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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 + + +

Volume 3 = THE GOOD CHRISTIAN

Sixth Sunday after Easter

The Consolation to be Derived from Remembering the Presence of God

“And you shall give testimony, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” St. John 15:27.

All the consolation and joy of the Apostles was gone, when Jesus Christ, their only comfort, had vanished from their sight. They were standing on the mountain and looking towards heaven, just as one who wishes to accompany his departing friend a part of the way, nor did they take their eyes off him, as long as He remained in sight. This was their only remaining comfort, that at least they might continue to look at him, until the cloud, hid him from them. When God is excluded from the eyes of the mind and from the heart of man, there can be no true joy nor consolation. But when God is kept constantly in the mind and the heart, there must necessarily be the greatest joy and true consolation. And that every just Christian can have if he wishes, and he can secure and enjoy the possession of it by the constant recollection of the presence of God. There is no trial or trouble in the world that cannot be assuaged and lightened for the just man by this recollection, for

*II. Nothing is more consoling for the just man in spiritual trials than to remember the presence of God; and
II. Nothing more consoling for the just man in bodily trials than to remember the presence of God.*

1. The trials that affect the soul are the many dangers and occasions of sin. The Lord often permits his holiest servants to be made the objects of such attacks, in order to prove their virtue and constancy in his love, and to increase their merit in heaven; therefore he warns us: “Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation” (Ecclus. 2:1, 5). But do not fear or be downcast. Whatever dangers or temptations assail you, your God is present with you. “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (St. Matthew 28:20), were the words which our Lord spoke to his disciples when he sent them as lambs among wolves, without scrip or staff, to wander through the world preaching the Gospel in the face of the most violent persecutions; go, said he, but be comforted; for I shall accompany you. And this one thought gave them such courage that they went through the world with joy and gladness. This one thought should console you, too, and more than suffice to strengthen you in the midst of the worst trials that can assail your souls. Why should I be afraid of twenty men who are running at me with drawn swords, if I have a hundred thousand armed soldiers surrounding me ready to fight for me? “Alas, alas, alas, my Lord, what shall we do?” (4. Kings 6:15) cried out the servant of the prophet Eliseus when he saw a whole army coming against them. “Fear not,” said the prophet to him; “for there are more with us than with them ; and the Lord opened the

eyes of the servant, and he saw ; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Eliseus” (4 Kings 16:17).

Can any power be compared with that of God who gives himself the name of Almighty? What have we, then, to fear, as long as we are determined never to leave our God, but to keep always in his friendship? Who can harm us while he is our defender? “If God be for us, who is against us?” (Rom. 8:31.) This appears clearly from the history of Job. How long and persistently Satan had to petition the Lord before receiving permission to do Job any harm. At last he was allowed to carry out his wish ; but within certain bounds and on certain conditions, which had to be strictly observed; for the Lord permitted Satan first to attack Job in his temporal wealth, but commanded him to spare his person. He afterwards gave Satan leave to afflict Job’s body as he pleased, but strictly forbade him to interfere with his soul. How little the devil can do against us; he is indeed a cruel executioner, but he dare not lay hands on any one until the Supreme Judge has passed sentence.

It is a great consolation for a servant of God to know that not a snare can be laid for him without the consent and permission of his good and most loving heavenly Father! What a comfort even in the midst of dangers and temptations to have this good Father always at one’s side, and to know that he is fighting against the enemies of our souls. This thought has always been a shield behind which faithful servants of God have found sure protection from the shafts of their enemies. This was the thought that encouraged *Job*, when he was so cruelly ill-treated by the devil that he became one wound from head to foot, and was reviled by his friends, ridiculed by his own wife, and forced to take refuge on a dunghill. This was the thought that gave *Moses* such indomitable courage that he feared neither king nor tyrant. It was this thought of the presence of God that made *David* so fearless in the midst of his enemies and in dangers of all kinds both of soul and body, so that he dared to challenge all nations and all calamities to rise up against him. Encouraged by the same thought, the heroic *Machabees* engaged in a battle against an army of thirty five thousand men, and overcame them. But, you think, is not God present everywhere in any case, and what should we have to fear in temptations? True, but in what does his presence help me by way of consolation, if I do not remember it? I may have a thousand armed men to protect me on my journey, but if I am travelling along a road beset with robbers and murderers I shall not be a whit more cheerful or less anxious, in spite of my strong escort, unless I know of its existence. The least noise would frighten me, and cause me to tremble with fear lest it should be a robber coming to attack me. The two disciples that were going to Emmaus did not recognize our Lord at first, and so, although they had him in their midst, they continued to nourish gloomy and desponding thoughts. Magdalene stood in the garden and spoke with Jesus after his resurrection, but she still continued weeping bitterly for having lost the Lord. The poor cripple at the pool of Bethsaida lamented that he had no one to help him, although Jesus was standing by his side at the time and about to heal him; for he knew not our Lord. Therefore it is not the presence of God, but the frequent recollection of it which fills our hearts with a childlike confidence in the divine assistance, and thus gives a feeling of true comfort and security to the soul, and makes it courageous in spite of the attacks and snares of its enemies. The same recollection and thought of the presence of God brings comfort and consolation in bodily trials.

