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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

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Avoiding Idleness If We Wish to Gain Heaven

"*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire*." Matt 7:19.

These words should be weighed attentively by all those who spend the most of their time in incessant worldly cares, or in idleness, doing nothing, vain amusements and useless occupations. Do these people imagine that such a life will bring them to heaven? No, for "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, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." And what is to become of those good-for-nothing people who produce no fruit of good work? "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire." In a word, idlers shall have no share in heaven, for:

An idle life can bring no man to eternal life. Therefore he who desires to go to heaven must avoid idleness.

A vicious life cannot lead to eternal life; an idle life is a vicious one, and therefore an idle life cannot lead any one to eternal life. An idle life is a vicious life. Idleness opens the door to all sorts of sin and vice. Idleness is an enemy to virtue, a betrayer of youth, a spendthrift of time, a dangerous sleep, a poison for the souls of men, an incentive to impurity, a pleasing guest of hell, a soft cushion of the devil, a luxurious bed of all evil. Idleness is the mother of all concupiscence, uncleanness and sin. Idleness is, as it were, the mistress of all vices—a cesspool of temptations and bad thoughts. In a word, St. Augustine gives no hope of salvation to the idle man who has no becoming occupation: "He who loves idleness shall never be a citizen of heaven."

The infallible word of God says: "Send him to work, that he be not idle." No matter whom the person may be, of what sex or condition, rich or poor, young or old, let that person work, and have something to do and be not idle. Why? "For idleness hath taught much evil" (Ecclus. 33:28, 29).

Natural philosophers tell us that the human understanding in our working moments can never be idle, but must be always thinking of something. So too the heart and will of man can never be without some inclination; they must always have some object to love or hate, to desire or detest. Suppose now that a man or woman, a boy or girl is idly walking, standing or sitting, with no proper occupation; no study or reflection for the mind, no work for the body; what then goes on in the understanding? For it must have something to think of. Under the circumstances the only thoughts that occupy it are vain, useless, dangerous or sinful; and from such thoughts can come nothing but vain, useless, dangerous or sinful affections, inclinations and desires of the heart. The

human heart and mind are like the millstones that turn as long as the water drives the wheel; if the miller puts in wheat, they grind that; if oats, they grind oats; if he puts nothing in they grind each other and make fire and flames. No matter how fertile a field is, if it is not tilled, and is allowed to lie idle, it can produce nothing but thistles and weeds of all sorts. In the same way, when the soul has nothing to do, no useful or necessary occupation, it gives itself up to evil actions. Stagnant water that has no movement or outlet becomes foul and miry, and brings forth only worms and hideous things; clear water, if it is led over a field or garden, brings forth grass and beautiful flowers; but if allowed to run idly over the streets, it gets mixed with the dust and makes mud and dirt. Our hearts and minds are ever-flowing fountains of thoughts and desires; if they are busied with good and praiseworthy work, they must of necessity produce beautiful flowers and excellent fruit; but if they are permitted to run about the streets after vain and sensual objects, nothing can come from them but filth and mire.

Idleness is called the devil's pillow. Never does this hateful enemy, who is always on the watch to ensnare our souls, find a better opportunity of spreading abroad his wicked inspirations and temptations, especially in the matter of impurity, than when he finds men idle. Therefore, there is no better remedy for evil thoughts and desires than hard work and constant occupation. Do something, that when the devil comes he may always find you busy; then he will leave you and say to himself: there is no hearing for me now. And if sometimes you are plagued with these thoughts during your work, act as if they did not concern you, and go on with your work without fear or anxiety; when the devil sees that you pay no attention to him, he will despair of being able to do you any harm and will leave you in peace.

While the Israelites were burdened with hard labor in the Egyptian slavery they never thought of impurity or idolatry. Their circumstances were such that they had no time or inclination for such things. But when they were freed from slavery by the goodness of God, and were idle and unoccupied in the desert; when the bread was sent them miraculously from heaven, and they knew not how to pass the time except in eating, and drinking, and amusing themselves, then they determined to have the golden calf as their god, who led them, as they thought, out of Egypt; then all sorts of excesses took the upper hand.

David, if he had not sat idly at his window after the midday sleep, would never have committed those horrible sins that he did afterwards bitterly bewail day and night. Samson, when the Philistines left him in peace, and he did begin to repose in the lap of Delilah, lost his strength and his eyes and became a laughing-stock to his enemies! And Solomon, as long as he was busied with the building of the temple, was a dear child of God; that wretched, peaceful and idle enjoyment of his goods filled his heart with the love of women, and turned him into a shameless idolater.

