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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

Fourth Sunday after Easter

Consolation of Married People in Trouble

"Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart." St. John 16:6.

The disciples of Jesus Christ had good reason for sorrow and trouble when they learned that their beloved Master was about to leave them and go to heaven; and yet, as He declares, it was good for them that He should leave them: "It is expedient to you that I go," so that the disciples had more reason to rejoice. In the same way, many married people trouble themselves without cause, or even when they have cause to rejoice. But there are also many real troubles in the married state, which must be borne with patience. How are married people to console themselves under these, and how are they to make them lighter, will be the subject of the present instruction.

I. Consolation in the trials caused by children.

II. Consolation in the trials caused, even involuntarily, by one of the married couple.

I. Married people have different kinds of troubles to suffer from their children; for the latter may be wicked and unruly, or they may be weakly and delicate; or, through poverty, there may be a lack of means to support them properly. These three kinds of trials are very hard for parents to bear, and, since they give just reason for anxiety, they require great patience.

1. If the children are wicked and unruly, that is a heavy cross indeed! Solomon says: "I hated all my application wherewith I had earnestly labored under the sun." And why so, oh, wisest of kings? "Being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he will be a wise man or a fool" (Eccles. 2:18, 19); that is to say, whether he will be pious or wicked. Certainly, it was good reason for anxiety not to know how his son would act after his death. How would it have been with him if he had seen (as was really the case) the wicked son Roboam bringing his happy kingdom to destruction? In truth, many parents have been grieved to death by the conduct of their children. The emperor Severus died through grief at the dissensions of his sons, and the trouble they caused him. Marcus Aurelius Antonius starved himself to death because he saw that his son Commodus was a cruel and savage man. And yet, what wonder is it that Solomon, who was unfaithful to God, and the two last named, who were impious persecutors of the Christians, should have wicked and impious children? As the tree, so the fruit. And, therefore, Christian parents who give their children bad example are not much to be pitied when the latter follow in their footsteps; they are the cause of their own troubles. But what a sad thing it is for pious parents, who have tried to rear their children well, by duly chastising them and giving them a good example of piety and virtue, to see that they turn out disobedient, obstinate, reckless, given to lying, cheating, cursing, drinking, immorality, and other vices, and are therefore on the high road to hell? Could

there be a greater trial than this for a pious father and mother? Yet, you must not despair! Your grief should in part be mitigated by the thought that you have done your duty, and that you have not been wanting in your parental obligations. God does not require any more from you. If all your labor and trouble profit little with your wicked child, at all events your future reward will be nonetheless, but will rather be increased, on account of the anxiety you suffer. Console yourselves, Christian parents, as far as the salvation of your souls is concerned; and, although you have just cause to pity your miserable children, who willfully ruin their souls, still you must never despair of their conversion. Do like the pious Job, who arose every morning and offered sacrifice for each of his children, for fear lest they should have offended God. Pray daily and fervently that God, who holds the hearts of all men in his hands, may give your children the grace to repent and to lead pious lives. Trustful and fervent prayer can work wonders with the Lord. You will thus become parents of your children in a twofold sense; for you will not only have given them their natural lives, but you will also have brought forth their souls to life for God and heaven.