II. Bodily trials interfere with our well-being, and thus make life a burden to us. These trials, for the most part attack pious and just men: “Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weeps but the world shall rejoice and you shall be made sorrowful” (St. John 16:20). The world, that is, they who love the world and live according to its maxims, will rejoice; but you, my dear children, will be visited by trials, for that is necessary for you, that you may enter into the eternal joys of heaven.

Now where will the afflicted and troubled man find this comfort and consolation in his crosses and trials? It is vain and useless to seek it from the world; for it is the Lord alone who ordains these trials and sends them down on men ; and therefore it is he alone who can take them away from us, or mitigate them. We generally throw the whole blame of our suffering on men, or on accidental, natural occurrences, and therefore we break out into complaints: that man, that neighbor of mine, that husband, or wife, or child of mine is the cause of all my troubles. My poverty or sickness comes from that misfortune, that loss, that premature death. If people had only left me alone, and had not interfered with me, I should not have to suffer this or that annoyance; I should be able to live in peace. But that will not do; we are wrong from the very first in those complaints. Nothing in this world happens by chance; no man, nor beast, nor misfortune can hurt or annoy us without consent of the almighty God. Hear how Christ himself spoke to Peter, when the latter drew the sword to defend him on the eve

of his bitter Passion and Death: “The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” It is not Judas who sold me to my enemies, nor the high-priest and scribes who have taken me prisoner, nor the ungrateful people who cry out “crucify him, crucify him,” nor the unjust judge Pilate who condemns me to death, nor the soldiers and executioners who scourge me, crown me with thorns, and nail me to the cross ; it is not they who have prepared for me this bitter chalice of suffering; but it is my heavenly Father who has filled it to the brim with pain and sorrow, and given it to me to drink. Therefore it is God alone who lays the cross on our shoulders, and it is from him alone that we must seek consolation in bearing it.

Sinners, alas, you cannot expect any of this consolation as long as you remain in the slavery of the devil, without repentance and amendment! You have your share, as well as the faithful servants of God, in the troubles and miseries of this life; but not the slightest part of the comfort of the just falls to your lot. The very presence of God only makes your crosses heavier and more burdensome. For there is nothing more terrible to the sinner than to remember that he is in the presence of God, who sees the filth of his sins and vices, and must punish them strictly as his judge.

Let us all, my dear brethren, make trial of this, and for a time practice this keeping in the presence of God; and we shall see how sweet the Lord is, and experience that there is no sorrow or trouble in life so great that cannot be alleviated and sweetened by the constant recollection of the presence of God. Let us now begin on earth what we hope and desire to do in heaven. In this alone does the indescribable, eternal happiness of the elect in heaven consist, that they have their God always with them, and unceasingly see him clearly and enjoy the light of his presence. If you were to take God out of heaven, or out of the minds and memories of the blessed, there would be an end of their happiness, and heaven would become a horrible hell. If God were to go down into hell, there is not an angel or a blessed soul that would wish to remain in heaven; but all of them, if they were permitted, would descend into the abyss in order to be with the God they love and to see him, and they would have a joyful heaven in the very midst of hell.

Let us keep in the friendship of God, and like St. Paul, place our thoughts in heaven, so that like him we shall be able to say: “Our conversation is in heaven.” We are in banishment, and have many evils to suffer; but our conversation is in heaven, that is, with the Lord who makes the joy of heaven. For if it is God, and God alone, who can fully satisfy the human heart, as St. Augustine says: Thou hast made us, O Lord, for thyself, and our hearts are uneasy till they repose in thee, it follows necessarily that the more a man associates with God in this life, the more he cultivates a familiarity with him, and the greater, too, must be the consolation and joy of his heart even in this life. So it is; the constant vision of God makes the happiness of the elect in heaven; and the constant recollection of the presence of God makes the happiness of the human soul on earth, as far as happiness can be had here.

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