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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. 4 - THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE

Second Sunday after Easter

Jealousy in the Married State

*"He delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly."* I Peter 2:23.

Christ has suffered for us, leaving an example that you should follow in his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly. How beautiful it would be for us Christians if we all lived together according to the example of our Model, Jesus Christ! What a happy thing, especially for a married couple, if one knew how to give way to the other! Certainly, peace and union would then be much better preserved. There is yet another thing that causes much trouble and uneasiness. And what is that? Where the peace and quiet of the married life are not disturbed by quarrelling and contention, they often are by rash judgments and secret injurious thoughts on one side or the other; and that occurs when one suspects the other of being unfaithful; therein consists the jealousy that is often found amongst married people. I will speak on jealousy in the married state, and explain,

*I. What jealousy is, and what great mischief it works in the married state;*

*II. How married people are to guard against it, and how one is to act if the other is infected with it.*

I. As worms and moths grow in clothes and eat them away, little by little, so jealousy grows out of love and, like a gnawing worm, eats it away and changes it into hatred. Jealousy is a mental disease which comes from the fear that we have of another getting possession of something that we love, and wish to keep for ourselves: the least interference with the object of our affection disturbs and disquiets the heart and mind exceedingly. Nothing is more common in the world, among all states and conditions, than this malady. The general loves honor and reputation for bravery and heroic actions; a young officer is fortunate enough to vanquish the foe frequently, and thereby makes a name for himself, and the general at once grows jealous of the young man, and cannot bear him, although the latter has conquered the enemies of his country. The praise that the officer gets grates on the ears of the other, who thinks that his own fame and reputation will suffer thereby. Thus Saul, who formerly loved David, hated him at last so much that he tried to take his life, and the sole cause of his hatred was the jealousy he felt when he heard the people singing in David's praise: "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Kings 18:7). A lawyer is jealous of another who gets more cases than he does; a doctor is jealous of another who is more successful in curing disease; a merchant is jealous when he sees another making more profit; a tradesman is jealous of another who possesses more skill in his handicraft. Jealousy is found amongst musicians, painters, and sculptors, on account of their art; amongst women, on account of greater magnificence in dress; in private houses, among children, if one of them is caressed more by his parents than the other.

But there is no state in which this fell disease is easier introduced, and developed more quickly into a mortal illness, than in the married state; and that is because the husband and wife, or either of them, who become infected with that malady, have a twofold, instead of a single love, and that love is a very earnest one indeed. The husband, for instance (and the same may be said of the wife), loves himself and his own happiness best; and next to himself he loves his wife as one who belongs to him alone; hence comes his ardent desire to be alone loved by her, and a great fear and anxiety lest she should share her heart with others, or conceive an aversion for him. If he sees only the least sign of that, he suspects her of being unfaithful, and is much grieved and distressed thereat; this fear, suspicion, and distress are a real mental disease, and constitute what is called jealousy. How much mischief this malady causes!

It grievously torments the heart that suffers from it. No heavier cross can be found in the married life. Imagine a grisly monster with a hundred eyes and ears always open, so as to see and hear everything, and whatever he sees and hears tortures him most cruelly. Imagine that you see a lot of gloomy, melancholy thoughts and suspicions going in and out of the mind, day and night, without ceasing, like ants in their hill, or wasps in their nest. That is a picture of the heart and mind of a jealous husband. He believes that all his suspicions of his wife are true; that all he dreads is actually occurring. He watches her every step and movement; he suspects all that she says or does in presence of others. Even if she goes to church or says her prayers, he puts a wrong construction on it, and if he cannot detect any outward proof of unfaithfulness, his suspicions and fears sink all the deeper into his mind, and cause him unspeakable torture. But there is no use in describing this any further; they who suffer from it know by experience what a torment it is. Ah, yes! Temporal losses, misfortunes, poverty, sterility, trouble with children, sickness, illness, and death of children, an ill-tempered husband, an obstinate wife, worthless servants, and other trials of that sort which afflict the married state—all these things are easy to bear in comparison with that heart-gnawing disease, jealousy. No matter how courageous and brave a man may be in bearing all changes of fortune, if he once begins to suspect his wife of being unfaithful, his courage is gone from him. No matter how pious and good a wife may be, and how resigned in bearing crosses and trials, if she grows jealous of her husband, her patience and meekness are turned into fury and wrath. “A jealous woman is the grief and mourning of the heart. With a jealous woman is a scourge of the tongue which communicateth with all” (Ecclus. 26:8,9). The Spouse of the Canticles likens this feeling to the pains of hell: “Jealousy is hard as hell” (Cant. 8:6).