2. Although it is a hard thing for pious parents to have wicked children, yet there are some who attach little importance to the future life, and who think it a far greater trial to have weak and delicate, or deformed children. For instance, the children have distorted features; one is stupid or even silly; another is sickly and delicate; a third is blind, lame, or crippled. Such is the whole cause of the parents' sorrow and trouble: Oh, my poor son, they think, full of anxiety; oh, my unhappy daughter! What am I to do with them? How can I provide for them? What will become of them when I am gone? Is it not a great misfortune? Even if they were with God in heaven, we should die happy! And thus they lament. But why are you so troubled, to no purpose, about the divine will? God, who has created your children, knows why He made them deformed or sickly. Say with David: "He made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 99:3). We often do not know what we wish, or desire, or ask from God, nor what we complain of and grieve about. He is the Lord, who alone knows what is best for each one of us, in every circumstance. He is the Lord, whose providence arranges all things for the good of man. When you think of your children, remember what Christ said: "It is better for thee, having one eye, to enter into life," with one hand, or lame and crippled, with one foot, "than having two eyes, to be cast into hell's fire" (St. Matthew 18:9), with two hands, or two feet. And, therefore, He tells us to pluck out an eye, to cut off a hand or foot, if we are thereby led into sin. Remember that if your children were all beautiful, clever, or healthy, they might become worldly, as God has foreseen; they might sink into all kinds of vice and sin and be lost forever. As it is, their natural defects keep them out of many occasions of evil, and they will one day rise again, free from every defect, to rejoice with God in heaven. Could you desire anything better than this for your children? Therefore, let the Almighty dispose of them as He pleases. Thank Him, and be satisfied with your children such as He has given them to you. Meanwhile, as far as bringing them up to virtue is concerned, you must be as careful of them as of your other children, whom you think possess better natural qualities. The former are made to the image of the Almighty God, just as well as the latter. If a precious treasure is confided to my care, I must guard it well, and not allow it to be stolen, whether the box which contains it is black or white, made of plain wood, or of gold and silver. For the box does not increase or lessen the value of the treasure it contains. Married Christians, the souls of your children are the precious treasures that the divine goodness has entrusted to your charge for a time. The body is only a box, or, to speak better, a worthless sack, in which that royal treasure, the soul, lies concealed. What matters it, then, whether the sack is beautiful or ugly, crooked or straight? In any case it contains a beautiful soul that is pleasing to God, and that, therefore, you also must love and esteem. And besides, if you look after your deformed or sickly children as you ought, and be satisfied with the decrees of Providence, your temporal interests will not suffer.

3. One of the heaviest crosses for married people, at least, according to their own idea, is to have children, and not to have bread enough to give them, or to try to rear them according to their condition without having the means to do so. Certainly, poverty is hated by all. But it arises either from the fault of married people themselves, or from the arrangements of divine Providence.

If it comes from their own fault, either because they marry without sufficient means, and know not how they are to earn anything to support themselves and those who depend on them, or because, although they know how to earn, they are too idle and too fond of their own ease to work. What else can be the result of that but a house full of poor children? Or, as also frequently happens, the married couple may have means enough to live comfortably, and to support their children decently and respectably, but through carelessness they allow their

wealth gradually to slip through their fingers, and so reduce themselves to poverty in the long run. They spread their wings too far; they bend the bow until it breaks. They try to be like others in respect to food, clothing, and housekeeping, although their means do not allow it. They dress their children expensively, and let them go about doing nothing, so that they appear to be richer than they really are, and at last they are forced to suffer the pinch of poverty, which they could have avoided by living in Christian humility and modesty, according to their means. How many cases of that kind there are in the world, and perhaps in our very midst! Go on with your luxury in dress and expensive living; you will find out your mistake in the end! I have never had the gift of prophecy, but in this matter I know that I will prove a true prophet. And that I am right in saying that your children and your children's children will suffer want. These people and such as these may blame themselves for their poverty and the trials it entails, and they will certainly have to give a strict account to their Judge hereafter for having thus willfully reduced their children to poverty.

II. I pass on now to the other trials, which the married couple most wickedly cause each other by unfaithfulness, aversion, hatred, avarice, extravagance, cruelty, by which discord is introduced into the married state.

