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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 + + +

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NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Carelessness of the Avaricious in Neglecting God during Life

“And entering into the temple, He began to cast out them that sold therein and them that bought.” St. Luke 19:45.

So far are men carried away by the desire of money and temporal riches that they do not hesitate to place the honor of God in the background, and profane the buildings consecrated to him, as we read in today’s Gospel of the buyers and sellers who turned the temple of the Lord into a public market-place, so that even the meek Jesus was forced to be angry with them and to drive them away with scourges. On last Sunday I said and proved to you that the avaricious man, with all his labor and trouble, gains nothing for time and eternity; but I have not said near enough, for he loses everything in time and in eternity, inasmuch as he neglects God and all that belongs to God.

I. The avaricious man neglects God during life by omitting the good that he ought to do.

II. He neglects God by doing the evil to which his desires lead him.

I. To please God it is indispensably necessary for us to acknowledge him as our last end, and as the centre of our happiness, who alone can fully and perfectly satisfy all the desires of our hearts; necessary to avoid everything that could keep us away from him, and to do all that can lead us to him. We must love him constantly with all our heart and soul, so that every thought, desire, word and action of ours must be directed to him. That is the only business that we have to perform in this short and uncertain life here below; whatever cannot be directed to this business by a good intention is not only useless, but culpable and unlawful.

Now, an avaricious man who works for temporal goods with an inordinate desire and care, does none of those things, and it is impossible for him to fulfill properly the duties which Jesus Christ himself has imposed upon us, because it is impossible to serve two masters, and because the love of money is utterly incompatible with the love of God; “you cannot serve God and Mammon” (St. Luke 16:13). Besides, on what does the avaricious man set his heart and his affections? “Where thy treasure is,” says Christ, “there is thy heart also” (St. Matthew 6:21). Now, money and property are a treasure. What is the end of all his actions? His money and property. In what does he place his happiness? Where does he seek his rest and pleasure? In his money and property. Of what does he think most? What does he watch most carefully? His money and property.

How is it possible for such a man to give his heart, and his whole heart, to God? It is impossible. To hear

Mass devoutly, to hear the Word of God in sermons, so that one may be encouraged to love heavenly things and to despise earthly goods by the inward working of the Holy Ghost, to go to confession and holy Communion every month, or oftener, to make once a year a more careful examination of conscience, so as to keep one's account with God in good order, now and then to read a spiritual book, or the lives of the Saints, to make a daily examen of conscience every evening before retiring to rest; these and similar exercises of a Christian life are unknown to the avaricious man. They do not suit his fancy; he cannot afford to practice them. They will not help me to earn my bread, he says.

If any one of you is so much taken up with business cares that he does not attend to God and to his soul, should I say to him: Alas, poor, unfortunate man, you are a slave to greed of gain and an inordinate desire of earthly things! Even though you seek no unjust profit, your very mode of life is not justified before God; you are subject to a disgraceful avarice, and before long you shall hear the words: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (St. Luke 12:20.) Yes, whose shall they be? I ask. They shall be for my children and heirs, you think. In that case, you work for others and forget your soul! And it is so in reality. Ask some gray-haired old grandfather for whom does he labor. For my children, he will say. And for whom does his married son labor? The latter will answer, for my children. And for whom do they work? For their children in turn. Alas, what folly and blindness! no one works for himself and his soul. The avaricious are like Domitian, who dreamt one night that he had on his shoulders a heavy, but, at the same time, an agreeable burden; the thought that a hump of gold had grown on his back, whereat he was greatly rejoiced. A foolish joy, for he had much more reason to grieve at a deformity that would make him contemptible in the sight of men. If he could have really had such a hump, he would have been obliged to carry it about with great labor, without ever deriving the least advantage from it. How many there are who make a golden hump for themselves! They heap up riches, but on their backs; not for themselves, but for their children and descendants. No one works for God and for heaven. No; avarice will not tolerate that kind of labor, when once it gets hold of the heart. Heaven is nothing more to an avaricious man than it is to a beast, which can see it as long as there is light; his soul is no more to him than to a dumb beast; he neglects it as if it were to perish with the body.

His god is money, and therefore St. Paul compares avarice to idolatry. When the prophet Osee, during the Babylonian captivity, was preaching to the Jews and exhorting them to adore the true God, Ephraim said to him: "I will not adore the God of whom you speak." And why? "Because I am become rich; I have found me an idol" (Osee 12:8). The avaricious man says the same thing by his acts: I have found me an idol, what is God to me? I have neither time nor inclination to serve him; I have my God at home in my coffers. If, now and then, he does something to serve the true God, he does it only for the sake of money and temporal gain. If he had nothing to fear or to hope from God, he would never think of him. He does not seek money for God's sake, but he seeks God for money's sake.

