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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 + + +

VOL. 2 = The Penitent Christian

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST & Trinity Sunday

The Mercy of God and His Patience with Sinners

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” St. Luke 6:36.

What a good and merciful Lord is ours! Not satisfied with publicly manifesting His mercy towards sinners, by seeking them everywhere, and receiving them most lovingly into His friendship, Jesus Christ also shows us the mercy of His heavenly Father, in making His sun to shine on the good and the wicked, and His rain to fall on the just and the unjust. In fact, since the latter are more in need of pity and mercy than the just, He makes them the special subjects of His patience and long-suffering goodness. Since what could not be done by the consideration of the uncertainty of life, the severity of God’s judgments, and the eternal pains of hell, must and will eventually be effected by meditating on the merciful goodness of God, we shall now reflect today upon

- I. The wonderful goodness and mercy of God towards the unrepentant sinner; and*
- II. The wonderful goodness and mercy of God towards the sinner who wishes to be converted.*

I. There is nothing more pleasing to an angry man, than to be revenged upon His enemy. Rare is it to find men who, if they are grievously offended and have a chance of avenging themselves, yet manage to conquer their anger and to forgive their foe. To no purpose do preachers exhort people to forgive injuries; to no purpose, do they cry out till they are hoarse the words of our Lord, “But I say to you: Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you” (St. Matthew 5:44). Pardon those who have offended you, or else God will never pardon your sins; forgive, and that too from your hearts, or the fire of hell awaits you; you must necessarily choose one or the other. Vain, I say, is it to exhort people to practice the duty of forgiveness; for, generally speaking, they will remain as they were before. When anger and hatred have once taken possession of the heart, all the exhortations in the world will not prevent a man from being revenged when he can, far less, speak lovingly of His enemy, or do him any good.

If, like men, God, too, were unwilling to restrain His hatred and anger; if He were determined to take revenge on His enemy every time he offends Him: oh, woe to us! Where should we be now? Not here certainly. Long ago, we should have been with the demons in the flames of hell! How would it now be with many of you, O sinners? Let us consider a little both the past and the present. How have we acted towards God, and how has God acted towards us? What injury has He ever done us? Is there any one who can point to the least thing that God has done to harm him? Nay, is there any one who can prove that God has not been constantly doing good to him every moment of his life? In justice, therefore, there should not be a moment of our lives during which

we do not behave towards God with the greatest gratitude, reverence, fear and love. How have we treated Him in reality? Have we not dared, miserable creatures that we are, who are every moment in need of our God, have we not dared to rebel against Him without the least cause? How often have we not renounced His friendship, and declared war against Him; reviled and insulted Him to His face by our actions; despised, mocked, and laughed at Him; trampled on what we knew to be the expression of His will, and turned our backs on Him, thus showing Him that we cared little about Him? That is really what you have done every time we committed a mortal sin. That is what is still done every day by most men, by all kinds of injustice, by willful drunkenness, impurity, cursing and swearing, calumny and detraction, in thought, word, and deed. For sin is, nothing else than a rebellion against God, a contemning, dishonoring, insulting God. In sinning, a man refuses to do what God wishes him to do, or does that which he knows to be displeasing to God. How, up to the present, has our outraged God revenged Himself? I might well say: "I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?" (Ecclus. 5:4.) In spite of having so wantonly offended God I have, as yet, felt no punishment.

Is this because the great Lord does not feel the insults His weak and miserable creatures offer Him; just as a brave man does not mind the barking of a little lap dog? Ah, indeed, He does feel them! He speaks himself, in the Sacred Scripture, of His great sorrow and anguish at the transgressing of His commands, of the disgust, hatred, and anger He feels towards the sinner. "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike" (Wisdom 14:9), St. Paul, when He says, "But according to thy hardness, and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5). To show the sorrow and grief He feels at sin, the Deity makes use of an expression which (strictly speaking), could be employed by men only: "And God, seeing that the wickedness of man was great on earth . . . touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth . . . for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Gen. 6:5, 6, 7), since they now despise and offend me.

