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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

VOL. 4 = THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The guiltiness of a too busy Life

“What woman having ten groats: if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it!” St. Luke 15:8.

By this parable Jesus Christ wished to show the envious Pharisees, who were murmuring against him, because he received sinners, that he had good reason to seek a soul lost in sin, with the greatest eagerness, and to rejoice with the whole court of heaven at finding it doing penance. For his meaning was: If the children of the world give themselves such trouble, and work so hard for a worthless thing, such as a single sheep, or a groat, have I not far greater reason to trouble myself in order to save a soul that is made to my own image, and that I will redeem with my precious Blood? This parable also condemns the folly and blindness of most men who, for the sake of finding, keeping, or increasing earthly and transitory goods give themselves no end of trouble, while they shamefully neglect their precious souls and their eternal happiness.

A life that in any state or condition, is too busy, cannot be sinless, nor can it lead to heaven, although each and every occupation of the day may be in itself lawful and without sin.

Consider a person who leads an idle, luxurious life; he sleeps late every morning, spends hours before the glass dressing, receives and pays numbers of visits, goes out walking, spends his time in amusing and enjoying himself, and these are the principal occupations of his life. What think you of it? Is it lawful? Can such a life lead to heaven? But if you consider each of these occupations in itself, you cannot say that any one of them is unlawful or sinful; for it is not a sin to sleep an hour longer than the usual time, nay, it is often useful and necessary, in order to refresh the wearied body; it is no sin to look at one's self in the glass, nor to dress becomingly; becomingly, I say, because it is never lawful to dress in a scandalous manner, even if it be the fashion to do so; it is not a sin to eat and drink what one is fond of, and what tastes well, and if one has a proper intention in doing so, it becomes a work meritorious of eternal life; it is not a sin to visit a friend, nor to be visited by him, for that is often required by courtesy, nay, by Christian charity and mercy; it is no sin to take a walk, nor to play an honest game in company, nor to amuse one's self lawfully; nor is it unlawful to spend a whole day, or even three or four days, in that apparently idle, useless, and luxurious manner, for that is often required in the way of recreation, or to recover one's health or good spirits, and, of course, when the good

intention is not wanting, it will conduce to eternal salvation. You may see now that a person who leads a luxurious life may do nothing the whole day long that is unlawful in itself, nay, that he might merit heaven by everything he does. But to make a rule of living in that fashion, to make it one's only occupation, to spend weeks, months, and years in that way, could a life like that, I ask again, be excused from sin? Certainly not; because it is not a Christian life. A life of that kind is evidently an idle, luxurious, effeminate, and, of course, vicious life, that follows the broad road "which leadeth to destruction." Therefore, they who live in that way cannot excuse themselves by saying: We do no harm; all that we do during the day is lawful, and not forbidden. I admit that everything you do is lawful in itself; but if you reckon all up together, and make up your lives of such actions alone, you live in an unchristian and vicious manner. And that is evident enough from the fact that you do little or nothing of what you ought to do to gain heaven.

You see now that the same answer must be given to the excuses of those who are too much wrapped up in worldly cares. Who can accuse me of leading a sinful life? they ask. I do nothing wrong by being careful in my duty, profession, office or employment. I admit that everything you do is lawful; it is lawful for you to run about here and there, and to be diligent in the service of your temporal master; it is lawful to buy and sell, and to make honest profit; lawful to write, and study, and practice law, and hear what is to be said on both sides of a case; lawful to be careful in the duty one has undertaken to perform; and I grant you even more than that, for not only are these things lawful, but they are necessary to you, and if you do them with the right intention you will merit heaven by them. But, taking them altogether, if you are so buried in them that you neglect the business of your immortal soul, that you have no time to hear Mass, or to listen to a sermon on Sundays, nor to read a spiritual book now and then, nor to approach the holy Sacraments often during the year, nor to say your evening prayers and settle your accounts with God, by the examination of conscience, nor to think seriously of God frequently during the day, that cannot be consistent with a Christian mode of life, nor can it be excused from sin. Your employments, I repeat, are in themselves good, but the fault is that there are too many of them. It is not the nature of worldly occupations, but their multiplicity, that distracts the human heart from heavenly things, chains it down to the world, prevents us from serving God and working for our souls as we ought, and consequently causes the illness and eternal death of the soul. Those men who were invited to the feast had also their lawful and important business to attend to, and therefore they excused themselves from coming. I must needs see the farm I have bought; I must try the five yoke of oxen I have lately purchased; I must celebrate my marriage feast. Who would not look upon such excuses as valid? And yet God, who compares himself to the master of the house, was so angry at the refusal these men gave him that he declared solemnly: "None of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper" (St. Luke 14:24), that is, shall gain heaven. And why; they had lawful business to excuse them from coming? But the excuse was invalid; no business, no matter how lawful or important it is, should hinder a man from coming, when the Lord invites him to come; it should be abandoned, or else be interrupted or moderated.

