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JMJ

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 +++

*VOL. I = THE BAD CHRISTIAN*

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Punishment of Ingratitude

*"I know mine."* St. John 10:14.

Happy the souls whom the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, will recognize as his on the last day and who, being placed on the right hand of the Judge, shall hear the joyful invitation: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you" (St. Matthew 25:34). Woe to the great number who will not be recognized by Christ on that day! But why? Does he not know each and everyone? Yes, but he does not know all as his own. There are many to whom he has already said what he will repeat to them on the judgment day, "I know you not," and they are those who, during life, have not wished to know God or to honor him, but who preferred to drive him away from them by their wickedness. Amongst the number of these are especially the ungrateful, who are like the ten lepers who were cleansed, and of whom only one returned to give thanks to our Lord: "Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine?" (St. Luke 17:17.) Such was the question our Lord asked, as if he did not know where they were; for he looks on the ungrateful as if they were unknown to him. How ungrateful most men are to their good God, especially those who have received most benefits from him. But will the God of justice never be tired of our ingratitude, so that he will leave it unpunished until the last day? Is it not punishment enough not to be recognized by Christ? If the thought of that punishment does not affect you, you must know that ingratitude is a vice so hateful to God that he, who is otherwise so merciful, is forced to punish it most severely even in this life. Hence

*How and in what manner does the Almighty punish the ungrateful even in this life?*

No upright man upbraids another with the benefits he confers on him. He who acts thus is an intolerable boaster, and makes even his benefits disagreeable to others. He who has received a kindness must certainly be grateful for it, remember it and praise it; but not so he who confers it. Nay, a really good-hearted man tries to make the benefits he confers greater by never speaking of them, and by concealing as far as possible his own part in bestowing them. Such was the conduct of Booz with regard to poor Ruth. She was compelled by want to glean corn in the field; Booz told his reapers not to interfere with her. The best kind of alms are those which are received by the worthy poor without their knowing where they come from, and therefore Christ says: "When thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee" (St. Matthew 6:2-4).

But why do I say this, when my intention was to speak of the punishment of ingratitude? To show that it is the ungrateful alone who compel God to put them to shame by upbraiding them with benefits he so liberally

bestows on them, making them see the deformity of their ingratitude, and showing them the justice of the punishment he inflicts on this vice. Thus he said in his anger to the Israelites: "I made you go out of Egypt, I and have brought you into the land for which I swore to your fathers; and I promised that I would not make void my covenant with you forever... and you would not hear my voice; why have you done this?" (Judges 2:1, 2.) When king David had committed adultery and murder, God sent Nathan to reproach him: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee from the hand of Saul, and gave thee thy master's house. Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord to do evil in my sight?" (2 Kings 12:7-9.)

What an intolerable torment it will be on the last day for the wicked, when in the presence of the whole world the Lord will remind them of all the benefits he bestowed on them, and, to their public shame and confusion, will reproach them for their ingratitude! See, he will say, I have created you out of nothing; I have redeemed you from eternal death by dying on the Cross for you; I have brought you, in preference to many thousand others, to the one true faith; I have enriched you with many gifts of soul and body, and with temporal blessings; I have so often enlightened you by means of my inspirations, and by sermons also, if you had gone to hear them; I have so often overlooked your faults and borne patiently with them, although I could have condemned you to hell for one mortal sin. And yet you have continued to despise me and my law!

Besides this severe reproach, which God often causes the ungrateful to feel in their consciences during life, he punishes them also by withdrawing his benefits from them; for, just as he who is grateful merits a continuance of the benefits hitherto bestowed on him, so the ungrateful man deserves to be deprived of those benefits. Such was the punishment inflicted on the ungrateful Israelites. Such was the punishment of the philosophers of old, of whom St. Paul writes to the Romans that God bestowed on them greater wisdom and understanding than on other men, so that they knew their Creator and penetrated the secrets of nature; "Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God hath manifested it unto them. When they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks," for the wisdom they received from him, and therefore they "became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 19:21), as a chastisement for their ingratitude: "For, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 19:22).

2. What punishment has God in store for the ungrateful? He will deprive them of all the blessings he has hitherto conferred on them. He will take from them by death their son, their daughter, their dearest and only child; or else the child who is now the greatest joy of its parents will afterwards be their greatest trouble and torment, because they have trained him up in worldly vanity. He will punish those disobedient children by putting an end to their prosperity; he will deprive them of their father or mother by a premature death, so that, through their inexperience, they will have trouble enough to provide themselves with their daily bread: He will put an end to the joy of that vain woman by depriving her of her husband, or he will punish that man by taking away his wife, so that the happiness they find in the married life will be destroyed. He will make the joy of that strong and healthy man to cease, and send him a long and wasting illness that will make him weary of life. That curious, inquisitive man shall become weak in his understanding, confused in his imagination, and shall pine away in uneasiness and melancholy. He will soon put a stop to the pride and conceit of that wealthy man, and reduce him to poverty.