1. The first of these causes is great anxiety to two hearts that really love each other, especially when the illness is of long duration. We can easily imagine how people feel in such circumstances: the sick person has pain and sorrow enough, while the other, who is in good health, is almost as badly off, either through pity, or on account of the labor of attending on the former. And what advice is to be given to them in such a case? None, except that they should resign themselves humbly to the will of God; for it is certain that health and sickness, life and death, come from the Lord, and sickness is a gift of God, as well as health. Trials of this kind are often useful, nay, even necessary for us, since thereby our eyes are opened, and we can see where we are here below, namely, in a vale of tears, where we can have no joy or consolation unmixed with trials and suffering. If married people, who truly love each other, were always in good health, they would often lose nearly every desire for the joys of heaven, and would dread nothing more than death, which would separate them, and rob them of the paradise they think they have found on earth. Therefore, God often visits them, afflicts one of them with a tedious illness, and thus disturbs their joy, so that they may both learn that their true country is not here, but in eternity, and that they cannot reach it except by the rough road of trials and difficulties.

2. For the same reason God frequently dissolves the bond of marriage, and takes one of them away by a premature death. That is the hardest trial of all for married people who love each other. It pierces the heart of the survivor with a sorrow that can hardly be healed for the first half-year. And truly, one must be made of marble or iron not to grieve over the unexpected loss of a person in whom all one's love, happiness, and consolation have been centered, next after God. There is not even a savage beast but grieves when it is deprived of something it has long been attached to. But let that be as it may, what is the use of so much weeping and sorrowing? Its only effect is to make one pine away with melancholy and ruin one's health. All our tears will not restore the dead to life, nor be of any help to one who has entered into eternity.

Married Christians, the best thing for married people to do in such a case is to put away the sorrowful thoughts out of your minds, and occupy yourselves with some lawful business. Think also for your consolation: It is done now, and I cannot undo it; such is the will of God; the Lord has given me my husband, or my wife, He has taken back his gift: "Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1: 21). I knew very well, when I was getting married, that I was uniting myself to a mortal who could not escape death some time or other; why should I now grieve and sorrow so much for the death of that mortal, who has accomplished a journey that I, too, must end in the same manner. I am not astonished when I see that wax melts in the heat of the sun, that wood burns when it is thrown into the fire, that clothes are gnawed away by the moths, for I know that all these things occur according to natural laws. In the same way, I must look upon this death as a mere natural occurrence, since all men must die. How many great people are subject to death, although so many people depend on them, and they must be satisfied with the will of God; why should I not be so, too? My husband, my wife, is, I hope, in heaven; why should I be envious of that great good fortune? He, or she, who is gone before, will prepare the way for me, and will obtain powerful graces for me from God, that I may save my soul; besides, I can say that the love I formerly gloried in so much on earth is changed into a better and purer one. The object of my affection sees, in the light of God's presence, all my sorrow and affliction, and, perfectly happy while I am weeping, prays that everything may help me to my eternal salvation.

Finally, a general remedy for all trials, no matter where they come from, and a sure source of consolation, is the love of God and a good conscience. Crosses and trials in this life are generally chastisements that the just God sends to pious Christians, as well as to the wicked, and, indeed, He sends the former far more of them than the latter. But see which of the two is the more afflicted: a good, conscientious man, or a wicked and vicious one? Which of the two is the more easily consoled in similar trials: a pious, virtuous woman, or a vain, frivolous, and worldly-minded one? Which of the two will give way to noisy lamentations, to complaints and murmurs against God and heaven, and to despair and melancholy? A good or a wicked Christian? There is no doubt that if we consult experience we shall find that a slight annoyance, a trifling loss or misfortune, a thing of no account, so to speak, is enough to drive a wicked man to frenzy; while a pious Christian who loves God can bear a far heavier cross much better, for, although he feels it, yet the bitterness of his suffering, the heavy weight of his cross, will not press long upon him, before he has recourse to God for strength. A single confession or Communion, a devout prayer, is enough to make him resigned to the will of God; and therefore, although his eyes are filled with tears, his heart is full of consolation and contentment.

Christian married people, and all who are here present, who are now and then tried in various ways, no matter what your state of life may be, be careful to have a good conscience, and to keep in the friendship of God always, and then, no matter how heavy your cross is, you will be relieved of half the burden; and then resign yourselves to the will of God, and think and say with patient Job: "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil" (Job 2:10) with patience and resignation? Amen.

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