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For God so loved the world

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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. III - THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

We Must Love and Serve God, Because He Is Our Lord

“The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.” St. Matthew 4:10.

Strange, indeed, that an express command had to be given to man under pain of eternal damnation to adore his Lord and God, and to serve him alone? God, who is infinitely beautiful, who is infinitely perfect, and in himself worthy of all love; in whom there is nothing that can be hated, nothing that must not be esteemed and loved, who showers benefits on us every moment of our lives! What heart can be so ungrateful as not to honor and love him, whom we hope and desire to possess one day forever in heaven; in whom alone we can find all that can satisfy us? What man is there, who loves his own happiness, who should not adore this God, and love and serve him faithfully? And truly, what is there more surprising than that there should be a necessity of a special command in this matter? But when I consider the way of the world, and how great the number of those who instead of loving and serving their God, only offend and insult him day by day, I am no longer surprised. In order, then, to force men to render him their due homage of love and service, God must have recourse to a strict command: “The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve,” although what God is in himself should impel us to this love and service without any further law.

God is our Lord, and therefore we should serve him and love him with all our hearts.

If we had no other reason to impel us to do so, the mere fact of his being our Lord should suffice. And what kind of a lord is he? All the emperors, kings, and rulers of the world govern in a servile manner; they are masters and servants at the same time, because their power is united with want; they have received from God the power and right to rule over others and make laws for them; while all their pomp and magnificence they must get from the very persons whom they govern. They are in need of their subjects; they live on their labor; they must be fed and protected by them and maintained in the style suited to their dignity. If they lose their land and their people, there is an end to their splendor, and they become like other men. Napoleon I. & III. Don Pedro of Brazil: No man is really a master, as long as he is in need of a servant. The master and servant are alike in want; they are both mortals and both needy; for they are mutually in want of each other's help. Therefore no one of you is truly a master, no one truly a servant. God, alone, is the true and real lord, that perfect master, who has no need of us. He does not want us, but we are in want of him, and therefore he is truly our Lord.

This lord can be called our Lord in a far more perfect sense than earthly potentates can receive that title from their subjects. These belong to their sovereigns in such a way that they are bound to obey the laws of the land, and to perform the services required from them; but they do not receive their lives and being from their sovereigns. Princes and kings may say: these people are my subjects; this kingdom, this country, belongs to me, it is for my use and service. But the subjects cannot say: the prince or king belongs to us, he is for our use and service. But God is truly our very own Lord; we belong completely to him, and he, great as he is, belongs completely to us. Our souls and bodies and very lives belong to him by the title of creation, because he has created us out of nothing; by the title of redemption, because he has bought us by his blood; and by the title of preservation, for every moment he must, as it were, create us anew, nor can we make the least movement without his help and cooperation. Finally, we belong to him by the title of that most just power by which he can do with us all he pleases without being in the least unjust to us. He can raise or lower me; he can give riches or allow me to pine away in poverty; he can give me health and strength, and again deprive me of it; he can preserve my life, and take it from me just as he chooses; he can reduce me to nothing, if such seems good to him, without being in the least accountable to any one; and all that he can do with far more power and right than the owner can dispose of his horse, or sell it, or give it away, or permit it to rest in the stable, or drive it on the most difficult roads, or put a bullet through its head, without its having the smallest right to complain.

Although we belong thus completely to God our Lord, yet he, too, is ours, so that we can say with truth: God belongs to us completely. David rejoices at this: "Behold, I know thou art *my* God" (Ps. 45:10). He does not say, I know that thou art God: but, I know that thou art my God. The Lord is ours to such an extent that, so to speak, he will not be a lord, unless for us. He has given us all that he has created outside of himself; he has given us all that he is in himself.

Nay, he does not look on it as even enough for his faithful servants that he has created heaven and earth for them. For it is his will that all he is and has should also be ours; he has made us like himself, in creating us to his own image; he has made himself like to us, when he took our nature on himself, and became a poor man for our sake; he gave himself completely to us, when he sacrificed his life on the gibbet of the cross for us; he made himself our food, since he left himself to us in the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar; every day he offers himself as a continual sacrifice for our sins to his Eternal Father; and he himself, with his whole divine essence, will be our reward in the heaven where we are to possess him for all eternity.

