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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 AFTER EASTER

The Reasons we Have for Constantly Recollecting the Presence of God

“Jesus came and stood in the midst.” St. John 20:19.

We enjoy the happiness of having God present in our midst, wherever we may be, although we cannot see Him with our bodily eyes. God is present with us at all times, in all places; but are we at all times, in all places present with God by constantly recollecting Him and His divine presence? Not by any means! The church is generally the place, our hour for prayer generally the time in which we think of God; the remainder of the day is devoted to other thoughts and ideas. To try to think of God often, and to walk constantly in His presence, is, to our mind, fit only for holy and perfect people, and for religious in their convents, who have nothing else to care for the whole day. Yet all of us, no matter what we are, should practice this holy recollection of God's presence, and keep Him constantly before our eyes; there is nothing more reasonable if we consider it as far as God is concerned; nothing more useful if we consider our own salvation; nothing more consoling, even in the calamities of this life, than the constant recollection of God's presence; in other words

- I. We should often think of God, and keep His presence always before us, because we are human beings.*
- II. We should do so because we are Christians.*

God, who is infinite wisdom, who does nothing without a reason, and has made nothing in vain, cannot provide us with a means unless He wishes at the same time that we should make use of it for the end to which He has created it. Now, when He created us human beings, He gave us understanding, will and memory, that we might remember God Himself, know Him, and with this knowledge love Him with all our hearts. That duty is so proper to man, that when he neglects it he does not lead a human life, nay, he has lost the nature and the being of a reasoning creature: “Fear God and keep His commandments for this is *all man*” (Eccles.12: 13), that is to know, honor, and love God, therein does man chiefly consist, and he who neglects that cannot properly be called a man.

Therefore as human beings we are bound to use our understanding to this end, and to keep before our memory the omnipresent God. When and how often shall we do that? Perhaps once or twice a day, when we are engaged in prayer? If that were the case, the Lord could not expect us to do more than remember Him during those times; if He granted us the use of our eyes only for a quarter of an hour during the day, we could see only for that time. But just as during the whole day our eyes borrow the light in order to see visible, created things

whenever we will, so our understanding and memory, as long as they are in a sound state, receive the inward light necessary to recognize Him as our Creator. Therefore we should always have the omnipotent God before our memory.

What is easier for a man than to think of God? Nay, I might ask is it possible ever to forget Him, unless we deliberately shut Him out of our memory? Is it possible for us to keep our eyes open and not to see during the daytime? For wherever we turn, we find some visible object. Now, everything we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands, and perceive with our senses reminds us of Him and brings Him before our memory. If we look up to heaven, it reminds us of its Creator, and speaks with its lights and stars of the glory of God. If we cast our eyes down to the earth, it reminds us of its Creator, and tells us of the wonderful power of God by the countless variety of creatures that are in it. If we consider ourselves, our souls and bodies call out to us: All that you are and have, you have received from God. In a word, everything in the world is a voice that cries out to us: "Remember thy Creator." How, then, is it possible that we do not often, nay, always, think of Him, whom the whole world, with all that is in it, constantly represents to our memory? Where are we, then, when we allow a long time to go by without thinking of God? Are there perhaps certain times when we cease to be rational creatures, so that we need use our reason for only a few moments during the day, and when that short time is at an end, again relapse into the condition of little children? Sometimes, to quiet a child, a book is given to it; it takes the book and turns over the leaves and plays with it for a whole hour without being a whit wiser than before. What is the cause of that? In one place it finds a long word, in another a pretty red letter, in a third a picture. The latter is what takes the child's fancy; it studies and ponders over it; but it cannot understand the letters. Try to explain them and say: see here my child; that is German, that is French, that is Latin, —the child will hear what you say and will attend to it, but not a word will it understand. Are we not like that, my dear brethren, when we sometimes allow half a day to pass without thinking of God? A large book is always placed before our eyes, the book of Nature that is, heaven and earth: all the creatures therein are so many letters and words that explain to us the wisdom, omnipotence providence, and other perfections of God; so many voices that cry out to us "Remember thy Creator." We hear the voices and attend to them, for they make an impression on our outward senses; but we do not understand the language in which they speak to us of God. Our thoughts, cares, and speculations are concerned with what we see in the creatures themselves with which we have to do; we are satisfied with begging from them some sensual gratification or temporal benefit; but we rarely think of God who is always present and working in those creatures, although we ought to raise our thoughts higher than what we see around us.

Man has no greater benefactor than God. No better or more loving father. No more faithful and affectionate friend. Can he find any one who thinks so constantly of him as God? Whatever we have in and outside ourselves is His free gift. To Him we must attribute it that we are alive and in good health. God bears us in His arms like a loving mother, to protect us from all dangers of soul and body. He is in the earth to support us; in the water to cleanse us; in the air to refresh us; in the fire to warm us; in the sun to enlighten us; in our food and drink to nourish us; in our clothing to cover us. Thus the great God is always occupied with us, although He is not in the least want of us, and would be just as happy as He now is if we never existed. Nay, through all eternity He never turned His thoughts away from us for a moment, and attended to us as if He had nothing else to do. Just as not a single moment passes in which we do not enjoy the fruits of the divine liberality, so also we should not allow a single moment to pass in which we do not keep the thought of God fresh before our minds.

