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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 +++

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Hopeless State of Those Who Boast of their Sins

“And when he is come he will convince the world of sin.” St. John 16:8.

The sin of which the Holy Ghost will convince the world is the want of faith in Jesus Christ, who, in the Gospel of today, expressly says: “Of sin, because they believe not in me.” Yet this conviction will be extended to each and every sin, for all sins are due to a want of lively faith, but especially to those sins which are committed against the Holy Ghost, the chief of which is despair on the part of the sinner. But if there is any despairing sinner in the world, it is certainly he who boasts of his sins. He is the most shameless of all sinners, whether he boasts by word, or by act. He is a hopeless sinner, too, as I shall now prove.

I. He who boasts of his sins is a hopeless sinner, as far as he himself is concerned.

II. A hopeless sinner, as far as God is concerned.

That sick man is in a hopeless state who, laboring under a dangerous malady, refuses to follow the advice of the doctor or of his friends and to take the medicine that might help to cure him, and that because he is firmly persuaded that he is in good health and that there is nothing amiss with him. Nothing short of a miracle can help a man in that state. This is an exact picture of the man who boasts of his sins; he has as many dangerous maladies as he has mortal sins on his conscience; his soul is actually dead, and only awaits the last moment of his life to fall into the everlasting death of hell. For him to have any hope of recovery, of saving his soul by true sorrow and conversion to God, he must heal radically the diseases of his soul by using the medicine appointed for that purpose, and be reconciled to God in the Sacrament of Penance; but that is just where there is no hope for such a sinner. For he cannot do penance and recover the grace of God without acknowledging the wickedness and malice of his sin, and detesting it with all his heart, more than any other evil in the world. It is not enough for him to confess his sins. How many confessions of Christians are but the outward appearance of penance, and mere counterfeits, which add to, instead of taking away, the guilt of sin! That which most frequently interferes with the validity of the Sacrament is the fact that many do not fully acknowledge the malice and deformity of sin, and consequently they do not sincerely repent of and detest it.

The sorrow required for true repentance and conversion is a supernatural act of the will, by which man conceives such a hatred and horror of sin that he execrates and condemns it more than any other evil, more even than the eternal flames of hell, because it offends God, who is infinitely great, infinitely just, and deserving of love for his own sake; and he who is not in such disposition has not a sorrow that will avail to obtain

forgiveness for his sins. Now, in the case of those who boast of their sins, where is this horror? “They are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things” (Prov. 2:14). David watered his couch with his tears every night; he ate ashes like bread; he mingled his drink with his weeping, as he himself testifies. The public sinner stands humbly at the door of the temple, striking his breast and not daring to raise his eyes to heaven. Peter used to shed bitter tears during the remainder of his life whenever he was reminded of his denial of Christ by hearing a cock crow. Magdalen retired into a cave in the desert and scourged every day severely her body, that was the occasion of the sins she had formerly committed. But those other sinners rejoice when they have done evil, and boast of having offended God as they would of some heroic action; and by that very boasting they commit another mortal sin. What hope is there of such sinners sincerely repenting and saving their souls? I know that as long as a man lives he can change his perverse will; but there is very little hope of that; the great probability is that he will never repent. And this is the reason: “The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth; but ignominy and reproach follow him” (Pet. 18:3). There is hardly any means by which he can be brought to repentance and amendment. You may give him the most salutary warnings: “he contemneth;” speak to him of the omnipresent, almighty God, whom he has so often offended: “he contemneth;” it is long since the thought of God had any power to move him; show him how he has forfeited the joys of heaven for a worthless thing: he cares nothing for his loss; open hell to him, if possible, and let him behold all the fearful torments that await him in that sea of fire: he has no fear of it. And why? Because “he is come into the depth of sins.” There you have a true sketch of the sinner who boasts of his sins. And certainly he must be sunk deep in depravity and have lost all feeling through a long-continued habit of sin, who is no longer ashamed of his wickedness. For experience teaches, and every one who has offended God by a grievous sin knows well, that the first, second, third, or fourth sin always inspires one with a secret fear and anxiety. And what a combat goes on before consent is given to the first mortal sin! That consent is given after a long struggle, but with fear and trembling; and therefore, as our Lord says, “every one that doth evil hateth the light” (Job 3:20). He who meditates evil shuns the light; he does not wish to be seen; he hides himself in dark corners; he is afraid almost that the very walls of his room will reproach him. And when he has committed the sin, how ashamed he is of himself! How careful he is to prevent others from coming to a knowledge of his guilt! When David committed adultery with Bethsabee, he was filled with anxiety lest his crime should become known, and he had recourse to all sorts of artifices to conceal it, until at last he commanded the husband of Bethsabee, Urias, a brave soldier who had often exposed his life for him, to be placed in front of the army, so that he might be slain by the enemy. This cruel order was carried out; Urias was killed, and David married Bethsabee; and all that he did solely with the view of concealing his crime from the eyes of men.

