, and it were possible for him not to acknowledge his sins; if he might say: I have not done the evil things I am asked about, what would that help him? For he shall find accusers enough, and more than enough, to carry on the case against him, and to convict him beyond the shadow of a doubt: as I now proceed to show.

The criminal accused in the judgment.

When many credible witnesses testify against one accused of a great crime, he has a poor chance of escape. Now, think of this and tremble at the thought: Countless are the witnesses who shall appear against you to accuse you openly and convict you unanimously of guilt.

1. First there shall be swarms of demons from hell, moved by the bitterest hatred toward you. Even he who now tries to inspire you with a presumptuous hope in the divine mercy will then beg of God to forget all his mercy. Even he who now paints sin to you as of little account and a mere trifle, will then bring forward all your sins in all their deformity. Even he who now tries to drive you to sin by his suggestions will then bring forward those very suggestions for your damnation, and accuse you of having listened to them. What shall he say? How shall he give testimony against us? The devil will recite before the tribunal of Christ the words of our profession, and the oath by which we bound ourselves in Baptism. You were asked whither you wished to go and what you desired. You answered by your godfather and godmother that you wished to be baptized and enrolled amongst the soldiers and followers of Christ. Then you were asked whether you renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, and you answered: I renounce them; I give them up forever.

Now tell me how you have kept this promise during your life! Show me some sign that you have acted up to the holy profession you made that you were a soldier and follower of Christ? How often have you not been ashamed to show devotion and due respect and reverence to God in public, simply because such was not the custom of the world! How often have you not followed the example of others even against your conscience, because the world would have it so, in spite of the emphatic exhortation of Christ: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him". "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). Is that the way to renounce the world? If you had vowed in holy Baptism to observe perpetual fidelity and obedience to the world and its luxury, could you have fulfilled that vow better and more exactly than by your past conduct?

You promised also to renounce the flesh and all its concupiscences. And how have you kept that promise? Say when did you fulfill your obligation in that respect? In your childhood, when you first commenced to know what the sin of impurity is? In your youth, when you knew enough of it by experience? The sinful thoughts, desires, wishes, conversations, letters, allurements, words, and actions that resemble those of a dumb beast rather than of a reasoning being, all these things show how you have observed your act of renunciation. Finally, you have renounced the devil; I renounce the devil and all his works, you said. But, says the devil, you have done me little harm; if you had signed a document promising to follow me in all things, I could not have expected more from you than what you have done to please me; you have at once consented to my temptations, nay, sometimes done more evil than I hoped for from you; I have advised you to curse and swear, but you have gone beyond that and blasphemed God; I have told you to hate your enemy and wish ill to him, and you have really done him harm; I told you to get drunk, and you committed impurity besides; I suggested unchaste thoughts to you that you might take pleasure in them, and you have actually committed the sinful action; I would have been content with your own soul, but by your allurements, seductions, scandal, and bad example you have brought hundreds of souls into my hands; you have done my will in all things as if you were my servant or slave; have I, perhaps, treated you so well and been so kind to you while you were serving me that you had reason to renounce God and adhere to me so faithfully? Oh, how I have embittered you for the short and mean pleasures that you owe to me! I have sent you a worm to gnaw your heart and torture your conscience; the money you procured by my help cost you a world of trouble and anxiety.

2. Yet these accusations shall proceed only from a bitter hatred. There shall be others, inspired by just indignation and by a love of justice, that shall be brought against you on that day. For complaints shall be made by all those, whether they are amongst the elect or the reprobate, who have been unjustly treated or injured by you during life, whom you have harmed in their honor, health, or temporal goods. Justice, oh, God! they cry out; here is the wretch who wronged us and cheated us out of our property! He it is who in that suit, in which we should not have failed to obtain our rights, forced us to accept a compromise by which we were defrauded wholly or in part of what belonged to us! This is the miser who wronged us by not paying the wages due to us for our hard work, or by delaying to pay us, or by unjustly lessening the salary agreed on, so that we had to suffer the pangs of hunger! This is the merciless husband who treated me, his wife, as if I were a servant-maid or a dog, so that I was almost reduced to despair, and spent my life in continual sorrow and affliction! This is that inhuman father who brought us, his children, to the extremity of poverty by his constant gambling and drinking, and by the idle, worthless life he led! This is the unprincipled wretch who by all sorts of tricks, lies, and bribes, deprived us of our employment and of our good name, that he might do a service to others! This is

