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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. 5 = THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

### The Hope of Heaven that Is Founded on Certain Pious Practices Is Very Deceitful

*“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” St. Matthew 28:20.*

“All power is given to me in heaven and in earth,” says our Lord to his disciples; as if he wished to say, I am able to bring all men to heaven. My will and desire is that all should be saved; but this will is not enough to insure the salvation of all; he who wishes to go to heaven must contribute his share to that effect. “Going therefore teach ye all nations.” He who wishes to go to heaven must belong to the true faith; but faith alone in me is not enough to secure salvation. He who desires to be saved must be baptized: “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” But even this will not suffice: “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” He who desires heaven must keep my commandments, and indeed all of them. Now, there are many who found their hopes of heaven partly on different pious practices that they are wont to perform, partly on some attempts at self-justification with which they try to excuse their sins.

*But to neglect the observance of even one of the commandments, and to build one's hopes of salvation on any works of piety or attempts at self-justification is a false and deceitful hope.*

There is no devotion to which we can trust our salvation if we do not keep all the commandments. Fervent prayer, hearing Mass, almsdeeds and charity to the poor, fasting, devotion to God and the Mother of God. What powerful means to gain and to preserve the grace and friendship of God! And if they are made use of in the state of grace, with a good intention, they add much to our sanctifying grace and merit here, and to eternal glory hereafter in heaven! Ah, is it possible for a Christian who diligently performs those works to be excluded from heaven and condemned to hell forever? There is no doubt of it; if he who does those good works does not repent of his sins, if he does not lead a pious life and keep all the commandments, he will certainly go to hell, and unfortunately there are many Catholics who build their hopes of salvation on a foundation of the kind, and are certain of saving their souls, although at the time they are living in sin, and neglect certain duties of their state and condition.

I. Hence false is the hope that many found on certain prayers. Some are so simple-minded and credulous as to believe firmly that all who say those prayers constantly as they are prescribed, and never omit them, will not die unrepentant, but by the merit of those prayers will receive the grace of final perseverance. That is a deceit of

the devil, who thus makes fools of many. For they place all their hopes of salvation in those prayers, and take little care to amend their lives, nay, sin all the more recklessly sometimes. To spend hours in the church praying, and then to swear, curse and grumble the whole day long at home; to bring up children to vanity and idleness, to give them a bad example and yet to hope to get to heaven; truly, that is a deceitful hope! Hear what our Lord says: "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven (and keeps all his commandments), he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matthew 7:21). And you think you can get hold of it so easily by saying a few prayers?

Then, indeed, the poor hermits were laboring in vain when practicing austerities in the wilderness! And the holy martyrs were fools to endure the torments inflicted on them by the tyrants to whom they freely gave themselves up. To no purpose has Christ given us the exhortation: "Strive to enter by the narrow gate" (St. Luke 13:24); do violence to yourselves by penance that you may enter heaven. All this would be to no purpose if it were possible to save our souls by saying a few prayers. No; it is not so easy to walk into heaven. A pure conscience, a pious, upright life, the way of the cross and penance, that is the only road to heaven, and no one can get there otherwise, although he were to say thousands of prayers. Prayer is necessary to gain heaven, and it must not be omitted. It is necessary for the just man to keep him free from sin:

"Pray that ye enter not into temptation." It is necessary for the sinner to obtain from God the grace of repentance and sincere conversion. Pray, then, fervently and diligently, but pray first of all for a contrite and penitent heart for all your sins; pray, but at the same time amend your life. Keep all the commandments of God; fulfill the duties of your state of life. If you fail in this, then you honor God only with the lips, while by actions you drive him out of your heart, and all your praying will not help you to heaven.

2. Others put their trust in certain pious practices which they do at stated times; they give candles for the altar; they always wear blessed things, crosses, and indulgenced pennies; they get others to go to holy Communion for them and to pray for them; they fast every Friday or Saturday in the year, and on Good Friday eat nothing till evening; and when they have done those things they imagine they cannot be lost, but must save their souls and go to heaven. They give generous alms to the poor, and think that thus they pay off the debt contracted by their sins, although they do not repent or confess, or take any steps to amend their lives. They find great consolation in their wicked lives in the words of the elder Tobias to his son: "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness;" but they do not attach the right meaning to those words, and they forget what Tobias said in his exhortation: "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind; and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord, our God" (Tob. 4:11, 6).

Fasting and almsgiving are very meritorious, but they do not help to heaven him who does not keep the commandments. The Pharisee prayed in the temple; he fasted twice in the week; he gave the tenth part of all his goods to the poor; moreover, he took God to witness that he did not live in grievous sin like other men; and yet on account of pride alone all his good works did not help to his justification. Generosity to the poor has, indeed, a special power of freeing from sin and eternal death; but not without true repentance and amendment of life. For, "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." How do almsdeeds free from sin? Almsdeeds are able to move the Almighty to touch the heart of the sinner, and to give him plentiful graces that he may repent and amend, and so be freed from the state of sin and from eternal death. But if a man is determined to persist in his evil ways and unlawful habits, then I would say to him at once: Unhappy, foolish man, you are deceiving yourself with all your pious works; you are going to hell! All you do is not of the least use to gain heaven for you; with all your good works you go to hell.