And besides loses all pity for the poor. God, as the common Father of all, has given to some an abundance of worldly wealth, that they may help the poor and needy; that is the last thing the avaricious man thinks of; it is easier to get blood from a stone than an alms from a miser, although he has more money than he knows what to do with. Divine Providence has given to some a larger share of temporal goods, to others a lesser share, and to others none at all, so that men might stand in need of each other, and by helping each other all go to heaven; the poor man by his patience and resignation to the will of God; the rich man by alms-deeds and the works of Christian charity. Now, if there is no doubt that the rich are bound under pain of sin to help the poor out of their superfluous wealth, how much greater is not the obligation of a rich man who is a miser? For, since he spends less than he might, his store increases daily, and with it the obligation of alms-giving. But there is little use in reminding him of his duty. Avarice has taken from the miser's heart all human feeling and natural pity, and, much more than that, it has taken away all supernatural virtue, all Christian charity and mercy. Thus the avaricious man neglects God during life by omitting the good he is bound to do.

II. But he incurs a still greater responsibility before God, by doing the evil to which his avarice leads him. The Sacred Scripture says: "Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man." "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale, because, while he liveth he hath cast away his bowels" (Eccles. 10:9, 10). The miser is the most unjust and the most impious of all. I find that this vice was

in the world in the time of our forefather Adam, for the first vice that showed itself in Cain was greed and the love of worldly goods, since he kept the best fruits for himself and offered the worst to God. His envy, jealousy, hatred and murder of his brother were all children of avarice. It was through avarice that king Jeroboam introduced idolatry into the kingdom of Israel; it was the cause of the rebellion and murmuring against God of the Israelites in the desert, for they clamored for meat to eat: “Who shall give us flesh to eat?” (Num. 11:4) although they had sheep and cattle in abundance, which they were unwilling to slaughter through avarice. St. Paul says of avarice: “The desire of money is the root of all evil; which some, coveting, have erred from the faith” (I Tim. 6:10). There is no sin so great and horrible which an avaricious man is not ready to commit for the sake of money. The Scribes and Pharisees wanted some one to deliver Jesus Christ into their hands; they had only to promise a sum of money, and the traitor Judas immediately offered himself; he was blinded and corrupted by a few pieces of silver. The high-priests, who wished to nail the Son of God to a Cross, were ready to spend their money, and they found soldiers and Jews enough who were willing to do the work of the executioner! The soldiers come back from the grave of Christ, filled with consternation, saying: We have seen that he whom you crucified has really risen from the dead, and as eye-witnesses we can publish the fact throughout the whole city of Jerusalem, to your great shame and confusion; what are you going to do? Out with your money at once; there is nothing better! Bribe the soldiers, and they will not only hold their tongues, but they will even spread a false report that the disciples of Christ came and took away his body during the night while they were asleep. So great is the power of money. The devil himself, after having vainly tempted our Lord to gluttony and ambition, at last tried to seduce him by the love of gold; if he is a mere man, thought the tempter, he will have to succumb to this; and so he took our Blessed Lord to the top of a mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth, and their glory, and said to him: “All these will I give thee if, falling down, thou wilt adore me!” (St. Matthew 4:9.) Clearly the devil did not yet know that he had to do with God, otherwise he would not have made such a promise, nor would he have dared to try a temptation of this kind.

If he were to show a purse of gold nowadays to many Christians, and offer it to them, ah, how many knees would bend in adoration of him! Faith, honor, fidelity, conscience, soul, heaven, God himself, all are too light when weighed against a sum of money! The desire of money is the root of all evil; nay, it is the means that the most vicious make use of to accomplish their sinful and wicked undertakings. The proud man uses it to make himself great in the eyes of the world and to oppress others; the sensual and unchaste man to satisfy his brutal lusts and his sensuality; the vindictive man to destroy his enemy; the glutton to satisfy his appetite; all of them require money to carry out their wicked intentions.

I conclude with the words of David: “If riches abound, set not your heart upon them” (Ps. 41:11). I do not say that you must throw away your wealth, but that you must not fix your heart and desires on it. It is not an evil thing in itself to possess riches; many of the greatest friends of God have been rich in this life; the whole evil consists in the bad use and inordinate love of it. It is one thing to keep poison in a closed vessel, and another to take it into one’s mouth and swallow it. “Woe to the rich,” not because they possess money and lands, but because they allow them to possess their hearts. You who are moderately rich, remember the words of St. Paul: “Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content.” If we have enough to procure daily bread for ourselves and those belonging to us, let us be content therewith, and not desire great riches. Finally, you who are poor, remember that God has so ordained for you, and that He gave the same portion on earth to his beloved Son, who came into this world poor, lived poor, and died poor, that he might make us rich in heaven. Amen.

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