the avaricious man at whose door we have so often knocked in vain to ask for a piece of bread! Oh, just Judge, pronounce sentence! And if the Judge shall hear the complaints of those whom you have injured only in their worldly substance, in transitory things, how much more loudly will not resound in his ears the cries for vengeance of those whom you have injured in their immortal souls, in eternal goods? What bitter complaints shall then be made against you by those to whom you have given occasion of sin by impure solicitations, love-letters, unchaste songs, and conversations? by the children whom you have taught to swear and curse, and to indulge in vanity? by the servants whom you have kept in your house for unlawful purposes?

3. All the holy guardian Angels accuse their own charges, and demand their reprobation from the Judge. Every one of the Angels, says Origen, shall be present in the judgment to bring forward those who were the objects of his care, and he shall then make his accusation, stating the number of years he endeavored by his inspirations and warnings to encourage to good the soul entrusted to him, and keep it away from evil.

4. Even the Mother of God, and all pious Christians, shall accuse him. Refuge of sinners! Help of the desolate! Mary, Mother of mercy! thy very name fills my heart with sweet joy and consolation! Surely I shall have nothing to fear from thee, at all events? But, alas for a lost cause! If I die in the state of sin even thou shalt be among the number of my accusers. Sentence him, she will say, oh, just Son! Through me he could easily have been saved; through my hands went all the graces and blessings thou didst so generously bestow on him, but he rejected them. And a similar complaint will be made against me by all good Christians who have lived in the same town and house with me: We gave that man good example of the Christian virtues; we have shown him the narrow way that leads to heaven; he did not follow us, but went on the broad road that leads to hell. Such, too, shall be the testimony of the priests from the confessional: We have warned that man not to sin any more, but he kept on adding sin to sin; we begged him as gently as possible to leave that house, that person, to avoid the occasion of sin, saying to him that otherwise all his confessions would be of no avail, and that we dared not give him absolution, but he paid no attention to us; he promised, indeed, to do as we said, but his promises came to naught; he went from one confessor to another, and as the latter did not know the state of his conscience, nay, as he deliberately concealed it from him, he succeeded in obtaining absolution under a false promise of amendment.

Alas! whither shall I go? What shall become of the sinner in the midst of so many and such powerful, hostile, and embittered accusers, many of whom shall be in high favor with the Judge? What shall I then say in that miserable position, outvoted on all sides; what shall I say in excuse? Ah, there will be no escape for me! Wherever I turn I shall find my case a lost one, my situation desperate, my sentence eternal damnation! But it is not come to that yet! Like the unjust steward, you know what to do. Sigh forth with the sorrowing Job: "Shall not the fewness of my days be ended shortly? Suffer me, therefore, that I may lament my sorrow a little before I go and return no more" (Job 20:21). Just Judge, grant me still a little time that I may go and repent of my sins, accuse myself of them, and seriously amend my life before that great and terrible day comes; so that when the accusers shall stand forth against me and call out for vengeance on me because of my sins, I may be able fearlessly and truthfully to answer: it is true, ye demons, ye saints and Angels, ye just and ye reprobate, ye Apostles and disciples of Christ! it is true that you have reason to accuse me; but it is true also that I have repented, that I have accused myself, that I have atoned for all, that I have amended my life and died a happy death. Thus all your accusations are repelled; my cause is justified and won; my eternal inheritance is with the just, who will joyfully await the Judge's sentence on me. If we are in need of doing so, let us observe this and do penance, and then we shall attain to the desired consummation. Amen.

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