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St. Joseph, pray for us

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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 + + +

THE GOOD CHRISTIAN - VOL. III

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

We Must Fear and Love God, Because He Is Almighty

“When he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke; and the multitude were in admiration at it.” St. Luke 11:14.

A single word of our Lord's, a sign, was sufficient to cast out the devil and to make the dumb speak, the blind see, the lame walk, and to restore the sick to health, and the dead to life. It was that which excited the admiration of the bystanders. They looked on Christ as a mere man like themselves; if they had known him to be true God, they would not have been so astonished at his miracles, for with God a word or command is enough to effect whatever he wishes. Why? Because he is an almighty Lord, to whom nothing is impossible. There you have another reason for giving to God, who is your Lord by countless titles, and is most worthy of your love, the homage of your fear, or of your love? If both, as I believe; you must love him and fear him at the same time, according as we are disposed towards him, as I shall now show.

Our Lord and God is an almighty Lord; therefore the just should love him all the more, while sinners should fear and tremble before him.

He alone can be called almighty who can cause something to exist where there was nothing before, and can do so at once, so that, without trouble on his part or help from others, he can create what he pleases; his power and will must be such that no other power can resist them, and that without him no other power can do the least thing. There you have a short description of the unlimited and perfect power of God.

1. God can make a thing without any pre-existing material, a power that seems impossible and is incomprehensible to any created intelligence. One of the first maxims of philosophy is, out of nothing nothing can be made. If the shoemaker has to make a pair of shoes, the tailor a coat, they must necessarily have materials for their work, as well as instruments and tools wherewith to work, and time and place in which to work, otherwise they can do nothing. Let all the mighty ones of the world gather together, with all the Angels in heaven; let them put forward all their sharpness of intellect, and then, if they can bring into being a single grain of sand, a single blade of grass; but they will never be able to do that. If the sun were as a grain of sand, and God had afterwards made it many thousand times larger than the earth, would not that be a great miracle? And yet it is a still greater wonder to make something out of nothing, to create the smallest grain of sand, than to

make the sun out of that grain, because there is some resemblance, although a very small one, between the sun and the grain of sand; for the sun is something, and the grain of sand is something; but between nothing and the grain of sand there is absolutely no resemblance whatever. "From nothing nothing can be made." God alone has the power to make out of nothing in a moment all he pleases. God has made this earth, which is twenty-five thousand miles in circumference, out of nothing, and he has placed it in the air unsupported by ropes or pillars, with all its weight of oceans, mountains, towns, and towers; nor can it fall; and it has its fixed place, which it will not leave. The mighty vault of the heavens is more than a hundred and sixty millions of miles distant from the earth, so that its whole circumference is more than nine hundred and sixty millions of miles. Yet this stupendous work has no pillars to rest on, no ropes to hang by, no hinges on which to turn; but it does not fall down, and always goes along on the road pointed out for it by its Creator. And this great weight moves so rapidly, that each point of it passes over more than forty million of miles in an hour, yet it never gets out of repair, nor requires to be mended or changed.

2. God can do that at once, in a single moment. Men must remove many obstacles out of their way before undertaking any work; so that, according to the nature of their task, they require more or less time in which to perform it. How much time it requires to build a magnificent palace according to the rules of art! Pliny writes of the temple of the goddess Diana at Ephesus that it was a wonder of magnificence. But how much time did it take to build it? For two hundred and twenty years was the whole of Asia employed on it. The whole universe, the heavens and the earth, were made out of nothing by the Lord whose name is Almighty, nor did he require more time than a single moment in which to do it.

3. Nor did it cost him more labor or trouble than a single word, a breath of his mouth, an act of his will; with the almighty God alone willing and being able, saying and doing, commanding and fulfilling, are all one and the same. God said: be light made, and light was made... let there be a firmament made amidst the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And it was so. Let the waters that are under the heaven be gathered together into one place; and let the dry land appear. And it was so done. Let the earth bring forth the green herb; let there be lights made in the firmament;... let the waters bring forth the creeping creature;... let the earth bring forth the living creature; and so it was done. "He spoke, and they were made." A word was enough for him to produce any effect he pleased. And just as he has created the world by a word, he could also, if it were his will, with one word create new worlds every moment. But what do I say of a new world? Picture to yourselves a million of worlds, all greater than and of different form to this. God can make infinitely more of them. And as he has made all things by a word, and can still make other things in the same way, so also he can destroy what he has made, and reduce all to nothing.

4. The fourth proof of a great power is to produce great effects with small and weak means, and to have no need of other help. God created the whole universe, heaven and earth, in a moment. Ask the prophet Isaias what trouble it cost him, or how many Angels he employed in that work, and you will hear that he accomplished it without help of any kind, by the mere breath of His mouth: "I am the Lord that make all things, that alone stretch out the heavens, that establish the earth, and there is none with me" (Is. 44:24).