Parents should not wonder at the wickedness of their children when they are brought up in idleness. Fathers and mothers, God has entrusted your children to you, binding you by a grievous obligation to look after their souls and to bring them to heaven. You often complain of the conduct of your Sons and daughters; you say that your children already know and speak of things that they should not know anything of for the next twenty years; that from day to day they grow more independent, vain, unruly, and indeed if you could see into their consciences you would find far worse things that do not appear in their faces. Whence comes this? Reflect a little on the training you give your children; examine how they spend the day from morning till night; see if they do not perhaps sit on the cushion on which the devil takes his rest. You may be quite certain that idleness is the mother of all concupiscence and sin; you need not have the slightest doubt of this; idleness is the bellows that blows up the flames of impurity and wantonness and all other vices. How is it possible, if the son has nothing to do but eat, drink, sleep and roam about the streets, if the devil finds him always making a holiday; how is it possible for that wicked spirit not to lead him into all kinds of sin and evil? How is it possible, if the daughter has no occupation but adorning and tricking herself out; no other teaching or instruction but how she is to make courtesies and pay compliments, how she is to talk and dance; if she is allowed full liberty to attend all kinds of parties; if she finds the smoke of the kitchen too sharp for her eyes; if the needle hurts her hands; if the smoothing-iron is too hard for her hands; if housework is too hard or too low for her; if her whole occupation consists in talking, joking, laughing, sitting at the window or before the door; how is it possible that in such circumstances innocence, piety, modesty, purity should escape getting into danger and being lost? There is not the least doubt that idleness is the sole root of all this mischief.

Do not allow idleness into the house; keep the children working diligently, and then things will go better. And do not let the piety of your daughters deceive you in this particular; they may wish to spend the whole morning in the church, and to be present at vespers and other devotions in the afternoon. I do not say that those things are not good, but they are not always real devotions with every one; sometimes they are prompted by a spirit of freedom, weariness of being alone, love of idleness, curiosity, and the desire to see and be seen. There is no better inheritance you can leave your children, no more useful dowry for their future wedding day, than, besides the fear of God, a love and relish for suitable work. This is the best means of preserving their temporal goods and saving their souls from sins and vice.

What, some of you will say, do you wish to make us all work? You must know that we do not need to earn our bread in that way; we have, thank God, enough to live on; we belong to rich, respectable families, and it would not be becoming in us to toil and work; we have servants to do that for us. Now, I am, indeed, glad to hear that you are rich. I wish you joy, and hope that it may last! But that does not excuse you from honorable work and occupation; that is no reason why you should be always idle. The good of a serious occupation is not merely earning one's livelihood; the chief reason is to avoid opening the door to sin and vice by idleness, so that we may save our souls. Consider that house which the Holy Ghost describes to us. In it there was an abundance of all good things, and it was as well provided as the ship that does not leave the land until it is filled with all necessaries; its numerous servants were all well fed, clothed and provided for. The master sat in the council and took his place among the senators of the land; the mistress was clothed in rich apparel; in a word, everything was in such good order that there was nothing which one could envy in another house. In the midst of these riches, what did the mistress do in the house? Did she occupy herself, as she might have done, in going to parties, walking, gambling and visiting? Hear the words of the Holy Ghost: "She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands;" mark this, Christian women and maidens! "She is like the merchant's ship; she bringeth her bread from afar." So diligent was she in her housework that she even interrupted her night's rest: "She hath risen in the night, and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens. She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." In a word: "She… hath not eaten her bread idle." Was that amount of labor necessary for such a woman? By no means, but she occupied herself thus in order to please God. Therefore she merited the name of a God-fearing woman: "The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (Prov. 31:13, 15, 19, 27, 30, 31). Those holy hermits of olden times who lived on herbs and roots, and wove baskets the whole day, did not do so for the sake of earning their living or making money, for when a basket was finished they would unweave it and commence it again; their only object was to avoid idleness and always to have something to do, some work in hand. Charlemagne, the great Christian emperor, had his sons taught different trades and professions, while his daughters had to spin and were not allowed to wear any linen or lace but what they had made themselves. What do you think of this? These people belonged to a princely, an imperial family; and they worked, not for their daily bread, but for the sake of their souls.

You do not need to work, you say, in order to earn your bread. Very good, but you must work to earn heaven. Even if an idle life brought no sin or vice in its train, no special temptation, it still could not lead to heaven. For what is eternal happiness and to whom is it promised? It is a reward that is given to every one according to his works. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his Angels and then will he render to every man according to his works" (Matt. 27). Heaven is a penny that will not be given to any one unless to him who has labored till evening. Therefore, the usual excuse is of no avail: If I do nothing, I do no harm. What! No harm? To do nothing is in itself harmful. You have a piece of land which is so hard that it produces no thistles or thorns or weeds, but neither does it produce good fruit; is that good land? No. It is worth nothing to you. The heavenly householder will one day ask us the question that was put to the idlers in the Gospel: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" (Matt. 20:6.) He will not say: why stand you here, wicked and unjust people? Why do you hinder others from working? Why do you destroy my vineyard? But: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" "Go you also into my vineyard" (Matt. 20:7); work, or you have no reward to expect. No; never will any one who loves idleness become a citizen of heaven.

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