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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*

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Consolation in Adversity

*“Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” John 16:20.*

“You shall lament and weep; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy,” therefore be not disturbed, nor frightened at the thought of the sorrow. Hear this, pious Christians, who now live in trials and adversity, resigned to the will of God! Be comforted! Your sorrow shall be turned into joy! Hear this, pious Christians, who now mortify your senses by voluntary penances and austerities only continue as you have begun; not only shall your sorrow be turned into the eternal joys of the next life, but also in this life you shall have joy in return for your sorrow, for

I. Patience in adversity, penance, and mortification of the senses, bring to the servant of God in this life a supernatural joy, and

II. A natural joy.

The Apostles teach that we can have joy and consolation in trials and mortification. St. James says: “My brethren, count it all joy,” yes, nothing else but joy; What? When everything goes according to your natural wishes and inclinations? No; but “when you shall fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2). When you are sunk in a sea of troubles, and all sorts of trials to sustain, then your joy should be at its height. St. Peter gives us a similar lesson: “If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice” (1. Pet. 4:13). “I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses” (2. Cor. 12:10). “Who now rejoice in my sufferings” (1. Coloss 1:24). Nay, he even ventures to say: “I am filled with comfort; I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation” (2. Cor. 7:4). Paul was as joyful in his sufferings as if he was in a paradise of delights and although he had the great happiness of being rapt up to the third heaven, and seeing the bliss of the elect, yet he never rejoiced at that, but only at trials he had to bear, on which he congratulated himself.

Now you will understand how the martyrs of Christ were able to laugh and sing so joyfully in the midst of the most cruel torments; how so many other Saints, and even tender women, longed so earnestly for the cross, and were not satisfied till it was given them; nay, if the cross laid upon them seemed insufficient, they tortured themselves with iron chains, hair-shirts, rods, and scourges, nor would they have changed those penances for any worldly delights. Ask a St. Teresa, a St. Catharine of Sienna, a St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, if she is tired of her cross, and you will hear how Teresa preferred to die rather than to be without suffering. Let me, O Lord, she used to pray, either suffer or die. You will see Catharine holding the crown of thorns with both hands, and

refusing to change it for any earthly crown. You will hear Magdalene expressing the wish to live longer, solely for the purpose of being able to bear the cross longer, to suffer, not to die. "To him that overcometh," to him that conquers himself, "I will give the hidden manna. . . which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it" (Rom. 8:18).

Can there be a greater consolation for a reasoning being than that which he finds in God, his Creator? Everything seeks and finds its rest and pleasure in that to which it has a natural inclination. This we see even in senseless and lifeless things. Throw a ball into the air, and as soon as the force that impelled it is exhausted, it sinks back again, and does not find rest until it is on its proper element, the earth; and if you were to dig away the ground from under it, it would follow you until it reached the centre. The magnet has such an attraction towards the north, that if you rub a needle on it, it will constantly turn to the north also. Turn it round and round as you will, now in this way, now in that, it will not rest and will continue to agitate itself as if it had life, until it again looks towards the north, its centre and point of rest; then and then only it remains quite still and immovable. Now, there is not amongst all created things a more powerful impulse and inclination than that which urges the heart of men to God, in order to be united with him and to rejoice in him: "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for thyself, and our heart is uneasy until it rests in Thee!"

Without God there is no true joy. Seek out, O sensual, luxurious man, whatever there is on earth to delight your eyes, to charm your ears, to tickle your palate, to gratify your senses, to delight your flesh; and having found it, pile it all up in a heap, and then tell me honestly whether you are truly contented and satisfied? You must acknowledge that you have grasped at nothing but empty air and deceitful vanity, as the prophet says: "O ye sons of men, why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" You will be just as uneasy as before, and will have to seek after some new pleasure. Nor is that any wonder, for amongst all things that the world can offer you there is nothing for which you are created. One thing is still wanting to you. From this it is clear that man can find no greater joy, no more perfect consolation than in and with his God. That only is solid joy which comes from the Creator and not from the creature.

And such is still the experience of those who for God's sake mortify themselves, and say with determined will: Lord, thy will be done! I accept this from thy divine hand; I will bear it and be satisfied with it, because it is so pleasing to thee. I am sure that many are a thousand times more cheerful in their poverty than the rich are in possession of their wealth and treasures; many who are a thousand times more satisfied in their mean and lowly condition than great lords are in their high dignities; many who have incomparable more pleasure in the observance of chastity, and in bodily austerities, than others find in sensual enjoyments; many who thank God for having deprived them of earthly joys, and even envy others who have more to suffer than they have. Nor can it be otherwise. The words of God cannot deceive; and he has expressly promised that they who for his sake renounce temporal consolations shall receive a hundred-fold more than they have given up. It must be so, for that only is solid joy which comes from the Creator, and not from the creature; which is not begged of the outward senses, but sought in the centre and resting-place of our hearts. What I have said up to this has been addressed only to those who know by experience what it is to rejoice in God, and to have heavenly consolation. To the sensual children of the world such things are but riddles, and they are as little capable of forming an opinion of supernatural joy as a blind man is of pronouncing on the merits of a fine picture of which he cannot make the least image in his mind. Now I will show you that patience in adversity practiced for the love of God is the cause of joy to us in this life, even as far as natural joy is concerned.

