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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. 2 = The Penitent Christian

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Two Essentials of True Sorrow for Sin

*“No man can serve two masters.” St. Matthew 6:24.*

There are many so-called penitent Christians in the world who try to prove our Lord a liar. “No man can serve two masters,” he has said; but these people wish to serve the world and God at the same time; they wish to serve God, and also their rebellious flesh; they wish to give themselves partly to God, and partly to the devil. This is chiefly their case when they are preparing for confession. There are some sins they wish to drive out of their hearts; others, that they cling to tenaciously. Or else, if they repent of all their sins, it is not from a supernatural motive. But they are attempting an impossibility; “No man can serve two masters.” There are two essentials to a true sorrow for sin, which I shall now proceed to explain to you.

True contrition must

I. *Be extended to all the mortal sins that one has committed, without a single exception; and*

II. *It must spring from God, that is from a supernatural motive.*

I. He who wishes to be a true Catholic must believe all that the Catholic Church teaches. The word of God is as infallible in one article of faith as it is in another. If I refuse to believe him in one point, I cannot believe anything he says. The same may be said of one who repents of his sins. He is not sorry for any of his mortal sins, if he is not sorry for all. If I sincerely detest a single mortal sin because it closes heaven against me and exposes me to the eternal flames of hell, I must also detest every mortal sin, because they all entail the loss of heaven and the pains of hell. If I detest one mortal sin because, in committing it, I have offended God, who is so good to me, I have the same reason for detesting all mortal sins. If I detest a mortal sin because I thereby have grieved Jesus Christ, my Saviour, who has loved me so much that he suffered death for me, I have the same cause to detest all mortal sins. If I detest a mortal sin because I have thereby despised God, who is worthy of all honor and love, the same motive should impel me to hate all sin, or else my repentance is not sincere.

Even if I detested one certain mortal sin, on account of its special deformity and loathsomeness, and felt no sorrow for the rest of my mortal sins, God requires of me, if I wish to regain his grace and friendship, and make a valid confession, that I should hate and repent of all the mortal sins I have committed, and that, too, with my whole heart. All must be forgiven together, or else none at all. God will not make friendship with the sinner until the latter has subscribed to all the required conditions. All that God hates must be given up and destroyed. “Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, by which you have transgressed” (Ezech. 18:30, 31), all without exception; for, if you allow a single one of them to remain on your conscience, you will assuredly die the death of the sinner. What would it avail me to shed bitter tears for a hundred grievous sins, if my heart and will still remained attached to but a single one? Hell is full of unfortunate sinners who are lost through a single bad habit, a single vice, to

which they were addicted during their lives. How, then, can I expect to obtain pardon, if I repent of one sin and not of all?

God commanded Samuel to say to Saul, "Go and smite Amalec, and utterly destroy all that he hath; spare him not, nor covet anything that is his; but slay both man and woman, child and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (I Kings 15:3). Saul obeyed, but not fully, as God had commanded him. He cut and burnt, and hacked and slew; but whom and what? "All the common people," says the Holy Scripture, "he slew with the edge of the sword. And Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the flocks of sheep and of the herds, and the garments and the rams, and all that was beautiful, and would not destroy them" (Ibid. 8:9). He kept for himself what was of any use to him, "but everything that was vile and good for nothing, that they destroyed" (Ibid. 9). And therefore he received from Samuel the sad news that God had deposed him from his throne, and rejected him, because he did not destroy everything according to the command of the Lord. "For as much, therefore, as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee from being king" (Ibid. 23). Here we have a striking picture of the conduct of many Christians when they are preparing for confession. After the fashion of Saul, they repent of and detest the sins that do not excite strong desires in them, from which they expect no special profit or pleasure, and which are not difficult to avoid. These they sacrifice to the divine justice. "All the common people he slew with the edge of the sword; "but what becomes of the king? What of the more important and attractive transgressions? "Saul spared Agag and all that was beautiful." That is what these sinners do. All that is pleasing to the senses, and that has long captivated their hearts, is spared. That unlawful, scandalous intercourse with that wicked companion; that proximate occasion of sin, which one does not wish to leave; that long-standing hatred and enmity; those ill-gotten possessions; those habits of drunkenness and intemperance, the occasion of so many sins; those scandalous abuses, the occasion of sin to others, these are the king Agag whose life is saved; these are kept uninjured in the heart, in the inclination, and in the desires; these sins are not repented of, because there is no serious intention of avoiding them.

Hear what the Lord God says: "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments living he shall live, and shall not die; I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done" (Ezech. 18:21, 22). "Pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord" (Lam. 2:19). And why not like oil or balsam? No; for oil or balsam cannot be poured out of a glass so that none of it remains sticking to the sides of the vessel, while water, on the contrary, may be poured out at once almost to the last drop. Sinner, when you go to confession, "Pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord," so that not one of your sins remains unrepented of. But contrition must not only be universal. It must also

## II. *Proceed from a supernatural motive.*

That which impels us to sorrow for our sins must come from faith. A few examples will serve to make this clear. Pharaoh, Saul, Antiochus, Judas, all confessed and expressed their sorrow for their sins. But what good did their repentance do them? None at all. In spite of it, they were lost forever. On the other hand, King David sinned, and that, too, in consequence of the greater lights he enjoyed, more grievously than those others, when he committed the crimes of adultery and murder. "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Kings 1:13), said he to the prophet Nathan. That was all the proof he then gave of his repentance, and yet the prophet said to him at once: "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (Ibid.). Magdalene came into the presence of our Lord, and cast herself down at his feet. Whereupon, she had the happiness of hearing from his own divine lips, the words: "Many sins are forgiven her" (St. Luke 7:47). Peter denied his Master most shamefully three times; but he began to weep immediately after, and not another word was said of his sin. The thief on the cross, who probably had not done a good act during his whole life, only said to Christ the words: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom" (Ibid. 23:42), and at once, the eternal kingdom was promised him: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Ibid. 43).

