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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

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Powerful Means of Salvation That All Men Have at Hand

“Taking the seven loaves, giving thanks He broke, and gave to His disciples for to set before them, and they set them before the people.” St. Mark 8:6.

Four thousand hungry people! What a number to provide for no wonder that the disciples exclaimed in astonishment: “From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?” And yet the merciful, and at the same time Almighty Lord, who, did not wish the people to suffer the pangs of hunger or to faint on the way, so increased the scanty supply that there was more than enough to still the hunger of the whole multitude. There you have a figure and symbol of the care that the good God, who is so desirous of the salvation of all men, takes of their souls, that nothing may be wanting to them on the way to eternity. Many are called; not four thousand, but all are called to follow Christ on this way. God has an earnest wish and desire that all men should gain heaven. But where can so many millions find nourishment on their way to heaven? That is, where shall they find the means of attaining this end? The Almighty God, who loves us so much, knows how to provide for all abundantly.

The Almighty has prepared for all men, not only necessary and sufficient, but frequent, abundant, and as far as He is concerned, efficacious graces and helps, and if they wish to cooperate with them, they can easily gain heaven.

It is an article of Faith. God has prepared necessary graces and sufficient means for all men to work out their salvation if they only wish to co-operate with those graces. For if God has the earnest, sincere and efficacious will that all men should be saved, then He must provide men with those means and graces without which it is impossible to gain heaven. Otherwise He would wish and require of men something that He well knows they cannot do. No; we have in God a most generous Father, who is not satisfied with providing for His adopted children, whom He has created for heaven, merely those graces that are absolutely necessary for their salvation, but He is ready to give to all men frequent, abundant, and, as far as their efficacy is concerned, most powerful graces and helps, with which they can easily, if they wish, merit heaven.

Can any one then excuse his vicious life by blaming the parsimony of the Almighty, and saying that he had not grace, and therefore found it too hard to restrain his wicked passions and keep the commandments? If so, then our Lord did not speak the truth when He invited all men to serve Him: “Take up my yoke upon you, ... and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet, and my burden light” (St. Matthew 11:29, 30). Before His ascension into heaven He said to His Apostles and their successors: “Go ye into the whole world and

preach the Gospel to every creature” (St. Mark 16:15). Hence the observance of the Gospel law, for which heaven is promised as an eternal reward, can and will be a sweet yoke and a light burden for all who wish. But how shall it be sweet and light? We cannot see that if we consider the Gospel law as it is in itself and in its own nature, for it is very difficult to our senses, and is opposed in nearly everything to our natural inclinations, as is evident from the words of our Lord: “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away” (St. Matthew 11:12). Now if, in spite of this, the Gospel law is for all men a sweet yoke, a light burden, it must be made so by the frequent and great graces that God is willing to give to all who desire and wish for them. True, these graces do not take away all the difficulties at once, yet they enable him who works with them easily to overcome obstacles that in themselves are hard to deal with; they give him strength to mortify himself willingly, to do violence to himself with pleasure, and so easily to abstain from forbidden things.

To explain this. There lies a sick man in a violent fever; he is tormented with thirst, and knows not what to do; but he can be cured if he calls in the doctor. He is forbidden to drink, and told that if he does not obey that command he will die. What do you think? Is that an easy or a hard thing for him? As long as the heat of the fever last and he suffers thirst, it is almost unbearable; if you put a cup of water near him, he cannot possibly refrain from drinking it; he will do what he can to get hold of it, and drink it up most eagerly. Whether I die or not, he says, I cannot stand this thirst any longer. On the other hand, it is easy enough for him to abstain from drinking if he uses the means prescribed; when that is done the heat of the fever disappears, and the thirst is quenched of itself. So it is with a sinner. His fever is the vice to which he is addicted; the thirst is that violent inclination to that which God has forbidden under pain of eternal death. Tell the proud man that he must humble himself; the avaricious man not to love money; the unchaste man to renounce carnal lusts; the vindictive man to forgive his enemy; as long as the fever and thirst of desire last, he will answer: Ah, I cannot; it is impossible! But tell him to beg humbly the help and grace of God, which God is ready to give him, and the heat of the desire will be moderated, and he will easily overcome difficulties that in themselves are grave enough. But if he refuses to employ that easy means, whom is he to blame for the insuperable difficulty he finds in keeping the commandments? Is he not himself in fault by his obstinacy in not asking the divine assistance, or not working with the graces given him, which would have made it easy for him to conquer his passions, as many know from their own experience, who, having once made up their minds to serve God, have laid down the burden of their sins by a good confession? Hence, if the law of the Gospel, that is in itself difficult, becomes, according to the assurance of our Lord, a sweet yoke and a light burden, then it must be sweetened and lightened, not by small, weak, and barely necessary graces, but by great, copious and superabundant ones. From which again it is clear that as all men are called to the sweet yoke and light burden of Jesus Christ and it is to be sweet and light for all, that God has prepared, or is ready to prepare, for all men, great, frequent, powerful, superabundant graces; and if men wish to co-operate with them, they shall easily be enabled to keep the Christian law, and therefore to gain heaven.