What are we to conclude from this? Why does God not at once pour out the vials of His wrath upon sinners? Has He perhaps not sufficient opportunities, or means, or strength to revenge himself on His enemy? Is not the sinner at all times, and in every place, completely in God's power, so that He can do with him as He pleases? He has only to give a sign, and the clouds will discharge their lightnings on the head of the presumptuous wretch who dares offend Him; only a sign, and the earth will open and swallow Him up. If God withdraws from him for a single instant His protecting hand, he will at once fall back into his original nothingness. If He is so enraged against sinners, why does He do none of those things?

Ah, here we see the wonderful love, patience, and mercy with which God treats the sinner, inasmuch as He overcomes, so to speak, such an intense dislike, restrains such an infinite hatred and anger. He has no good to hope from the sinner, and no harm to fear from him, yet He does not take the least revenge, when it is so easy for Him to take it. With the greatest patience, He bears with the wanton offences and transgressions of His creature, and allows himself to be insulted and outraged, year after year, by daily sins, and instead of doing the least thing to harm him, He preserves him in life all the time.

When God was forced to destroy the wicked world by the universal Deluge, it took Him a hundred and twenty years to complete His vengeance. During all that time, He gave notice to men of the impending calamity. He sent Noe to exhort them to amend their sinful lives, and to warn them of the coming punishment; to tell them that if they abstained from sin, they might appease the anger of God. When Noe saw that his exhortations were fruitless, he began to build the ark. But what a long time it took him by divine command to finish it! He spent fully a hundred years at it, although he might have finished it much quicker.

Why was this? That men might have time to amend, and to do penance for their sins. God waited patiently; it seemed hard to Him to destroy men, although they were His greatest enemies, just as a loving mother is unwilling to punish her dear child. And when at last the flood came, on the day appointed, how did it come? The waters could certainly have overwhelmed the world at once but even in His wrath, God could not forget His mercy. The rain fell steadily for forty days, and the waters rose gradually, until they entered the houses and finally overtopped the mountains. Why was that? Because the patience of God was giving sinners time to climb higher and higher out of the reach of the waters, time to repent of their sins, and at all events to save their souls from the eternal flames of hell, as doubtless many succeeded in doing.

The good God treats you and me just the same, today. He is very quick in pardoning, and forgiving us, very slow in inflicting on us the punishment we so well deserve. He waits from day to day, from month to month,

from year to year, nay, sometimes till old age creeps on us. He exhorts, threatens, promises, runs after us, and calls out to us to return to Him. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; and why will you die?" (Ezech. 33:11.)

Behold that angry little infant in the arms of its mother! It kicks and struggles, and tries its best to get free from her embrace. It gnashes its teeth against its mother, yes, actually raises its hand to strike her, so angry is it in its weakness, at not getting what it wishes. And what does the mother do? Does she beat it? (Sometimes, indeed, that would be a very good thing to do; but it is not generally done). Ah no! she presses the infant all the closer to her bosom, she talks to it in a loving manner, sings for it and soothes it, until it is quite satisfied. That is the only punishment she inflicts on her obstinate child. There you have a striking example of the presumption of the sinner, and at the same time of the goodness and mercy of God towards him. Every reasonable man knows well that he is held in the arms, in the very lap of God, whose presence he can never avoid, and yet he dares to vent His anger against Him, to revile Him, to despise Him, and, as it were, to raise his hand to strike Him in the face, and this undutiful conduct he persists in often for years and years. Meanwhile, how does God act towards Him? Who can count the benefits that God bestows every day on ungrateful sinners?