II. In what does a joyful, happy life consist? Is it not in the inward peace, joy, and contentment of mind? I may give my outward senses all the delights they are capable of enjoying; but how will that help me to a happy life, if I am at war with myself inwardly, if my mind is disturbed and disquieted? If, on the other hand, my body is filled with pains and aches, or has to contend with hard work and discomfort, what harm will that do me, or, how can it trouble me, if I suffer willingly, and am contented and peaceful in the midst of my trials? Let us see whether this is in practice. The voluptuary is attacked, for instance, by a fever, a catarrh, a toothache, or a headache. Oh, what a state he gets into! How he murmurs and complains, and weeps and sighs, and what a commotion he causes in the house, as if the last day were at hand! Another takes no notice of such a little thing; he bears it with patience, and remains calm and satisfied. Lord, he says, may thy holy will be done! Since we have to deal with people, we are often exposed to a word of contradiction now and then, or to some disagreeable

act on the part of another. Occasionally people indulge in vituperation and contumelious language; the servants, the children, the husband or wife do not always act as they ought. The one who is not master of his passions, and knows not how to mortify himself, gives way to anger and ill-temper under such circumstances; he actually trembles with passion and his heart is full of bitterness. Thus his inward peace is disturbed; his mind is troubled. The other is master of himself at once; he keeps quiet as if nothing had happened; he rejoices at having an opportunity of overcoming himself; he preserves his peace. One is addicted to the pleasures of the table, and is intemperate; hence he has to suffer headaches, sickness, evil humors in the blood; he shortens his life, and must expect to die before his time. Another, through mortification, keeps within the bounds of moderation, and the little food and drink he takes, tastes all the sweeter to him; he has a good appetite, after as well as before meals; he is always healthy, cheerful, and in good humor. Since a luxurious life necessarily gives rise to a carnal one, the one seeks occasions to gratify his impure passions; he thinks he has found joy therein; but what bitter pills he has to swallow before, during, and after those criminal actions! His sleep is often disturbed; he has no appetite for his food; his sense of shame, his good name, his conscience, all must be sacrificed for the sake of his unruly passions. But he cares little for that; the unclean spirit has blinded his eyes, closed his ears, bewitched his heart, dulled his senses, driven away shame, darkened his understanding. Thus an uneasy conscience and the fire of hell itself are all that he has gained by his sensual indulgence, and yet he is not satiated with the sinful pleasure he enjoys. How can such a man have peace of mind! Does not the other feel far happier in the practice of chastity and mortification? And the same may be said of all other inordinate gratifications. See now from what uneasiness, annoyance, and discomfort he is free who seems to torment himself by voluntary mortification. He leads a pleasant, peaceful life on earth, even while he deprives himself of earthly pleasures; he is at peace with himself, with his fellowmen, and with his conscience, and lastly with the God whom he loves above all things.

Therefore, they deceive themselves who think that priests are too severe when they exhort people from the pulpit to practice mortification and to shun worldly pleasures and amusements, and look on them as enemies to all enjoyment. No, Christians, such is far from being the case! Never do we seek and desire to procure for you true enjoyment and pleasure more than when we exhort you to mortify your senses and evil desires, which, according to the law of faith, of reason, and of experience itself, are the only cause of all our unhappiness when we give them loose rein. Woefully deceived, then, are they who consider that the vain children of the world, who indulge their sensuality, are happy: No, Christians; that cannot be! We see the roses outwardly, but the sharp thorns are hidden from us. "They spend their days in wealth" (Job 21:13), says Job of such people; and it is true! They spend their time in eating, drinking, sleeping, amusing themselves and indulging in sensual pleasures; they have worldly goods in abundance, they gratify their senses, they deny themselves no worldly pleasure; but it is not true that their days are days of happiness. They call out peace! Peace! But all their calling cannot give them real peace. There is no peace for the world. Worst of all, then, is the error of those who imagine that the way of the cross and penance, the service of God, is so hard and bitter that it is intolerable. No, Christians, wrong again! The burden is light, the yoke is sweet, the cross is anointed, it is sweet suffering, a joyful sadness.

Only make trial of it, if you do not believe what I say; renounce the deceitful joys of the world; deny yourselves, as Christ wishes us to do. "Mortify therefore your members, mortify your outward senses, your inward desires, and you shall see the difference between the just and the wicked; and between him that serves God, and him that serves him not" (Mal. 3:18). You will see what a great difference there is between the zealous, true, pious Christian and the tepid man who leads a careless life, and has only the name of a Christian. You will experience the great difference between the vain, transitory and merely apparent pleasure that is to be gained by sensual gratification and the true, real peace and enjoyment that comes from mortification. You will agree with St. Augustine, who at first thought it almost an impossibility to give up worldly joys and sensual pleasures; but once he had firmly resolved to serve God faithfully, and had actually commenced to practice mortification, he soon changed his opinion, and cried out in joyful tones: "Oh, how delightful it has become to me all at once to be without vain pleasures! Now I am rejoiced at losing what I formerly feared to lose!"

The crosses, troubles, and difficulties that God sends us, or will send us, we shall accept with joy, and keep in check our outward senses and evil inclinations, mortifying and chastising our flesh. We have sinned; what an immense debt we have thereby incurred with the divine Justice! We can still sin; what powerful means should

we not use to avert such a calamity! Christ our Lord was never without the cross; how can we call ourselves a member of Christ under a thorn-crowned head if we live in pleasures and delights, and still expect eternal joys hereafter? Mortification alone can give us a quiet, peaceful life here below; why, then, should we avoid it, or hesitate to make use of it? And even if we had not all these reasons to urge us to this step, or if they should not be verified in our case; we have at all events the express promise of our Lord: “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

It should, then, suffice for us to know that our short sorrow and suffering shall be turned into an eternal joy in the glorious resurrection. Amen.

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