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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. 5 = THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

The Pain Caused to the Damned by the Thought of Heaven, Or the Pain of Loss

“He was transfigured before them.” Matthew 17:2.

If the transfiguration of our Lord, in which manifested for a short time some few rays of His divinity, occasioned such lively joy to His disciples that Peter, ravished out of himself, wished to remain in that place forever, what must be the joy of the elect in heaven, where the God of all beauty shows Himself face to face as He is, and allows Himself to be possessed by them for all eternity? “Lord, it is good for us to be here,” we shall all cry out in ecstasy, if we shall have the happiness of gaining heaven. Unhappy, reprobate sinners! you shall never for all eternity have any share in this manifestation of heavenly glory, or in the joy of the elect. Oh, yes; even you shall have your share in it. But how? Are the damned to be one day released and to be admitted to the glory of heaven and the joys of the blessed? No; they shall, quite against their will, turn their thoughts and minds to heaven, and contemplate the glory of God and the bliss of the Saints.

Heaven and its elect shall be to the reprobate another eternal hell.

The damned shall be incessantly tormented by the thought that they have lost heaven. The more joyous and blissful the dwelling of the Saints, the more painful shall hell be for the damned souls, on account of the constant yearning for the eternal happiness that the damned have lost by their own fault, and can never hope to gain during eternity. The greater and more desirable the good that one longs for, the more intense is the bitterness and disappointment caused by being deprived of it. If you wish to torture a human being, or even a brute beast, in a most cruel manner, chain him up in a prison and place beside him the most costly food and drink that he cannot reach, so that he has to die of hunger and thirst with food and drink before his greedy eyes. Death itself is not so painful as to be thus tantalized. When God brought Moses to the top of the mountain and showed him from afar the promised land, flowing with milk and honey, and at the same time announced to him that as a punishment for his doubting he was to have no part therein, how great must have been his affliction at hearing those words! But in that affliction you have a mere shadow of the torture caused the damned by heaven itself. This is the terrible pain of loss, as it is called, that is so often alluded to in Holy Writ as a warning to the living that we may all avoid hell, that is, sin. In the midst of their torments the damned shall know the glory and majesty of the Lord and his elect, not otherwise than as the sick man, whilst suffering the pains of illness, clearly recognizes what a great good health is and ardently longs for it.

1. The pain of loss is increased by the fact that the damned, while suffering, see the bliss of the elect. "You did evil in my eyes," says the Lord, "and you have chosen the things that displease me. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded; behold, my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart." Esau, after he had been deprived by Jacob of his birthright and had lost his father's blessing, "roared out with a great cry." Why? For, although he had lost his birthright, he still had his father alive with him to console him in his sorrow; he did not secure the first blessing of his father, but he was not accursed on that account, and had still a second blessing to hope for: "And when he wept with a loud cry, Isaac, being moved, said to him: In the fat of the earth, and in the dew of heaven from above shall thy blessing be" (Gen. 27:38, 40). Nevertheless he "roared out with a great cry," like a lion in his sorrow. Unhappy reprobate! how will you roar and howl after having lost your eternal inheritance, the blessing and favor of your heavenly Father, being, moreover, accursed by God and condemned to the fire of hell, when you see your former brothers and sisters, surrounded with shining stars, seated on thrones of glory, and rejoicing in eternal delights!

What would not the rich glutton give if that view were shut out from him! "And, lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Unhappy wretch that I am! he must have exclaimed, Abraham was rich as I was during life, and by making proper use of his wealth gained eternal happiness; my riches have hurled me into hell, because I made a bad use of them! Lazarus was formerly a poor beggar, whom I looked on as less than my dog, and now he rejoices in Abraham's bosom, and is a child of everlasting glory and happiness, while I lie here in the abyss of hell!

2. From this painful recollection and consideration of the loss of heaven comes another torture for the damned; for they are filled with the most bitter hatred and envy on account of the happiness of the elect. Envy and jealousy is one of the lowest passions that fills the heart with gall, and gnaws at it incessantly. All other inordinate passions disturb the heart, but they bring with them some consolation and pleasure, while envy that arises from sorrow at another's good fortune is a torment without any alleviation, a trouble without any comfort. Cain, the first-born of men, could not bear his brother Abel. Why? Because Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to God, while his was rejected. This filled him with such chagrin that his countenance became pallid and haggard. He had no rest until he had got rid of his brother by cruelly murdering him. In the same way the sons of Jacob could not bear the sight of their brother Joseph. Saul, when he heard the people singing hymns of praise to David, "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands," became so filled with envy and hatred that to his dying day he sought David's life. Aman fell sick and had to take to his bed, and lost all pleasure in his honors and riches, because Mardochoi, whom he could not bear, was favored by the king. The Jews, because Stephen overcame them in argument, "were cut to the heart, and they gnashed with their teeth at him;" envy gnaws at the very marrow of their bones; for the most trifling thing it eats out the very life of a man.

