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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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TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Injustice, an Effect of Avarice

“Whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee.” Luke 10:35.

If the Samaritan, mentioned in today’s Gospel, had not kept his promise and repaid the host for looking after the wounded traveler, he would indeed have done a work of mercy and charity to one, but he would have been guilty of injustice to the other. Injustice is of very frequent occurrence nowadays. I will continue to speak of avarice, or the inordinate desire of worldly goods. I have shown that this vice is the cause of many different kinds of sin, but especially of injustice; since men, blinded by the love of money, seek to gain it by unjust means. In my last sermon I briefly spoke of the fact that avarice is a very common vice, from which neither the rich nor the poor, in fact, very few men, are entirely free. Today I intend to show that unjust avarice is also a very common vice.

I. There are many who take what belongs to others;

II. Many who keep what belongs to others;

III. Many who injure what belongs to others.

I. The first kind of injustice is committed by those who take what does not belong to them. I am not speaking now of thieves and highway robbers, who attack and rob travelers, or break into houses at night; for it is evident that such people commit grievous sin, and violate the laws of justice most flagrantly. The very name of thief is detested by every one, and imprisonment or hard labor is looked upon as meek punishment for those who thus outrage the law. But how true it is that great thieves are let off, while petty ones are imprisoned. How many there are who, under some plausible pretext or other, actually steal more than would be required to condemn them to prison!

1. Amongst the number of such thieves are those husbands and fathers who rob their own children, by sharing with the children of a second marriage that which belongs by right only to the children of the first; or by wronging their other children out of the inheritance that justly belongs to them, for the sake of favoring unduly the child they love most. Injustice of that kind often gives rise to hatred and contention between brothers and sisters. Of the same class also are those husbands who rob their wives by squandering away their marriage portions with dissolute companions in feasting and carousing, while their poor wives and children are half starved. It is a sin that cries to heaven for a man thus to wrong those who have every right to look up to him for

help and support.

2. To the same class belong those wives and mothers who rob their husbands by spending, for instance, without their husbands' knowledge and consent, a considerable sum out of the common fund; by concealing and hoarding up for themselves, that they may be richer when their husbands die, money that should go to the children or other lawful heirs; by giving considerable sums to their parents and relations. All these acts are thefts and injustices, which bind to restitution. Remember, however, that I have said, "without their husbands' knowledge and consent;" because, if the latter know what is being done and say nothing, or if they give their wives permission to act as they please in money matters relating to household expenses, then there is no theft committed. Again, I have said, if they spend a considerable sum; because it is not unlawful for them to incur the ordinary expenses suitable to their station, or to give alms reasonably and according to their means (and, if their parents are poor, they must give to them in preference to others), even without the knowledge and consent of their husbands, for in such cases the latter would have no reasonable grounds for objecting.

3. To this class also belong children who rob their parents by stealing money from them. "He that stealeth anything from his father, or from his mother, and saith: 'This is no sin,' is the partner of a murderer" (Prov. 28:24). Why of a murderer? Because he treats his parents as if they were already dead, by taking possession of that which should not belong to him until after their death. Besides, who has given them a right to dispose of what must be divided equally between their brothers and sisters after their parents' death? If they were not guilty of robbing their parents, they could certainly be accused of theft toward their brothers and sisters, and of course they are bound to make restitution.

4. The same kind of theft is committed by servants who rob their masters and mistresses; this they do by often taking small things without permission, either for themselves or to give them to others, so that in time the things thus taken amount to considerable value. The same guilt is incurred by all those who receive such stolen things from servants or children, or who buy them. Sometimes servants and laborers, under the pretext of occult compensation, take away secretly from their employers more than they agreed upon as payment for their work; whether they pretend that their wages are too small, or that they have done something over and above what was agreed upon, for which, as they think, they ought to be paid, although they promised to do it freely and for nothing when making the agreement.

Gamblers, who cheat at play and win money thereby, are also guilty of theft; he who cheats is bound in conscience to restore what he has won. Thefts are committed also by those merchants and storekeepers who use short weights and measures, and if such people continue and mean to continue that mode of action for a long time, they are in a constant state of mortal sin, which they commit every time they sell in that way; because they have constantly the intention of making an unjust profit, which will amount in the end to grievous matter. They also sin against justice who sell old, damaged goods as if they were new, and for the same price; who induce simple, inexperienced people to pay a higher price than the thing is worth; and who, when they see that a customer is in a hurry for a thing, and that he cannot have it elsewhere, charge him much higher for it.