Whence is this difference? In the eyes of men, says St. Augustine, there was no difference between the repentance of the former and that of the latter; but the divine Judge, who sees the secrets of the heart, did not look at the matter as we do. Pharaoh was afraid that still greater plagues would fall upon him, as Moses had threatened in the name of God; and therefore he repented of his disobedience. Saul was anxious to retain the crown, and when Samuel told him that he would lose it for his sin, he repented at once. Antiochus was afraid of death, and hoped to be freed from the intolerable stench of his illness, for he was being eaten alive by worms.

Therefore, he wept and acknowledged God as his supreme Lord. Judas could not bear the tortures of a bad conscience, which brought him, not to a true supernatural contrition, but to the extremity of despair. Hence, none of those sinners found grace and mercy from God.

O Christians, of what kind is *your* sorrow for sin? I have sinned; I repent of my sins, and am sorry for them. That is what all sinners say; and many of them are indeed sorry that they have sinned, and would wish never to have committed a sin; but what is the motive of their sorrow? What makes them shed tears of repentance? Is it because they have offended the Almighty God, who is infinitely good and worthy of all love? Ah, I am afraid that is what most of them think the least of! Some temporal object or natural fear and anxiety, or misfortune, or the dread of disgrace before the world; such are the motives that induce them to detest what they have done against the law of God. It is not the offence offered to God, but their own misery and trials that they deplore; their sorrow is not supernatural; and, in fact, such people are the least capable of being moved to true contrition for their sins, because their hearts are fully occupied with their natural grief, and their minds are too disturbed to admit of good thoughts.

My dear Christian, your motive for repenting of and detesting your sins must be far different, if you wish to regain the grace and friendship of God in the Sacrament of Penance. Represent to yourself by faith what a great, powerful, good, merciful God you have despised by your sins; the immense loss you have caused your soul to suffer; the punishment, the eternal flames of hell, that you have merited in the next life, and then you will have reason enough to deplore your sins with true, interior sorrow. When you are going to confession, let faith speak, to your heart in silent meditation, as Nathan spoke to David, when the latter was still in the state of sin and had forgotten God, in order to move him to repentance: “Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; I anointed thee king of Israel” (2 Kings 52:7). Think of what you were a few years ago, a poor little boy, running about barefooted, the least amongst your brethren, who had nothing to hope for but what you could earn by the sweat of your brow; a poor shepherd boy, ill clad, you were glad when you had bread enough to eat. And I have given strength to your arms that you might slay the fierce lion; I enabled you to overthrow the mighty giant and to put his army to flight; and finally, out of sheer mercy and goodwill to you, I have raised you to the throne. Is not that so? Yes, David was obliged to confess, it is quite true. “I delivered thee from the hand of Saul” (Ibid.). Do you remember how you fared at the court of that king? How he often tried in his madness to pierce you with his spear, and how he pursued you everywhere with his army, seeking to kill you? Who helped you in those difficulties? Who protected you and saved you from the hands of your enemy? It was I, as you know very well. “And I gave thee thy master’s house” (Ibid. 8). The splendid palace in which you now live, the gardens that surround it, the treasures which you possess in such abundance, whom did all those things belong to a few years ago? To Saul, your master. And I have taken them from him, in order to bestow them on you, who never expected to be raised to such dignity and wealth. “Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord, to do evil in my sight? Thou hast killed Urias the Hethite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife” (Ibid. 9). Have I deserved that from you? When I placed the crown on your head, was that the time for you to trample my commandments under foot? When I raised you from out of obscurity, was it right of you to make me your foot-stool? Ungrateful mortal, how have you dared to treat me thus?

When you are preparing for confession, you should imagine that God is speaking to you in the same manner; that he says to you, I have created you. A few years ago, you were nothing; I could have left you in the abyss of your nothingness. I have chosen you in preference to countless others, whom I might have created, and have drawn you forth from that abyss, and made you to my image and likeness; your soul and body, your understanding, memory, health, skill, good name, and temporal support, all that you have and are, are benefits that you have received from me; and I have given them to you without any merits on your part. In preference to many thousand others, I have called you to the true faith, given you my Flesh and Blood as the food of your soul, and preserved you from many dangers of soul and body.

Often, when you had sinned mortally, I could have hurled you into hell where many are burning now, who have committed less sin than you. While you were actually in the state of sin, I have had the greatest patience with you, although I could have inflicted eternal punishment on you, at any moment. “Why, therefore, hast thou despised the word of the Lord, to do evil in my sight?” Amen.

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