II. A Christian is more in the sight of God than a mere human being endowed only with natural gifts; for the Christian is raised above His nature by the grace he receives in Baptism, and therefore is bound to perform all His actions, not only in a rational manner according to the natural light of reason, but also in a supernatural manner according to grace, with a supernatural spirit, for a supernatural end, that is, for God. It is an undoubted fact, too, that since the Passion and Death of Christ, after having received the grace of God, after having solemnly sworn fealty to Christ in Baptism, the Christian is bound to follow Christ as his model in all things and to strive for far higher perfection than a man in former times under the law of nature, or even under the written law of the Jews, was bound to do. The Jew under the Law of Moses was, so to speak, nothing better than the slave and bondsman of the Almighty; the Christian is the dear friend and child of God. The Jewish law was kept in the spirit of fear and trembling; the Christian law is a sweet yoke and a light burden that is to be borne in

the spirit of love and child-like confidence. The Jewish law was announced by mere men; the Christian law is published by God Himself. The sacrifices of the Jews were a mere imperfect shadow and figure of that most holy sacrifice in which we offer our God Himself on the altar. The sacraments of the Jews were a mere imperfect shadow and figure of our holy Sacraments, by which we share in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. Now, if even the Jews under the Old Law were most diligent in keeping God before their eyes and in walking constantly in His presence; If their Prophets by the command of God often exhorted them thereto; if God Himself commanded them to that end; nay, if even under the law of nature, which was far more imperfect than the Jewish law, that practice was common how can we believe that we are dispensed from observing it? Has Jesus Christ perhaps left this holy and useful practice out of His most perfect law of love, just as He has abolished so many ceremonies and customs of the Old Law? Hear what He Himself says in the Gospel, and then you will see that He has prescribed this practice in a still more perfect manner: "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times" (Saint Luke 21:36). When? In the morning, when you get up? In the evening, when you are retiring to rest? In the church, when you are hearing Mass? Before and after meals? No; "at all times;" without ceasing, as long as you are awake. "We ought always to pray and not to faint" (Saint Luke 18:1). But how can we do that? Must we spend the whole day in the church on our knees? If so, things will fare badly in our households. Must we always have the prayer book or the rosary beads in our hands when we are at home? If so, what is to become of the work? How are tradesmen to earn their daily bread? Must we always keep our lips moving in prayer to God? But how could we eat and drink then, or carry on conversation? No, such is not the case. What is prayer? An elevation of the mind and thoughts to God. But must we, then, always actually think of God, and never let the thought of Him out of our memories? Neither is that required.

The meaning is that we should think of God as often at least as our business permits; that we must frequently, in the midst of our business, raise our minds to Him and offer up our actions to His honor. If we neglect this we do not live as honorable men, much less as true Christians.

Judge from this now yourself, whoever you be, who at most are satisfied with raising your thoughts to God for a moment in the morning, and making in a careless manner the good intention, if you have even that much good sense, thus paying the Lord for the whole day, while you bury yourself so deep in your cares, business, and troubles that God has hardly a thought from you, until, wearied with worldly affairs, you are about to retire to rest; judge I say, what sort of a life you are leading, whether your actions are according to the instructions of Jesus Christ and are directed to imitating Him and to the attainment of your last end ; nay, whether they are consistent with human reason. Judge whether you know and are grateful to that sovereign Benefactor, who is busy with you the whole day, and who has to preserve you in life every moment by His help and cooperation. Judge whether you love God as you ought with your whole heart, since you exclude Him from your thoughts for such a long time.

Henceforth God should be the sole object of our thoughts. When we awake in the morning, our first thought shall be for God and we should say: Behold me, O my Creator, ready to do thy holy will today. When dressing, let us bless God, and humbly beg of Him to clothe our souls with the nuptial robe of charity, and to keep us in His grace to the end. Never let us begin anything without directing all our actions to Him by a supernatural intention. No work, nor business, nor labor should we perform of which He is not the beginning, the middle, and the end in our thoughts. If things go well with us we should not forget our Benefactor, but say; "thanks be to God!" If trouble comes upon us, we should turn to Him, and resigning our will into His hands, say with our Lord: Yea, Father, thy will be done. In the evening God should be the last in our thoughts before we go to sleep, after having thanked Him for all His benefits. Thus we should spend the whole day, nay, our whole life, in His presence and friendship, and make even now a beginning of that happy eternity in which we desire and hope to see and love Him our Supreme Good, forever and ever. Amen.

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