Hence, amongst other evils, arise discord, strife, and, in place of ardent love, an implacable hatred between the married pair, along with many sins and vices. Jealousy causes disunion between the married people. For how can the husband look kindly on her whose love and fidelity he doubts? And how can the wife love him who is so suspicious and has such a bad opinion of her, that he watches her every movement. She will certainly begin to distrust her husband before long, and to believe that he is subject to the faults he suspects her of. Thus, although she may have been innocent, honorable, and faithful before, she will now venture on things that she would not have dreamt of doing at first. It is against this that Sacred Scripture warns all husbands: “Be not jealous over the wife of thy bosom, lest she show in thy regard the malice of a wicked lesson” (Ecclus. 9:1), that is, that she may not really become what she sees you suspect her of being.

The world has had terrible experience of the effects of this passion. There have been women whom jealousy worked up to such a pitch of fury that, in order to be revenged on their husbands for suspecting them of unfaithfulness, they tore their own children to pieces before their husbands’ eyes and cast them at their feet. There have been women who, through jealousy of their husbands, cooked their children and served them up at table, nor did they say a word of what they had done until their husbands had unsuspectingly eaten the horrid repast. Almost all separations of married people have their origin in jealousy.

Unhappy, indeed, is the married life when this fury invades it! And how wicked are you, miserable scandal-mongers, agents of the devil, who delight in telling what you have seen or heard to husband or wife, so as to awaken the suspicions of either and kindle the flame of jealousy between them, a flame which can hardly ever be extinguished afterwards! Christian married people, do all you can to guard against these wicked and mischievous tale-bearers! Love each other constantly, with a true Christian love, which never suspects evil of the beloved one, as St. Paul says: Love suspects no evil (I Cor. 13:5). But how are you to act so that this vice may not find place in your hearts? That I will tell you briefly.

The wife must avoid suspicious company, so as to give no cause for jealousy to her husband. Since either of the married people can give the other occasion for jealousy and suspicions, so both are bound under pain of sin to avoid everything that could give reasonable cause for uneasiness. You must not pour oil on the fire, or it will blaze up more furiously; if a cloud comes up before the sun, it intercepts his rays, and the earth is in darkness. Therefore, the wife must be particularly cautious in this respect, if she sees her husband inclined to be very sensitive, and must carefully avoid all dangerous and suspicious company. They also frequently give cause for uneasiness by being too vain and frivolous in dress, especially when they appear so in company. For young unmarried women to act thus, and dress beyond their means and station, is certainly very wrong and opposed to the humility of the Gospel, no matter what any one says to the contrary; yet there may be a certain excuse for them, inasmuch as they are looking for some one whom they would be willing to please. Merchants are accustomed to polish up their goods and make them look well, so as to be rid of them all the sooner. But for a married woman, who has already entered on a state of life in which she should seek to please her husband and no other, to give way to vanity in dress, and that not at home, either, where her husband alone could see her, but in company and amongst strangers, such conduct must certainly appear very suspicious to a respectable and honorable man.

Above all, wives should have piety and fear of the Lord, and give their husbands an example therein. The pious are never thought ill of, while, on the contrary, they who are cold in the divine service, worldly in their lives, careless in their devotions, neglectful of confession and holy Communion, and remiss in hearing sermons, easily give reason to think that, as they do not serve the Lord their God faithfully, so also they are wanting in fidelity to their husbands. Finally, they must always be friendly and loving toward their husbands, so as to give a proof of the love and affection they have for them. If a wife is always gloomy, unfriendly and distant with her husband, how can he think anything good of her? At least he must doubt the sincerity of her love for him, so that if he loves her as he ought, he will be filled with distressing and anxious thoughts. Sometimes wives complain that their husbands are jealous; that they are too sensitive; that they are always on the watch; that they keep them shut up like nuns in the house; that they never allow them any amusement or society unless in their presence. But we might easily ask those who make that complaint: and how do you behave? Perhaps your conduct is such that your husbands have good reason to mistrust you. Examine yourselves and see whether you have not erred in some of the particulars mentioned already. If that is the case, it is no wonder, indeed, that your husbands are jealous! They would act stupidly and unreasonably otherwise.

If the wife is bound in conscience to avoid and shun everything that could give her husband reasonable cause for jealousy, so also is the husband equally bound to refrain from everything that might give just grounds of suspicion to his wife; and his obligation is even stronger, because, generally speaking, her love is much more sensitive and more exposed to the dangers of suspicious fears and jealousy. When a wife is accused of being unfaithful to her husband, the judge first tries to find out what sort of a life her husband leads: "For it seems to be very unjust that a man should require in his wife a purity which he himself does not observe" (Cant. 2:2). The same thing may be said here. It is useless and unjust for a man to keep his wife locked up at home, while he himself goes about as he pleases, day and night, without having any business to transact that would necessitate his absence from home. It is useless for him to expect her to be humble, modest, and reserved in company, and not to be too friendly with persons of the other sex, while he acts in the opposite way and allows himself the greatest freedom in his conduct and conversation with other women. And that is, unfortunately, only too often the case, and poor wives must sit down quietly and look on, their cheeks burning with shame! It is useless and unjust for him to forbid her all conversation with strangers, unless in his presence, while he is altogether too free in his manner and conversation, even with his own female servants, although his wife is looking on and must feel troubled and distressed. It is useless and unjust for him to expect her to meet him always with a smiling countenance, while he is stern, gloomy, and harsh in his manner to her. To no purpose does he require her to be pious and devout, in order that she may give no cause for suspicion, if he himself leads a loose, unchristian, and scandalous life, and thereby gives her good reason to doubt his fidelity. No; as far as this matter is concerned, the wife has just as much right as the husband. They must both be, therefore, very careful to avoid everything that is likely to cause suspicion.