5. The fifth proof of omnipotence is that there is no power or might that can withstand the will of God. "O Lord, Lord, almighty king," exclaims Mardochnus, "for all things are in thy power, and there is none that can resist thy will. Thou art Lord of all, and there is none that can resist thy majesty" (Esther 13:9, 11). If God wishes to humble the obstinate and bring them to obedience, all creatures, even those without life or reason, are at his disposal, ready to execute his commands. King Pharaoh dared to dispute his authority: "Who is the Lord that I should hear his voice? I know not the Lord" (Exod. 5:2). But God brought him to reason by the vilest things, frogs, flies, and gnats, and showed him that he must let the people of Israel go into the desert.

6. There is nothing in the world so strong and mighty that it can do the least thing without his help. "Without him was made nothing that was made" (St. John 1:3). Without his cooperation nothing is, nor can act. I cannot move foot, or hand, or finger, unless God gives me the movement. Not a drop of water falls from the clouds, not a leaf from the trees, not a hair from my head, unless God the first Mover, so disposes things. If calamities and misfortunes happen, it is to no purpose that we throw the blame on creatures. If affairs succeed with us, to no purpose and unjustly do we ascribe our success to our own industry, or to the help we have received from others; the almighty God is the cause of it all; health and prosperity, fortune and happiness, the fruitfulness of

the earth, victory in war, riches, all come from the hand of the almighty Lord.

What salutary thoughts should this truth inspire us with to our instruction and the profit of our souls? The two following, for two sorts of men, the just and the wicked: If we are in the state of sanctifying grace, if we love our God and keep his commandments, what good things may we not hope for from him! If we do not love him, if we are in the state of sin, have we not just reason to fear? Marius, the favorite of the emperor Tiberius, once showed his power by inviting a man of lowly condition to his table; but during the feast he caused the man's house to be razed to the ground. The poor man, when he came home, could hardly realize what had become of his house. The next day Marius again invited him, and during the repast caused a new and better house to be built for him on the same ground. It is easy to imagine his astonishment on returning in the evening; he could hardly believe his eyes, and looked on the new house as the effect of a dream. Marius then sent for him: see, said he, I am able to throw down your house and to rebuild it; should you not, then, be careful to keep me as your friend, since I can do you so much harm and so much good in one day? Woe to you if you do anything against me; but well will it be for you if you always keep my friendship. O Christians, how much more should we not fear to have the Lord our God as our enemy! How much greater care and diligence should we not employ to keep as our friend him who at every moment of our lives can inflict an infinite harm on us, or give us an infinite good! In the first place, God is an almighty Lord; what good, then, may we not expect from him, if we are in his grace, if we are his friends, his dear children, if we endeavor to do his will in all things, and with child-like confidence fly to him for refuge? If without any fault of ours we are in the danger or the occasion of losing our souls; if the evil one with his suggestions, or men with their flatteries, or our own flesh with its unruly desires, attack and try to lead us into sin, what have we to fear? The almighty God is present with us, and to him our weakness, no matter how great it is, is well known; he can protect us in temptations and dangers: he has promised us his help, and if we only make up our minds to work with it, he will preserve us from sin. If I am in temporal or bodily affliction, what comfort have I not in my trouble? I have an almighty Lord present with me, from whom, as I know for certain, the cross, the poverty, or the persecution comes; he can take it from me in a moment, if he wishes, and if he does not do so, I am certain that he has ordained the tribulation for my greater good, and that he will reward me for it eternally in heaven. If I desire to fulfill the duties of my state well and satisfactorily, and to attain true perfection and holiness, I have an almighty Lord ready to help me. No stone so hard, no block so unshapely, that he cannot make out of it children of Abraham. He converted the publican into an apostle, the murderer into a confessor of the faith, the greatest sinners into the greatest Saints.

On the other hand, are we in the state of sin? Have we this God as our enemy? Then we have not to do with a stock, or a stone, or a lifeless statue, but with an almighty God; and what have we not to fear if we fall into disgrace with him? Pains and sickness, shame and disgrace, poverty and hunger, fire and water, thunder and lightning, all the trials and tribulations of the world are in his hand, and at any moment he can visit us with them and utterly destroy us. But that is the least I have to fear. For our enemy is the almighty God, who "can destroy both soul and body into hell" (St. Matthew 10:28). O presumptuous mortals that we are, what have we done? We have not hesitated to rise up against God, and to offend him by many mortal sins! We who in comparison with God are less than the leaf that is blown about by the wind, than a dry straw, we have presumptuously rebelled against the almighty God! against that God who by his omnipotence keeps us every moment from falling back into our original nothingness! against that God without whose help we cannot move a muscle, nor speak a word, nor stir a limb! It is an abomination before men, when one who is wretchedly poor is at the same time proud. That thought should soften our hearts. Let us surrender ourselves to God and acknowledge with sorrow and regret, through love of him that we have sinned against the Almighty God and Lord! We promise never again, O God, shall that be the case for all eternity! Amen.

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