II. The wonderful goodness and mercy of God towards the sinner who wishes to be converted.

If a serf who has offended a mighty lord wishes to be readmitted to his favor and friendship, what must he do? Must he at once run to his house, acknowledge his guilt, and beg pardon? Certainly not; if he rushes into the house uninvited, although his only intention be to ask forgiveness, his conduct would be considered a fresh insult, would only inflame the other's anger anew, and perhaps make him receive the intruder at the point of the sword. At all events, the latter need not expect a kind reception. He must not be surprised if the offended nobleman turn his back on him, tell him in cold and scornful words to come another time, and at last consents to speak of forgiveness only when ample satisfaction has been offered for the insult. No; a matter of this kind must be dealt with much more carefully. The offender must employ the good offices of a third person to act as his advocate, and say a good word for him. And the advocate, too, has to be on his guard; it will not do for him to blurt out the matter at once; he must wait for a favorable opportunity, when the other is in good humor, he may say that his poor client is in great trouble on account of having incurred displeasure, that he is very sorry for his conduct, and is ready to do anything in his power by way of satisfaction. Even if these means are successful, and the reconciliation is effected, there still remains often a secret dislike and mistrust in the heart of the offended person. The insult suffered is rarely forgotten, and there is no chance of true friendship ever existing between the parties again.

Ah! How differently does the Almighty and Sovereign Lord treat us sinners! If I have made God my enemy; if I have grievously offended Him a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand times; if I have wantonly insulted Him for ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years; how much time will it take to appease His anger, and be reconciled to Him? It would be but right and just that, as I have allowed Him to knock, sigh, and call out so often at the door of my heart, and have turned Him away like a troublesome beggar; it would be only right that He should, in turn, allow me to knock and sigh without giving me an answer. But no; a single moment is all the time I require to be reconciled to Him. He himself has promised that, at whatever time the sinner is converted, he will live, and his former iniquities will no longer be remembered. But how am I to present myself before Him? Oh, in dealing with an offended God, there is no need of a third person's interference to dispose the divine heart to forgiveness and mercy. If I only wish it, I can present myself directly before Him, and ask His pardon. With what loving kindness did He not act towards the sinners Zachaeus and Matthew, towards the woman taken in adultery, the Samaritan woman, the notorious sinner Magdalene, the penitent thief, Peter, who denied Him thrice, and Thomas, who had lost faith in Him! To none of these, did He make the least reproach on account of the grievous sins they had committed; He never upbraided them with their vices; He treated them with the greatest friendship, ate and drank with them publicly, and defended them against detractors as if He himself were attacked in their persons, so that He got the name of being a protector, receiver, friend, and harbinger of sinners.

If you wish to see what joy it gives the Almighty God to admit the repentant sinner to His friendship, read and

meditate on the parable of the Good Shepherd, who leaves his whole flock to go in search of the one sheep that has gone astray; read the parable of the Prodigal Son, who after having squandered his whole patrimony in gluttony, drunkenness, and riotous living, and disgraced his father, came back half naked and starving; to be received by his glad father as if he were a great Lord, to be embraced and kissed with tears of joy, to be clad in new clothes, with a ring for his finger, and shoes for his feet, and a grand banquet prepared to testify to the joy the good father felt at the return of his worthless son. "Let us eat and make merry," he said, "because this my son was dead, and is come to life again; was lost and is found" (St. Luke 23:24). "So I say to you," says Christ, "there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance" (Ibid. 10). God calls the Angels to rejoice, as it were, not with men, but with Himself, when a sinner does penance; as if man were the god of his God; as if the whole happiness of God consists in finding the man whom he had lost, as if God could not be happy without man.

O sinner! How long will you refuse to give this great consolation and joy to the God who loves you so much? Have you not abused His patience long enough? Can you be so cruel as to offend Him still more, and to treat Him so shamefully? He is no Christian, but a heathen, an infidel, he is an unreasoning wild beast, a monster; who is not touched by the wonderful patience and goodness of God; who is not moved by it to repent of his sins at once, and who, instead of loving such a good Lord with all his heart, actually offends Him anew! Amen.

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