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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 + + +
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SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Last Sentence of the Judge on the Criminal

“Many are called, but few chosen.” St. Matthew 20:16.

Fearful words: The smaller number shall be called to the kingdom of heaven, and the greater number condemned to hell! If we blind mortals only thought of that while there is still time, that we might be inspired with a salutary fear, and so live that we may be found among the few elect! We have hitherto considered the state of the guilty sinner before the judgment-seat, and how he shall be summoned to judgment, questioned therein, accused, and convicted. There is still another and that a most terrible point to be considered, namely, how he shall be condemned by the sentence pronounced on him. “Then shall He say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire!” Ah, those words are enough to dry up the marrow of one’s bones! Depart from me, you cursed! Where to? Into everlasting fire!

I shall speak to you today on the words of the first part of this sentence:

“Depart from me, you cursed.”

I. The circumstance of the place shall make the sentence terrible, and that is the valley of Josaphat, when the whole universe, heaven and earth, and all that is in heaven, earth and hell shall be gathered together; “then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” He begins by bestowing the eternal reward with which His children shall rejoice. Meanwhile the wicked shall have to stand there, gnashing their teeth with rage and envy, seeing the happiness of the others, which might have been theirs, too, had they not excluded themselves from it by the perversity of their wills. “These, seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation, saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: “These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. Behold! how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints” (Wisdom 5:2-5), with whom they will rejoice forever! The elect, after they have been invited to go into eternal happiness, shall not enter into it immediately, but shall wait till the sentence on the wicked shall be carried out. For although the just shall be the first to hear their sentence, they shall be the last on whom it will be fulfilled, as St. Matthew expressly says: “And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting” (St. Matthew 25:46). Again a

source of fearful shame for the reprobate. Who could describe the fierce anger and intolerable shame and anguish of heart that the proud Aman suffered when he was forced to see Mardochai honored by the king, while he himself had to walk on foot, leading the king's horse, on which Mardochai was seated in great pomp? Who could describe the rage and fury of the same Aman, when, after suffering so much shame, he was brought to be hanged in the sight of the triumphant Mardochai on the very gallows he had prepared for him? But what is it all compared to the shame, confusion and despair of the damned, when they shall be forced to look on the last day at the chosen servants of God seated in glory, and to tremble and shudder at the feet of those whom they scarcely deigned to cast a glance on during life, when they themselves shall be dragged by the demons to hell?

2. He will no longer be meek and gentle as a lamb, but rather like a ravening lion, so that the whole earth shall tremble at the sound of His voice. And what shall that sentence be? "Depart from me, you cursed." Let us consider the full import of these terrible words. "Depart from me;" to understand this, it is enough to know what it is to be separated from God forever. But, alas! who can tell us what that is? A saint who actually sees God and knows Him clearly should come down from heaven to enlighten us on the point, and even then we should fail to grasp it fully. We may get a slight idea of it from the state of mind of Absalom, that disobedient, obstinate, undutiful son, who was banished by his father, but recalled and restored to favor through the intercession of Joab, under the condition, however, that he should never dare to present himself before his father, nor even to look at him. This condition seemed too hard and intolerable to the son. He saw how the courtiers, ministers, and attendants, how citizens and strangers, and even the poor and oppressed were freely admitted to the king's presence, while he himself dared not venture too near even to his father's chamber. No longer able to bear this reproach, he entreated Joab, saying: "I beseech thee, therefore, that I may see the face of the king;" if that may not be, I have no longer any wish to live, and you may tell him that he can have me put to death. The son of Manlius Torquatus, on whom his father pronounced this sentence on account of a crime he had committed: "I declare my son unworthy to be in my house, and I command him to go far away at once, out of my sight." The son was so afflicted at this that the next night he laid violent hands on himself, and hanged himself. Now, if these men were so oppressed with sorrow at a sentence that banished them from the sight of an earthly father, that they preferred death to banishment, what must it be to be separated and excluded forever from the house of God, from the inheritance of God, from the sight of God, from that God in whose possession we shall find everything that is desirable, from that infinite Good, from whom to be separated is nothing less than to be separated from all that is good?