Who can understand the terrible envy, the madness and rage of the damned in hell, when, raising the eyes of the mind unceasingly to heaven, they are forced to behold in the enjoyment of eternal happiness and delights the elect, against whom they have the most bitter hatred, and whom they would willingly drag down from heaven into hell with themselves if they could? What will not be their rage at seeing the bliss of those whom they persecuted during life, or despised as poor, mean, lowly outcasts, or laughed at as ridiculous fools, or treated contemptuously as their servants or slaves? When they shall be compelled to behold them for eternity enjoying unspeakable glory and happiness, while they themselves are lying in hell, mocked at and trampled upon by merciless devils.

Woe to those who have to experience those things before they believe them! Before they believe them, I say; because I am not at all sure that most men believe in the existence of such a hell; if they do believe and are afraid of it, I cannot understand how they reconcile the lives they lead with such a faith and fear. No; they do not believe in or fear hell, for we hear many saying in a laughing tone: Oh, the devil is not so black as he is painted; people talk all sorts of things about hell, as if they had been there and knew all about it; up to this no one has come back from it to say what it is like. Let hell be hell; priests must have something to preach about, but it is not half so bad as they make out. See how they fear and believe in hell! And so, you wicked ones, you do not believe in hell because no one has come back from there to tell you what it is like? Why, then, do you believe that there is one God in three Persons? Yet no one has come from the other world to tell you about that.

But if you believe one and not everything, you are unbelievers, and deny the Holy Scriptures. If you are right, we have reason to think that the Lord is making fools of us, and that he is uttering only an empty threat when he tells sinners that they shall burn forever in hell. Then must the Catholic Church be a false one, and the holy Fathers and interpreters mere deceivers. Then must you deny your religion, which teaches us this article of faith as well as all the others. Woe, I repeat, woe to those who must experience before they rightly believe in it!

Others of you say in your own minds, truly I believe in hell, and only too much do I fear it! Do you show that you really fear hell and dread the idea of suffering forever therein? It is not true; for you carry about with you the burden of grievous sin. You eat and drink according to your sensuality, and your sins are seated at table with you; you sleep and idle away your time till late in the day, and your sins are in bed with you; you clothe and adorn yourself, and your sins peep out from your extravagant dress; you go about amongst people, and walk, and joke, and laugh, and play, and amuse yourself at balls and parties, sometimes even during the holy season of Lent, and your sins are with you all the time; you go to church, to the confessional, even to the Table of the Lord to be fed with the Immaculate Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ, and you bring your sins, and more still than you had before, back with you. What sins? Ah, that you know yourself only too well! Ask your conscience what are the sins that you have not yet properly confessed, or truly repented of, or seriously amended! And you fear hell? No, you rather wish to go to hell, for you love your sins, although you know that you shall be sent to hell for those very sins unless you repent of them.

You have now meditated on hell. Enter into yourself and see how you have to live in future, if you wish to escape eternal pains. Make a firm resolution to amend your life; repent of and detest your sins from the bottom of your heart; fear sin more than all other earthly evils; throw yourself at the feet of your crucified Lord, and with true contrition of heart and tears of sorrow beg of Him by the merits of His sacred Passion to be merciful and to pardon you. Often say to God: “from the pains of hell deliver us, oh, Lord!” but add also: from mortal sin deliver us, oh, Lord! for that is the only thing that can bring you to hell. Let us all adhere to this resolution. For God’s sake do not forget what you have heard; we have not been treating of trivial matters, but rather of how we are to escape an eternal hell, where there are everlasting torments for all the senses, in the odious company of the demons and lost souls, and where heaven itself is an eternal hell. Oh, woe to us if we should learn what it is by experience before we use the means of escaping it!

Oh, Mary, Mother of mercy! do not allow us ever to become the enemies of thee and thy Son, or to blaspheme thee forever! Take us under thy protection now while there is time; obtain for us a true hatred, sorrow, and detestation of our sins, a true love for thee and thy divine Son, and the grace to persevere therein till death, and for all eternity, and thus enjoy heaven in heaven. Amen.

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