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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

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Timely Reception of the Viaticum

“Compel them to come in.” St. Luke 14:23.

A certain lord had prepared a grand supper for the refreshment of his friends, and yet some of the guests he had invited did not come. It is always so. They sent excuses. The goodness and love of our Saviour is represented to us in the person of the lord in the Gospel. What an infinitely precious food he has prepared for us in giving us his own flesh and blood as our meat and drink! He invites all to partake of it: “Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you” (Prov. 9:5). “Come to me, all you, and I will refresh you” (St. Matthew 11:28); eat and drink for nothing! And yet how astonishing the stupidity of us mortals! He has the, utmost difficulty in inducing us to come to this supper, which is so advantageous, nay, so necessary for us! And in fact there are Christians who must be compelled almost by force and violence to approach the holy Table, so seldom are they seen at it, so that the Catholic Church has been obliged to make a law rendering the reception of holy Communion at least once a year necessary under pain of excommunication. But why is it that if we are ever careless and dilatory in receiving Holy Communion it is at the time when we are most in need of it and when our Lord is most anxious to come to us, I mean the time of sickness. Today I will speak of these two points:

I. The loving condescension of our dear Redeemer; and

II. Our own stupid negligence.

I. If there is anything that can bring consolation in sickness it is a visit from a good, sincere friend, who can comfort the sick man and help him to pass the time by agreeable or consoling conversation. By agreeable conversation, I say; for it is not every visit that is pleasing to the sick man; there are some visits that only annoy him and make him wish that the person who came to trouble him with silly talk would go away. Job, patient as he was, sitting on the dung-hill and writhing in pain, complained of the friends who visited him with the intention of offering him consolation; for they began to speak to him of a host of things of which they knew nothing, and tried to fathom the designs of God in punishing him so severely. Ah, said he at last after having listened to them for a long time in silence:

“You are all troublesome comforters. Shall windy words have no end?” (Job 16:23.) Will you not put a stop to that vain, silly talk? If I were not sick it would be enough to make me so. But, on the other hand, a loving, sympathetic, cheerful, modest friend, who “showeth mercy with cheerfulness” (Rom. 12:8), encourages one by his conversation and makes his visit welcome. Such a friend as that cheers up the sick man and often helps him to forget his pains. And it is in time of sickness and trouble that true friendship is proved and the steadfastness of an affection that is not changed by outward circumstances.

Nowhere can the suffering Christian find a more faithful or loving friend than Jesus Christ; and from whom can he expect greater consolation, refreshment, and help, than when his Saviour comes to visit him in person in the Blessed Sacrament as the food and drink of his soul? When brothers, sisters, parents, friends visit you in your sickness, what can they do for you besides giving you the miserable consolation of the outward expression of their sympathy, making known their good wishes in your regard, and expressing their hopes that you may soon get better? When they have done that they can go home, and what better are you? That is all you have gained by their visit; they cannot take from you the bodily pains or mental depression which the natural sensitiveness to illness causes you. Nor can they give you the strength of grace to support the torments of your sickness and thus make them easier for you; nor can they lengthen your natural bodily life or assure you of eternal life; and therefore you can say to them, like Job:

“You are troublesome comforters,” from whom no help is to be expected.

But when Jesus visits you in the Blessed Sacrament your faith tells you that he is the Son of God, who holds in his hands the keys of life and death, to whom, while he was still on earth, the sick and dying were brought, and as St. Luke says: “Virtue went out from him and healed all” (St. Luke 6:19). He is the same the touch of whose garments was enough to cure disease; whose visit to a house filled it with joy and gladness. It is Jesus Christ who visits you, and he can at once relieve you from pain and sickness, or alleviate your sufferings, or lengthen your life, or give you patience, or assure you of eternal life; or else, if he does not help you in that way, he can let you understand what his reason is, that he wills you to suffer longer for the good of your soul; therefore he consoles you in the best way of all, giving you the grace of resignation to his holy will.

Jesus Christ, in the Blessed Sacrament, is the best and surest protector. Who would be afraid when he is present? For if the mere name of Jesus is enough to make the devils tremble and to put them to flight, what will he not do when he is united to the soul in his own adorable Person? If the mere recollection of Jesus is a source of joy to the heart, what an immense consolation and heavenly sweetness will not be caused to the heart of the just man in his sickness by the real presence of our Lord? Oh, yes, sweeter than honey and all things is his sweet presence.

What thanks and love we owe our dearest Saviour for such condescension and for the favor he shows us when we are most in need of his visit and consolation! And, oh, folly and stupidity of us mortals! often we have no desire for this most loving, and, to us, most necessary, visit! So it is. There are men, Christians, Catholics, who, if they ever object to be visited by our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, do so especially during the time of sickness, so that they have then to be almost forced to receive Holy Communion by extreme necessity. They must be begged and prayed before they will admit our Lord.

II. In a certain play there was once represented a grand palace, before the door of which all kinds of men were standing waiting for an opportunity to enter and hand in their petitions; but no one was admitted unless he was a friend of the attendant who had to present such petitions, or knew how to flatter him, or was dressed in costly style, or had bribed the porter. Among the crowd there was an honest, upright man, who had been waiting several days for admission, but in vain. “Oh, blind and unjust gates,” he cried out at last, who so little know whom you should admit first of all! Unjust gates, by which virtue is shut out! I might say the same, my dear brethren, to many a door behind which some one lies dangerously sick. “Oh, unjust door, that so little knowest whom thou shouldst admit!” The doctors come, and the door is thrown wide open; they are sent for in all haste when the sickness first declares itself; and quite right, too. Friends and acquaintances come to see how the sick man is; the door is thrown wide open; nor can we find fault with that. But where is the most skilful Doctor of all? Where is the best, truest and most necessary Friend, Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament? He, too, stands before the door, ready to enter at any moment. He earnestly desires to be admitted to pay a visit to the sick man;

but no one thinks of him, or at best he is remembered when the patient is at the last gasp; meanwhile the door remains closed.

This most reprehensible custom comes, in many cases, from a false idea that people have (and I know not whence they have it) that once they receive the holy Viaticum they must die. What incomprehensible ignorance amongst Catholics! If I receive Holy Communion I must die! If I receive the Author of life I must die! If I allow Jesus Christ to visit me I must die! Mercy on us! To what ignorance do we owe an argument of that kind? To make out of a sacrament of the living, that restores health not only to the soul, but often, also, to the body, to make out of that a sign of approaching death, as if he who has the keys of life in his hands could only be a harbinger of death! And you, husbands and wives, parents, friends, and domestics, how cruelly you often act towards the members of your households, in preventing them from receiving holy Viaticum during their illness or in putting off the reception of it from day to day, asking the doctors, nurses, and friends not to hint a word of danger, and least of all of the holy Viaticum, lest the sick person should be frightened! Thus the patient is defrauded of the heavenly food, until he grows delirious or falls into a lethargy which deprives him of the use of reason, or begins to gasp for breath, or has the death-sweat already on his brow, so that his soul is on the point of departing: thus it is either too late to receive holy Communion and the other sacraments, or else the patient cannot prepare for them worthily, and so receives them without any profit. This divine Sacrament, worthily received, is a certain pledge of eternal life. Now, if one neglects to receive it through culpable negligence, or defers receiving it until he can no longer prepare for it properly, especially when he is about to undertake the dangerous journey into eternity, what a bad sign that is for him! Amen.

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