If a saintly and learned man like St. Bernard confesses before God that he must write several books to a Pope, on whom God has placed, so to say, the care of the whole world, and to speak in those books of nothing else than that Pope's obligation in conscience to reduce the number of his occupations, and to set aside more time for prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, asking light and grace from above, and communing with God; and that, too, because the first, most important, and only business of our lives is that of our souls; if the holy and learned St. Bernard says that there is no hope of heaven for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, unless he lessens the number of his daily occupations, how can they who are overwhelmed with worldly occupations hope to gain heaven? What words can preachers find impressive enough to arouse the consciences of such people, and to remind them of their duty and of their obligation to change and amend their lives? But, alas! such people do not come to sermons because they have too much to do; their hearts are too much attached to earthly things, and they do not care for the Word of God, which is, however, most necessary for them. A too busy life, although each of its occupations may be lawful, is not a Christian life, nor is it free from sin, nor can it lead to heaven.

Therefore, if any of you here present lead a life of that kind, I conclude in the words of St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius: "Let this warning now suffice for you, so that you will not give yourself always, nor altogether, to external occupations, but will keep some of your heart and some of your time to consider the state of your soul"

If you ask me how you must arrange your occupations so as to perform these two duties properly, and not exceed in either, I will answer you in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice” (St. Luke 12:31). There you have the proper order of things; of two duties that must have the first place, which is the more important and necessary; reason itself tells us this, and no one can deny it. Now, the most important and necessary business that man has to perform in this life is to serve God and save his soul. That conclusion is valid enough. Therefore the first hour of the day should be given to God by prayer, and, if possible, by hearing Mass; the first thought on commencing any business during the day, must be given to him by renewing the good intention; the first day in the week (and thereby I mean Sundays and holydays) must be devoted to God and to the soul alone, by hearing the Word of God in sermons, by spiritual reading, and other pious practices; the first Sunday of every month should certainly belong to God and to the soul, by confession and Communion, as is the custom with pious Christians, nor is it forbidden to receive those holy Sacraments often during the month, for they are the channels by which the necessary grace of God flows into our souls. And as God must be the beginning, so should he be the end of all our daily labor, by the evening examen of conscience, if we wish to be truly pious and to take due care of our souls.

If this order were constantly observed, what a great advantage it would bring, not only to our souls, but also to our temporal concerns! How many do we hear complaining and lamenting that with all their labor and trouble they get on very badly; their incomes dwindle away year by year; their salaries are reduced; their debtors do not pay them; they are not able to pay their own creditors; they find it more difficult every day to keep house. What is the cause of all that? Do you wish to know? Then tell me, first, how do you manage your affairs? Do you give to God what belongs to him? Do you observe due order in your occupations? “Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice,” for it is he alone who can bless your labors. Do you do that? Then hear the promise of infallible truth: “And all these things shall be added unto you.” But if you invert this order and give to God the last, or even no place at all, on account of your many occupations, what wonder is it that he refuses to bless your work, since you refuse to give what belongs to him? “Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice;” look after your soul first of all! If you say to me, as St. Bernard represents Pope Eugenius as excusing himself: I cannot observe that order, because I must attend to my business or work, then I answer with the same saint: For that very reason you have too much work, and you ought to moderate it, if you hope to gain heaven.

Have you, then, more to do and to hinder you from serving God and attending to your soul than a Pope, a king, or an emperor, who has the care of a whole country, or of the whole world? We know already the order that one Pope was advised to follow. St. Francis Borgia, who knew Charles V., the celebrated Roman emperor and king of Spain, tells us that that renowned sovereign never allowed a single day to pass without spending a whole hour in the meditation of heavenly things, besides his ordinary prayers and works of piety; and this holy custom he never interrupted, whether he was in his palace in the midst of important state matters, or in the field with his army in all the turmoil of war. One day, while he was engaged in meditation, an ambassador from a powerful sovereign was announced, who desired to see him at once on most important and necessary business, that could not be deferred; but Charles sent word to him that he was engaged in a matter of still greater importance, since he was speaking with the divine Majesty about his soul. The same great and holy emperor used to keep his coffin in his room constantly before his eyes, so that he might remember his last end, despise earthly goods, and live in the fear and love of God. That is the way to seek God first.

Now, if this order could be followed by those who had to rule countries and peoples, and who ruled them well, too, amidst all the turmoil and confusion of a court, each one of us must conclude, my dear brethren: Why cannot I, too, observe the same order, and give to my God the first of everything *I do*, for my cares and labors are not so great as theirs? I will, then, begin to-day to observe this order, and will continue to do so punctually. I will often call to mind the impressive words of Jesus Christ: “What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?” (St. Matthew 16:26.) Amen.

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