It often happens that the wife or the husband gives way to jealousy without any reasonable cause, and shows

it by an anxious fear. What is to be done, then, so as to preserve peace and unity? Both must have a sincere compassion for each other, and think that the fear and anxiety are not the result of malice or treachery, but, as is really the case, of a too ardent love that one has for the other. The husband has great reason to rejoice that his wife esteems him so highly that she desires to possess his whole heart, and is troubled at the bare thought of a stranger having any share in it; and similarly the wife with regard to the husband. They must rejoice, too, at the preservation of conjugal chastity, of which jealousy is an almost certain sign; for if the wife, for instance, were unfaithful, she would not be much distressed if her husband acted coldly toward her. So, also, the husband would not trouble himself much about his wife if he were involved in an impure attachment.

Finally, in order to avoid this dangerous and loathsome disease, remember the warning of our Lord: "Judge not." Think no evil of each other. We must look upon our neighbor as good and pious, until we know for certain that he is wicked. Such is the Christian law and the true foundation of Christian charity. Therefore, put away all fears and suspicions, and treat them as mere bugbears of the imagination, as in truth they generally are. Put the best meaning on everything that you hear of, see, and remark in each other, as every Christian is obliged to do with regard to his neighbor's actions. If you are sometimes troubled with suspicions of your husband or wife, remember the words of Christ to the Pharisees: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" Do not listen to scandal-mongers, who blow sometimes hot, sometimes cold from the same mouth, when, under the appearance of intimacy or friendship, they tell one of you something suspicious they have seen or remarked in the other. Never be too curious in inquiring into each other's conduct; for he who asks many questions gets many different and disagreeable answers. He who is too anxious to know everything will find out a great deal that he would rather not know, and will cause himself much trouble and uneasiness.

St. Jerome says to a jealous husband (and wives may make a similar application of his words): "What is the good of the jealous care with which you look after your wife?" What is the use of it? If she is good and pure, your care is not necessary; if she is not, it will not cause her to amend. Why do you then torture yourself? Balaam taught Josaphat a similar lesson by means of the following fable: A man once caught a nightingale and was about to twist its neck. Oh, cried the bird, spare my life, and in gratitude I will give you a piece of advice that will often help you during your life. Tell it to me, said the man, and I will give you your liberty. Always be careful of three things: never try to catch a thing that will not let itself be caught; never believe a thing that is not probable; never bewail a lost good which you can never recover. The bird was then set free, but no sooner had it recovered its liberty than it perched upon a tree, and spoke thus to the man: Oh, you poor simpleton, what have you done? What a great fortune you have lost; for if you had killed and cut me open, you would have been a rich man for the rest of your life, since I have a pearl as big as the egg of an ostrich in my body. Alas, said the man, would that I had known that at first! Come with me to my house; I will give you a hearty welcome, and the best of food. The bird then laughed at him and said: What a stupid man you are to forget my advice so soon! Is it likely that I could have such a large pearl in my small body? Why do you believe it, then? Do you think I would allow you to catch me a second time? Why do you try to do so? You have lost me and cannot have me again; why do you bewail a loss for which there is no help?

I conclude with the same exhortation to you, married Christians, and I say: Is your husband, oh, wife, or your wife, oh, husband, true to you in conjugal love? Then never believe nor fear that this fidelity will be shaken, for it is not likely that such will ever be the case. Is either of you too incautious and free in conduct? Then the other must not be too anxious and jealous, for such care would be fruitless and profit nothing. Are you certain that you have been betrayed? Then do not trouble nor distress yourself too much about it, but commend yourself to God; for what is done cannot be undone by any amount of grief or sorrow. Love each other with firm confidence; select as your patrons that most holy married pair, Mary and Joseph. Although the latter was troubled about his spouse, yet, according to the holy fathers, he never gave way to an evil thought about her, but submitted his reason to a mystery that he could not understand. That he had the idea of sending her away privately arose from the fact that he was a just man, and therefore he wished to obey the law. Love your God constantly, and serve him truly, and there will be no jealousy between you, and you will preserve peace, union, quiet, and heartfelt love, until you both see each other in the city of heavenly peace. Amen.

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