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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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PENTECOST SUNDAY

The Malice of Cursing

“We have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” Acts 2:11

On this day the Apostles, who were hitherto afraid to open their mouths, begin all at once to speak in divers tongues. What is this? cried out the Jews and heathens in astonishment. Are not those who are speaking all Galileans? And yet each one of us hears them speak the language of our own countries. The Apostles used to speak in a far different style; our Lord had to bear with their murmurs and complaints, their quarrels and strifes as to who was the greatest among them. Nay, they even lent their tongues to the demon of cursing when they asked our Lord that fire should be sent down from heaven to consume the city that had refused to receive them: “Lord,” they said to him, “wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” (Luke 9:54.) Peter had even sworn that he knew not our Lord: “he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man” (Matt. 26:74). But now all of a sudden we hear nothing from them but the praises and wonderful works of God. And what wonder was it, after all? They were filled with the fire of divine love, and they could not speak but as the Holy Ghost inspired them. How many different kinds of speech may we not hear nowadays, which are inspired not by the Holy Ghost, but by the spirit of evil! I am alluding to that wicked language of cursing and swearing on the least provocation. It is not a trifling vice, for

I. Cursing is a sin, and in itself a mortal sin.

II. It is a mortal, and, at the same time, a most injurious sin.

I. Cursing is a sin, in spite of the fact that many think little of it: “Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not” (Rom. 12:14), says the Apostle, and again: “Do not err” (be sure you do not deceive yourselves on this point); “neither idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers shall possess the kingdom of God.” From these words it is evident that cursing in itself is a mortal sin; for it is reckoned amongst those sins which exclude from heaven.

1. It offers a grievous insult to God. If we consider the insult offered to God by cursing, and the harm it does Christian charity, who will dare to say that it is only a venial sin? Hear, oh, profane man! you wish, through anger and displeasure against your domestics, through envy against your neighbor, through hatred and vindictiveness against your enemy, that he should break his neck, or die suddenly, or be struck by lightning, or be possessed or carried off by the devil; you know better than I what your favorite curses are; but do you know what guilt you incur thereby in the sight of God? You arrogate to yourself the office of judge, which belongs to

him alone: for you pass sentence on your fellow-man, and desire that the evil you mention should befall him. But this is not the worst, although it is bad enough. What office do you then leave to your God? You make the Lord God your executioner, who is to carry out the sentence you have pronounced, and to inflict on your neighbor the punishment you have invoked on him, because you are unable to inflict it yourself. What an insult to the great God! what presumption on the part of a miserable mortal! And yet you imagine that cursing is only a small fault! You have been guilty of it times without number, perhaps from the moment you were first able to speak, and you have felt neither shame nor scruple on account of it; you are still guilty of it every day, when things do not go according to your wish. Do you think it a small sin to act thus insolently toward the Almighty, and to transgress so flagrantly the first and most important commandment, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart”?

2. Cursing is grievously injurious to fraternal charity:

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This love you violate, and grievously, when you curse your neighbor and wish that some great misfortune, such as sudden death, or being carried off by the devil, should befall him. If merely to rejoice in secret at your neighbor’s grievous misfortune, the mere wish that some serious calamity should happen to your greatest enemy, is a grievous sin against the charity we owe all men, how can it be a lesser sin to say openly to your neighbor that you desire that the evils you wish him in your angry and vindictive heart should really come upon him?

3. It is not even lawful to curse the devil. Because, just as the malefactor must not curse the executioner who stands with drawn sword ready to cut his head off, inasmuch as the latter acts by the authority of the judge and fulfils the sentence pronounced by the justice of man, so it is not lawful to curse the devil, who sometimes, by divine permission and arrangement, punishes men on earth, and who tortures the wicked in hell as the executioner of the divine justice.

4. How much more unlawful, then, to curse a human being! If it is not lawful to curse even the devil, who is the cause of so much evil in the world, and who seeks to ruin our souls eternally, then it is still less lawful to curse the earth, or the work we have to do, or the dumb beasts we make use of, because these things are harmless creatures of God, and cannot do us any injury, since they have not reason. What a terrible sin it must then be to curse a reasoning being like ourselves, who has been ransomed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, who is a Christian, a brother of Christ, an adopted child of God, and an heir to the kingdom of heaven, and whom we are bound to love as ourselves! What a terrible sin it must be to call down imprecations on one’s own domestics and children, on one’s wife or husband, and, most terrible of all, on one’s own father or mother! What a fearful sin it is, I say, no matter what annoyance they may cause us! For, wicked as a human being may be, still he is not a devil; he still has a claim to, and a hope of heaven. No, I repeat, in the words of St. Paul, “do not err;” do not deceive yourselves, nor flatter yourselves with the belief that cursing is only a small matter; “railers shall not possess the kingdom of God.” Therefore it is manifest that a willful, deliberate, and grievous imprecation is a mortal sin. And it is equally manifest that it is a most injurious sin.