II. I will now speak of the second kind of injustice, which is committed by those who keep what does not belong to them.

1. There are those who do not pay their servants, tradesmen, or laborers, the proper wages, or who, without just cause, retain something out of their wages, or make them wait a long time before paying them. The Sacred Scripture says: "He that sheddeth blood, and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire, are brothers. He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat is like him that killeth his neighbor" (Ecclus. 34:26, 27). But how can that be? Is not the life of a human being of more account than the wages of a servant or a piece of bread? Does not he who commits a murder incur far greater guilt than he who defrauds a laborer of his hire? If so, why are they both classed together as brothers? I find the reason of that in the same chapter: "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; he that defraudeth them thereof is a man of blood" (Ecclus. 34:25); for he takes away their livelihood. It is an injustice to deduct anything from, or to retain a legacy belonging to a rich man, although he can bear the loss very well; but to take away or retain even a few cents from a poor laborer, who has nothing except what he can earn by the sweat of his brow, is a far greater injustice. Therefore God gives the express command:

"Thou shalt not refuse the hire of the needy, and the poor...but thou shalt pay him the price of his labor the

same day, before the going down of the sun” (Deut. 24:14,15.) Why before the going down of the sun? Why today and not tomorrow? “Because he is poor, and with it maintaineth his life, lest he cry against thee to the Lord and it be reputed to thee for a sin” (Ibid.).

2. This kind of injustice is also committed by those who do not pay their debts when they can, or who borrow money or make purchases, foreseeing that they will not be able to pay, thus injuring others and retaining what belongs to them. It is to no purpose that some say they are unable to pay just now what they owe, because they continue their usual extravagant style of living, although they are bound in conscience in their present circumstances to curtail their expenses.

Read the 18th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and you will find one of those unjust debtors, in the parable of the king who demanded an account of his servants. Among others, there came to him one who owed him ten thousand talents: “And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold...and all that he had, and payment to be made.” You notice in this passage two expressions that seem to contradict each other, namely, “as he had not wherewith to pay,” and “his lord commanded that he should be sold, and all that he had, and payment to be made.” How are these to be reconciled? If the servant had nothing, how could all that he had be sold? There is no doubt that the servant had enough, but not enough to pay his debts; he could gratify his sinful desires, his vanity, his gluttony, but he could not pay his debts. In fact, it turned out afterwards that he was rich enough; for when he was on the point of being sold, he besought his master, saying: “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.” It is just the same with some people who refuse to pay what they owe; they have enough, but when there is question of paying their debts, they are as poor as possible; they have not wherewith to pay. I might compare them to a hedgehog; that animal has a body, legs and feet like other animals, but if you go too near him he curls himself up and you see nothing but a prickly ball. These people say: I cannot pay my debts now. In other words, they roll themselves up like the hedgehog. They have enough for themselves; they eat well, drink well; but if any one who has waited years perhaps for his money ventures to ask them for it, they have nothing but hard words for him. I wonder what those people will do when they appear before the Judge who searches the hearts of men, and who judges justice itself?

III. The third and last class of injustice is committed by those who, although they neither take away nor keep the property of others, yet injure it deliberately.

The chief of these are judges, lawyers, officials and others of the kind, who undertake the duties of their profession, knowing that they have not the knowledge, learning or ability necessary to fulfill them; or, if they have the ability, are careless and dilatory in performing their duty, or take more upon themselves than they can properly attend to. These act unjustly, because they are the cause of all the injury that others suffer on account of their ignorance, negligence, or the number of unnecessary things they have taken on themselves, by which suits are prolonged, or concluded too hurriedly; an injury that they are bound in conscience to make good. The same is to be said of those who knowingly entrust such offices to incompetent persons. What a fearful responsibility is thus incurred, although generally men make light of it! To this class belong notaries who sign invalid, usurious, or unjust contracts; witnesses who give false testimony in a civil case; those who are sent to examine into an affair, and who spin out the examination as long as possible in order to make more money by it; pettifoggers who, although they know a case to be unjust, undertake to defend it, and urge an appeal against a judgment unfavorable to them, although they know that the appeal will be fruitless and that it will uselessly increase the expenses of their opponents.

With these mischievous thieves must be classed guardians who are careless of the property of their wards; housekeepers, servants and others who do not look after what is entrusted to their care, or allow others to take it when they can prevent them from doing so; all who harbor thieves; all who, by command, counsel, approval, or hindrance, are the cause of injury to others; all who take or give away a part of a thing, without which part the thing is useless to its owner. The day would be too short for me to speak of all the different ways in which injustice is practiced; and if all the injustice that is daily committed in the world were to meet its due, where would prisons enough be found? But what escapes the eyes and ears of earthly justice will one day be exposed to the whole world, examined, and condemned by the justice of God, and unless true penance has been done, and restitution made, it will be severely punished. Consider the sentence that will be pronounced against the wicked on the Day of Judgment because they did not feed the hungry, nor give drink to the thirsty, nor clothe

the naked, nor visit the sick and those in prison. If he who did not give of his own is to be cast into the fire, what will become of him who stole the property of others? If he is to be sent to hell to whom Christ can say: I was naked and you have not clothed me, what sort of a hell will be in store for him to whom he can say: I was clothed, and you have taken the clothes from off my body? If he who refused to shelter Christ in the person of his poor must take his place among the demons, what will become of him who by treachery and cunning has driven the poor from their homes? In a word, if he who has not done good to his neighbor will be lost forever, how can he who has in any way robbed and injured his neighbor hope to get to heaven? Amen.

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