3. The third chastisement of ingratitude consists in the withdrawal of the blessings that God was prepared to bestow on him had he proved himself grateful for those he had already received, for he is not worthy of future benefits who has not been grateful for those that have been conferred on him in the past. Suppose that a man has made his will in favor of another but he finds that this other is not at all grateful to him; for the favor he intends to confer on him; will he not at once think that his kindness is ill-bestowed, and make another will? I meant well toward him, he will say, but since he shows such ingratitude to me, he shall have nothing from me. In the same way God told the prophet Samuel to announce to Saul, after the latter had disobeyed his command by beginning the sacrifice: "Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the commandments of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee. And if thou hadst not done thus, the Lord would now have established thy kingdom over Israel forever" (I Kings 13:13). But since thou hast been so ungrateful, he has cast thee away from his sight, and will take thy kingdom from thee: "Thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought him a man according to his own heart; and him hath the Lord commanded to be prince over his people, because thou hast not observed that which the Lord commanded" (I Kings 13:14).

4. The fourth and last punishment of ingratitude, as far as temporal things are concerned, is a premature death, by which God takes the ungrateful man out of the world. Many are of the same opinion as the rich man in the Gospel, who, considering the abundance of his riches, said to himself: "What shall I do, because I have no room where to lay up together my fruits? This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and will build greater... And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer" (St. Luke 12:17-19); enjoy yourself, sleep, play and spend your time in amusements and sensual pleasures. But, unhappy wretches, if you continue in your ingratitude, the day, the hour will come, and perhaps soon, when the unexpected then and sorrowful news will be announced to you, as it was to that rich man: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee," although you think you have nothing to do but to enjoy yourself, "and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (St. Luke 12:22.)

When describing the creation, Moses mentions in order all the creatures that God made by a single word, with the sole exception of fire, of which he says nothing. Did he, perhaps, forget it? By no means. Perhaps God did not create fire? Is fire, then, such a worthless thing that it does not deserve special mention? On the contrary it is the noblest, most subtle and most powerful of all the elements. Why, then, is there no mention made of it? Because fire is by nature fruitless and ungrateful. God created the heavens with their twinkling stars, and they at once commenced to praise their Creator: "The heavens shew forth the glory of God" (Ps. 18:1). He created the earth, and it brings forth countless fruits; the water, and it feeds and nourishes the fishes; the air, and it serves as a habitation for the birds. God created fire also; but what fruit does it bring forth? Not one. Everything that is thrown into it is at once devoured; fuel is the nourishment and support of fire, and the fire destroys its own support. Thus it is a perfect symbol of an ungrateful man, who is supported by the blessings that God bestows on him, but devours them all without producing the least fruit or making the least return for them.

We hear people say sometimes, when a young man dies suddenly or prematurely: What a pity he died so young! How clever and learned he was; what nice manners he had! He would have been a fine man had he lived, and he could have done a great deal of good. Is it not a pity that such rare gifts and talents should be buried so soon? That is true enough; all those talents and endowments were gifts of the divine liberality; but do you know what use that young man made of them? No; that we cannot find out. God could tell us, and if he were pleased to do so, we should perhaps discover that that young man was guilty of the greatest ingratitude toward God, that he misused the talents bestowed on him to indulge in pride, impurity and other vices, and thus to treat his good God with the greatest contempt; so that the divine justice was forced to cry out in anger: Away with that wretch! he is not worthy to be numbered any longer amongst living creatures; his name must be blotted out; go, oh, Death, and hurry him away from the world; he is not worthy to live any longer! Many Christians, after having been protected by God from many misfortunes, preserved in many dangers of life, and richly endowed with temporal goods, still do not hesitate to offend their sovereign Benefactor by sin. And if God in his anger deprives them of the benefits, the protection, or the blessings and prosperity he has hitherto bestowed on them, or if he refuses any longer to regard them with favor, or takes away their health by a tedious illness, or their life by a sudden and premature death, what else can they think or say but that it serves them quite right; that they are justly deprived of their prosperity, their health, their life? For they are not worthy of anything better, since they have been ungrateful to their sovereign Benefactor. Amen.

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