II. The habit of cursing, which is so common, is injurious to him who is guilty of it, to him against whom the curses are uttered, and even to the whole community in which such a wicked habit prevails.

1. He who curses deliberately forfeits his right to heaven and condemns himself to hell. Is not that harm enough? Yet it is an effect common to every mortal sin, although not produced in the same way. In some respects those who are addicted to other sins and vices have more to excuse them than those who are given to cursing. And why? Because they have, at least in imagination and in outward appearances, some profit and advantages from their sin; they have the money they desire, or the sensual gratification, or the honor, or the satisfaction they seek for. When they are burning in the flames of hell they can at least look back on their lives and assign the cause of the torments they are suffering. They know for what they sinned and deserved hell; they have, as the saying is, something for their money. Such was the answer that Abraham gave to the rich glutton when the latter cried out to him: “Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.” “Son,” was Abraham’s reply to him, “remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented” (Luke 16:24, 25).

But you, who sin so often every day by curses and imprecations, what will you have to say for yourselves in hell fire, except that you have sinned, and nothing more? For what profit, or pleasure, or honor, do you gain by cursing? None at all. Like mad dogs, you attack your fellow-men in your anger, and thereby poison your own blood, and fill your entrails with bitter gall. This is the pleasure, the joy, the delight you find in cursing; and what have you gained by it? Is your pain or your trial lessened by your wicked language, or have you been relieved from the pressure of misfortune? Your sufferings are just the same as before; you have the same trials, the same calamities to bear. Nay, they are worse than before; because those whom you have cursed in your anger have answered you in the same wicked strain, and thus increased your bitterness. This is the profit, this the advantage you have gained!

2. Besides the great injury you do yourselves, there is also that which you inflict on those you curse. We read the command given by God: "Thou shalt not speak evil of the deaf" (Levit. 19:14); that is, thou shalt not curse them. Why did God publish a special law in their favor? They cannot even hear the curse, nor know whether they are praised or abused. It can do a deaf man no harm to curse him; why, then, has God expressly forbidden it? We must understand this command in a moral sense; you must not curse any creature that has neither sense nor reason; and, when things do not go as you wish, you must not give vent to your ill-feeling by cursing your work, the weather, or your dog, your ox, or your horse, because they do you no harm; they are not to blame for causing you annoyance. They are deaf creatures, and do not understand, so that when you curse them you ill-treat and do them wrong.

Again, by the deaf are understood those who resemble people who are devoid of hearing, such as little children, and those who are morally deaf, such as disobedient sons and daughters, and others who refuse to listen to good advice. There are parents who curse their little infants when they are restless at night. How foolish they are in doing so! They are deaf creatures, and cannot understand what is said to them. All men, no matter who they are, are deaf as far as cursing is concerned, for they pay little attention to it, and look on it as a blank cartridge, that merely makes a noise, but cannot hurt them. No matter; the curse may have a bad effect on them, and injure them, for we read: "Give not to them that ask of thee room to curse thee behind thy back," to wish evil to thee, even in thy absence! "For the prayer of him that curseth thee in the bitterness of his soul shall be heard; for he that made him will hear him" (Eccles. 4:56). Thus you see that, although the evil wishes of him who curses his neighbor are not able to bring down misfortune or calamity upon him at once, yet very often God hears the curse and allows the misfortune to befall the person cursed, in order to show how he abhors that hellish language, and how he wishes to deter all men from the use of it.

The curses of parents against their own children have received from God a special efficacy, as we read: "The father's blessing establisheth the houses of the children, but the mother's curse rooteth up the foundation" (Eccles. 3:11). God allows that, in order to confirm and ratify the authority of parents, whom he has placed as his viceroys over their children, to inflict on the children the punishment they deserve for having provoked their parents to anger by obstinacy, disobedience and want of filial love, and also to punish the parents themselves by the grief and affliction they feel at seeing that their curses are not without effect. If we were able to trace those effects, and to point to the evils and misfortunes that the curses of parents bring down on their children, we should behold many a sad and lamentable sight.

I know well the empty excuse that people bring forward to try to lessen their guilt: I have no bad meaning in what I say; I curse only to frighten others; I do not think of what I am saying when I am in a passion; I curse only through habit, and I am sorry for it afterwards, and so on. But all these lame excuses have nothing to do with the matter; much less do they make cursing lawful or innocent. "Bless, and curse not" (Rom. 12:14). Once for all, give up that shameful, scandalous, diabolical, and most injurious habit; and determine to avoid, and to repent of, that sin which brings neither profit nor pleasure, and is the cause of great harm. If you are bent on losing your souls, at all events do not lose them for the sake of such a wretched and profitless vice. Amen.

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