Even after he has made some progress in vice and committed many grievous sins, it still takes a long time to deaden the worm of conscience so that its gnawings are not felt. He is filled with fear and despondency when he remembers that he is an enemy of God, a child of perdition; there is neither repose nor enjoyment for him even in his sinful pleasures, and it is the greatest torment to him to think of having to declare his sin even to one man in the tribunal of Penance. Even they who have been for some time in the habit of indulging recklessly in sin, and who have as yet no intention of amending, seldom go so far as to wish to be looked on as bad and vicious. The proud man does not like to be thought proud; the avaricious man dreads nothing more than to be called a miser, and tries to palliate his parsimony by saying that it is a necessary economy; anger is called just indignation; hatred, envy and vindictiveness are dignified with the name of lawful resentment; and thus the vices are clad with the appearance of virtue, that they may be concealed from the eyes of the world. It is the lowest degree of wickedness to wish to appear wicked and to put off all appearance of goodness. And here we have the true character of him who boasts of his sins; he has neither fear nor anxiety on account of them; he glories in publishing them; his delight is to be looked on as impious and ungodly; he does not wish to be thought pious. As far as the sinner is concerned, his salvation appears hopeless.

II. The crime of high treason is committed by one who insults his sovereign, and it is punished by the severest kind of death. If that crime is committed in a sudden fit of passion, and secretly, so that no one is aware of it except the culprit and the sovereign to whom the insult is offered, then perhaps the latter, if he is of a merciful and forgiving disposition, may be induced to listen to the humble prayers and apologies of his guilty subject, and to pardon the offence. But if the culprit is so foolhardy as to boast of the insult he offered to his sovereign, and to make it a subject of laughter among his companions, and actually to seek thereby to foment a rebellion

against lawful authority, what would you think of it? Would you say that there is any hope of pardon for such a one?

Sinner, you are guilty of the same crime against the infinite majesty of God when you boast of your sins. You have deliberately deprived yourself of the use of reason by drunkenness, or you have encouraged others to a similar excess; you have vented your wrath on your neighbor, you have had revenge on him who has injured you; you have gratified your impure desires; all these sins are so many insults and acts of contempt toward the infinite majesty of God, that deserve to be punished by hell fire. Another has committed the same sins, but secretly and stealthily, and at first with a feeling of shame and fear at having offended God so grievously, so that he sinned because he was overcome by a violent temptation, and he is very careful to hide his guilt from the knowledge of men. He has sinned grievously, and deserves hell; but we have a patient, long-suffering and merciful God, who is always ready to receive into his favor the sinner who acknowledges his guilt, and returns to him with a contrite heart, and that favor is easily shown to the secret sinner, because the insult he has offered to God is, so to speak, a hidden and private thing; the divine honor is assailed only by and in presence of one individual, accompanied, perhaps, by the parties of his guilt. But the presumptuous man is not satisfied with that; it is not enough for him to despise and insult his Lord and his God; he must make known to others the insult he had offered God, and boast of it to his companions!

Sinner, you wish to gain honor and glory before men, because you have ventured to offend God and to transgress his law without scruple or shame; to protest before the world that you care nothing for God's commandments, and that you disregard alike his promises and his threats; to show others that you still have a secret pleasure and satisfaction in remembering that you have sinned and offended God; to carry sin about in triumph, as it were, by making your honor and glory before the world consist therein; and to encourage others to be just as unscrupulous as yourself in transgressing the divine law. And what else is that but to treat the Almighty with public disrespect, as if he were unworthy of honor or reverence, to defy him, and, as it were, to say to him: what do I care for thee? What else is it but to make one's self a leader of rebels, and to seek to induce others to revolt against God? What else is it but to take away all shame and dishonor from sin, to make it respectable and becoming, and to set it up on a throne, since you make it the subject of mutual rejoicing and congratulations? Therefore salvation seems hopeless as far as God is concerned.

Be careful to avoid that hopeless state of sin; do not allow yourselves to become so shameless and so presumptuous as to make a boast and a source of amusement of your sins! If you hear any one dishonoring God by boasting of his sins, sanctify your hand by giving him a good blow on the blasphemous mouth; but if you have not courage or zeal enough for that, interrupt him at least by a gentle warning, and tell him that it is small honor to him to have offended God; or else show by your silence that you do not approve of such talk. In any case, do not allow yourself to be scandalized by it, nor seem to approve of it by laughing at it; nor must your hatred and detestation of sin be a whit less, although you hear others glorifying in their sins. You must feel sorrow for the insult offered the divine honor; say to yourselves with contrite hearts: Oh, God, be merciful to me and all poor sinners; "From my secret sins cleanse me, oh, Lord; and from those of others spare thy servant" (Ps. 18:13, 14). Amen.

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