This generosity he shows even to unreasoning and senseless creatures, although he has made them only for the use of man. How liberally and abundantly he provides wild beasts with all that is necessary to preserve their lives according to their different kinds! There is no living thing so small and mean that does not know where to find its certain food and nourishment; if it is sick, it knows where to look for medicine; if it is persecuted by another, it has arms to defend itself or means of taking to flight, so that it may either protect itself or avoid its foe. The trees and all plants have numbers of little veins by which they absorb the sap that they require as nourishment according to their different natures; the winds, the dews, the rains, the sunlight and nearly all the heavenly bodies attend on their wants, to provide them with heat, or cold, or drought, or moisture, or light, or shade at different times, as their preservation and growth require. How beautifully the earth is adorned with meadows and forests, with mountains and valleys, with streams and rivers, that it may serve, not only as the necessary, but as a comfortable and pleasant dwelling for man! And what is most surprising, this vast, ponderous globe hangs in mid-air, in which even a feather could not remain for a moment without falling to the ground; and it hangs there so immovably that for the last six thousand years and more it has not moved either to the right or the left, supported by the careful providence of God alone.

And what are we to think of the human body, which is justly called a little world? What a number of different members it has to perform its actions, not with difficulty, and only as far as necessity requires, but with ease, comfort and pleasure, when, where and how it pleases. God has given it eyes to see with, that it may

behold the beauties of the world and know its fellows; he has provided those eyes with covers, that when they do not wish to see they may shut themselves up and remain hidden; he has given it feet that it may be able to move from one place to the other according as it wishes; hands, that it may defend itself when necessary, work and support itself; a voice and speech that it may make known its hidden thoughts and the secrets of its heart; ears that it may understand the speech of others. Everything that the wide world holds and produces is for its use and enjoyment.

Now, if God is so generous to all His creatures, so munificent in providing the means necessary for a merely natural end, could any one suspect Him of being parsimonious only to men, and of giving them the graces and gifts necessary for their salvation in such a small and niggardly way as to enable them to attain their last end, that is, heaven, only with difficulty and great exertion? Does God then show greater love and care for dumb animals, nay, for senseless and lifeless things, than for the immortal souls that He has made to His own image, and that Jesus Christ has appointed heirs of the heavenly kingdom? Is the heavenly Father more generous and liberal to the trees and plants than to His own children? more careful of the creatures that are made solely for the use of man than of man himself, who is the end, the lord and master of all creatures? And shall God be more careful of and generous to the human body, which is, after all, only a tool and servant of the soul, a dwelling in which the latter is to work out its salvation, than to the soul itself, which is the master and lord of the dwelling?

And why should we require arguments to convince us of this since we know it already by experience? For who shall count the graces and helps that the Catholic Church possesses in such abundance to free her children from sin, to preserve them in grace, to deter them from evil, to instruct them in good, and so to bring them to heaven? How many holy sacrifices there are in which the flesh and blood of Jesus are daily offered to the heavenly Father as an infinite thanksgiving for all benefits received, an infinite atonement for all sin committed, and as a means of obtaining all the blessings we stand in need of? How many Sacraments, by the worthy reception of which we can, as often as we please, increase sanctifying grace, and obtain more actual graces? How many indulgences, which the Catholic Church so freely bestows out of the treasury of the merits of Christ and His Saints, by which we can wipe out the debt of punishment that still remains due for our sins? How many spiritual books that we may read, how many sermons that we may hear, how many explanations of Christian doctrine that we may attend? All these are intended to enlighten our ignorance, to impress on our minds the fear and love of God, to encourage us to do good, to arouse in our hearts a desire of heavenly things, and, as it were, to force us with violence into heaven. How many examples of the wicked to deter us from sin, of those good and zealous Christians who are still alive and of the holy citizens of heaven to spur us on to imitate their zeal, their virtues and their holiness of life? Ah, how many ways we have to lead us to heaven! Blind mortals that we are! If we only made a good use of the hundredth part of the graces and means at our disposal! Nay, if many a one employed for his salvation the hundredth part of the labor and trouble he takes to lose his soul, there would be hardly one excluded from heaven. Ask any Christian, even the most abandoned, even one who is buried head and ears in vice, if he has not experienced during his life that he has received thousands of benefits from God; if he has not felt thousands of graces, opportunities, secret impulses, and movements of the heart to return to God and do penance. And if he wishes to speak the truth he must say: Ah, yes! I cannot deny it. Ask him further whether he can honestly say that God is to blame for his not having led a better life, if grace has been wanting to him, and therefore if the fault of his vices and sins can be attributed to the parsimony with which God treated him. Again he must answer: No; but I did not wish to profit by grace. And the same will be the confession of every sinner.

In a word, let others fight and argue with each other as long as they choose about eternal predestination to heaven; it still remains, and must remain, true for all men who are shut out of heaven, because it is the infallible word of God himself, what the Lord says by the prophet Osee: "Destruction is thy own, oh, Israel! Thy help is only in me" (Osee 13:9). Your eternal damnation, oh, man! Whoever you be, comes from yourself, because you did not wish to save your soul. Amen.

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