3. We do not understand this now, but shall in the next life. Our mind is now bewildered and darkened by all sorts of evil inclinations; our appetites are excited by worldly goods and the outward beauty that we behold with the senses; we have never seen God except by the faith darkly; hence what wonder is it that we long so little for the possession of God, that we feel so little regret at losing God! What wonder is it that we are so little affected by the threat of being deprived of him, that we are so callous and undisturbed at the thought of the judgment that awaits us! But, unhappy sinner, how will it be with you when you learn clearly in eternity what God is, and at the same time must hear that you are banished from His sight forever? To be deprived of a good with whose value one is not acquainted is tolerable enough, but to be banished, and that forever, from a Good that one has before his eyes, and knows to be his only happiness, oh, what a bitter parting that is! Depart from me, "because I called, and you refused" (Prov. 1:24). I wished to have you with me in heaven, but you did not wish to come. I became Man for you, shed my blood, gave up my life for your salvation, but you have made no use of my goodness. For years and years I have had patience with you while you were in the state of sin; I have offered you the benefits of my merits, of my Passion in the holy Sacrament of Penance, "and you refused." You did not wish to acknowledge or love me as your God; you have offered incense to other deities; you have adored the world and its vanities; I had to yield in your choice to a transitory gain, a filthy pleasure, a breath of honor, a mere mortal! My cross was a scandal to you; my poverty and humility too mean for you; my life and the laws of my Gospel only provoked your laughter; heaven was in your estimation not worth striving for. Away with you, then! Never for all eternity shall you have any part with me! You have loved the curse; it shall be with you forever! Depart from me, you cursed! Away, ye demons, with those who belong to you!

Is there no mercy, then, no pity for those so miserably banished and condemned souls? No; Angels, Saints, the Mother of God, even parents, children, friends, relations among the elect, will all with biting laughter and

exultant triumph cry out with one voice: Depart, you cursed! Away! To hell with you! So shall the father among the elect cry out to His reprobate child: Away with you, accursed son! So will the children cry out with scorn and contempt to their parents: Away with you, accursed father and mother! So will the husband cry out to his wife; the wife to her husband; one friend and acquaintance to another: Depart, you cursed! away with you to the depths of hell!

4. What are your thoughts now? Is your flesh of iron that it does not tremble? Are your hearts marble that they do not become soft? You should now fear this sentence with a wholesome fear, that you may avoid sin. Yes, fear; fear by all means, but fear no one except that just Judge who alone has the power of passing such a terrible sentence on you! Fear, but fear nothing except sin, for it alone can bring down that sentence on you! Fear, but not with an empty fear, that remains only in the imagination, and leaves the mind anxious and dispirited. Fear with an effectual fear that strides on to action, repressing our evil inclinations, withdrawing our hearts from the world and its vanities, confining us always within the bounds of the divine laws. If we know that we are free from sin, or even if we have committed all the sins in the world, but our conscience gives us testimony that we have repented of them sincerely, confessed them candidly, and amended our lives, and if, moreover, we have the earnest will never again to offend God deliberately, and always to do His holy will as well as we know how: then we can and shall always rejoice in the Lord that we have not to fear that terrible sentence; a sentence that the divine goodness and mercy often suggests to us, now while there is still time, as a subject of meditation to inspire us with a wholesome, childlike fear, that we may resolve to be true to Him always, and with this resolution to enjoy even in this life a foretaste of the happiness to which we shall be called with His chosen children by the divine Judge on that day.

Yet, in spite of that fear, most people shall be lost. Why so? How many, think you, are in hell who during life heard in sermons, or read in spiritual books, and that, too, with fear and trembling, of the last judgment and the terrible sentence on the wicked? How many of those here present who are now filled with fear at the thought of that terrible sentence, and who will nevertheless on the last day be among the unhappy wretches on the left hand of the Judge, so that they will hear that sentence thundered forth against themselves? Why is this? It comes from the fact that after they have been for some time disturbed in mind by what they have heard, after having considered in a cursory manner what a reasonable man should do to avoid such an irreparable calamity, they forget those good thoughts in a short time, drive them out of their minds, and go on in their usual vicious, tepid, idle, vain, and therefore, as far as their salvation is concerned, most dangerous way of life. This is chiefly the case with those who, that they may not become melancholy, as they term it, deliberately avoid all reflection on such salutary and terrible truths, and, lest they should be forced to face them, willfully absent themselves from sermons.

But you, oh, sinners, who are not yet earnestly resolved to renounce your vicious ways and to return to God by sincere repentance, fear! tremble! Bewail and lament your folly, the hardness and blindness of your hearts! Is it, then, your determination for such a wretched thing, for a momentary carnal pleasure, for some trifling gain, for the sake of being revenged on your enemies, to satisfy your vanity, or for the love of a mortal creature—is it your determination to hear one day the terrible words: Depart from me, you cursed? Ah, souls, I beg of you by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, which still cries out to heaven for mercy; by the tears that the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, the Refuge of sinners, the Mother of mercy, has shed for you, enter into yourselves and return to God, most worthy of love, who now sincerely desires not your damnation, but your eternal happiness! Amen.

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