3. Others, too, are deceived who put their trust in various sodalities and confraternities, in which they are enrolled. True, it was a holy thought inspired by God that led to the foundation of those sodalities and confraternities; but as there is nothing so holy that the devil does not try to work something out of it to further his own ends, that spirit of evil tries to do mischief by those very sodalities, and though they were intended to further the welfare of souls, he, by his craft, turns them into a means of destruction, by persuading silly people that if they are enrolled in those sodalities and keep their rules they cannot be damned. And many trust to this, place no restraint on their evil passions, and indulge freely in sin. This is a most detestable error and a deceit of the evil one.

I am a sodalist, you say, a member of this or that confraternity; therefore, on account of the spiritual tie which unites us, I receive my share of the good works done by my fellow-sodalists. Truly, you do! And for your

comfort I will tell you something more: You are a Catholic, and consequently a member of the true Church of Christ; therefore you are in the Communion of Saints; that is, you receive a share of all the prayers and good works of every Catholic in the world. But if you are in the state of sin, you are a dead and rotten member of the confraternity, of the Church, and therefore you can derive as little fruit from the good works done therein as an amputated or mortified finger can receive from the food and drink which the rest of the healthy body consumes. The most you can expect is that the other members who are in the state of grace may by their prayers and good works obtain for you from God the grace of true conversion. Be enrolled, then, in a sodality; that is a good thing for all; but be careful that you are enrolled also among the beloved children of God. Sodalities and confraternities are established with the view of making their members more holy and pious, and that by mutual good example they may spur one another on to virtue and the fear of the Lord, so that after a holy life they may die a happy death, and love forever in heaven the God whom they loved together on earth. But you may take it for granted that you will burn all the deeper in hell because you led a wicked life in such holy company.

4. Others, again, place their hopes in their so-called love for and devotion to the Mother of God, and they live on carelessly in sin. No one who is devout to the Blessed Virgin can be lost; that is their favorite saying. A vain, deceitful hope! All the Fathers of the Church are unanimous on the point, countless great sinners have experienced it and still experience it every day; I must and will always maintain before the world, with grateful heart, that I know by my own experience, in myself and others, that next to God the Blessed Virgin Mary is the only hope of sinners, the Mother of grace, the Mother of mercy, the Refuge of sinners; whose prayers often move God to withhold the scourge and receive man again to his grace. I acknowledge, too, that none of her children shall be lost forever; but will she reckon in their number, and protect by her intercession, and bring to eternal salvation those whose love and devotion to her consists only in a few prayers that they say every day as a cloak for their wickedness, who honor her only with the lips that they may all the more freely offend her and her divine Son? Presumptuous sinners, your hope, I repeat, is a vain and deceitful one. Yours is not the love and devotion that characterizes the true child of Mary.

5. Others, more foolish, excuse and defend their bad habits by appealing to the conduct of men of the world at the present day. Others do so, they say; why should it not be lawful for me as well? The greater number do so; they have consciences, too; amongst them are many good and pious souls who wish to go to heaven, so that the thing cannot be so very bad after all. At all events, I did not begin it, and therefore I am free from sin. What foolish reasoning! Those people are like the thieves who asked the judge to do away with the gallows. The judge said to them: Do you give up stealing, and then I will do away with the gallows. But the thieves replied: We did not introduce thieving, and we will not abolish it. Nor, said the judge, did I introduce the gallows, nor will I abolish it. If that style of argument were admissible, then you might go and do what you please; wallow in impurity whenever you have the opportunity; it is lawful, for, alas! many others make a habit of that vice. Drink until you are bereft of your senses; there is nothing to prevent you; for drunkenness has now become so fashionable that men are no longer ashamed of it. Curse and swear as well as you know how; you are quite at liberty to do so, for there are few houses nowadays in which that hellish speech is not indulged in by young and old frequently in the day. In all these things you can appeal to the argument: many others do it, therefore it is lawful for me, too. But I say: No custom or prescription can hold against the law of God, the fundamental truths of the Gospel of Christ. If I do anything that does not harmonize with that Gospel, although others, and even the majority of men, do the same, I sin with them; and if I persist in sin I shall be damned with them.

Imitate in your life the few, that you may merit to be elected with the few and to find a place in heaven. Do penance; repent of and confess your sins and amend your life; live according to the rules laid down for us by our Lord in his holy Church. Live as he lived; as his faithful servants live; keep the commandments of God, keep them all without exception, keep them constantly; in all things, at all times, in all circumstances do what you know to be the will of God. To build one's hopes of salvation on anything else, no matter how holy it is, prayers, confraternities, works of devotion, is a vain, false, deceitful hope, that can have only one ending, that of the reprobate in hell. Amen.

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