Christians, do you believe this truth? Do you thus acknowledge God as *your* Lord? But if you do where is the respect you owe him? Where the obedience, reverence, esteem, affection and love due to him? Should not this alone impel you to love God always with your whole hearts, to keep his law, to serve him alone? And yet you make the greatest difficulty of loving and serving our Lord! Is that not the case? We must love him according to the law he has laid down for us "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" (Matt. 22:37). *With our whole heart*, inasmuch as we must truly love him above all things; esteem nothing, desire nothing, love nothing, but the Lord our God alone, and if we wish for anything else besides him, or esteem or love it, it must be on account of our Lord. *With our whole soul*, inasmuch as we do not allow ourselves to be moved by anything but God alone; if we rejoice, it should be on account of his endless glory and happiness; if we are sorrowful, it should be because we have despised and offended him, because so few really know and honor him, because so many dishonor his holy name. Our only fear should be to displease him by again falling into sin; if we hope for or desire anything, it should be perseverance in his grace and friendship, that we may love and praise him in eternity. *With our whole mind*, inasmuch as we should always think of our God and be concerned about nothing except pleasing him more and more. Finally, we should love him *with all our strength*, inasmuch as we should be ready to put forward every effort of soul and body when the honor of God requires it, and be prepared to sacrifice all we have, and all that the world esteems, and according to his good will and pleasure to accept all imaginable trials and difficulties, and bear them patiently till death for his sake. Alas, how far different is our conduct! There is hardly anything in the world that is not preferred to God in our hearts, wishes, and desires, in our love and esteem. Bitter but true it is, God alone is vile in our eyes in comparison with other things. We should not dare to act in that way towards earthly sovereigns. If they give a command, or publish a law, or make known their will even by a word, or mere sign, oh, how obedient their servants are! No difficulty frightens, no obstacle turns them away from their obedience; their duty may be displeasing to them, but no matter what sacrifices it exacts, they are ready to make them. The king has com-

manded, or forbidden; we must not go against his will. It is God alone who is thought of least of all by us; whose commands and prohibitions are ruthlessly trodden under foot when it does not suit our convenience to observe them.

Moses and Aaron came to king Pharaoh and made known to him the command of God: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go that they may sacrifice to me in the desert" (Exod. 5:2). What? said the proud king by way of answer: "Who is the Lord that I should hear his voice, and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

So Pharaoh would not hear anything about the God of Israel. But he would have shown far greater pride and obstinacy, if he had said: I know the Lord but I will not hear his voice, nor obey his command. Where the shameless pride of Pharaoh failed to reach, thereto have we come, when we consent to grievous sin.

We know well that God; yet what answer do we often make him by our actions? I will not hear him, nor do as he orders me, nor obey him.

Can anything more terrible or presumptuous be imagined than for a Christian, who knows by the light of the true faith what a great Lord God is, to act in that manner? Richard, king of England, lost his way once when out hunting in the forest, and his servants being unable to find any trace of him, he was forced to beg hospitality for the night from a charcoal-burner, who received him indeed into his hut, but with so little courtesy, that at the very door he gave the king a box on the ear. Richard kept quiet and showed no indignation at the insult; but when he got safely home again, he put on his most costly apparel, seated himself, adorned with crown and sceptre, on his throne, and thus, surrounded by his ministers and vassals, caused his discourteous host to be brought before him, and said to him: "Do you know me now?" So terrible was the effect of these words on the poor man, that he sank dead on the ground with fear. Christians, that man acted in a most unbecoming manner towards his sovereign; but he did not know his dignity, and in so far he was excusable. But we know our great God and Lord, and yet we act far more rudely towards him than the charcoal-burner acted towards the king; nor are we frightened at the thought of the number of times we have insulted him by our sins.

Dear Christians, let us, after doing sincere penance for our past sins, write deep in our hearts the words which Moses addressed to the Israelites: "Therefore love the Lord thy God, and observe his precepts and ceremonies, his judgments and commandments at all times" (Deut. 11). If we will not love God because he is a God so worthy of our love; if we will not serve him because he is such a great Lord, let us at least love and serve him constantly because he is our God and our Lord, to whom we completely belong, who belongs completely to us. Let us love our Lord not merely with the lips during the time of prayer; but let us show this love in every deed and in all our works, by faithfully doing his holy will. Let us love our Lord with our whole hearts above all created things. As our Lord he wishes to be loved and served by us; as our Lord he deserves that we should love and serve him. Woe to the man who loves anything with God, which he does not love on account of God.

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