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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 + + +

Volume 3 - The Good Christian

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Advantages of Gratitude to God

*“Seek, ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice;
and all these things shall be added unto you.” St. Matthew 6:33.*

If we were not wanting in piety and child-like confidence in God, how well would it be for us, not only in spiritual, but also in temporal things! But at the same time I cannot help thinking what a debt of gratitude we owe that good God who means so well with us! Last Sunday I showed how the Lord God deserves and expects a constant gratitude from us mortals, and that too, with the best reason; for everything we have in and outside ourselves is a pure gift of the divine Generosity, from which He has no profit whatever, except His honor and glory, and in which He has no other motive but to do us good. Now the Lord, in seeking this gratitude from us, does not look for any advantage for Himself, but rather for us; so that I might change the words of my text, and say with confidence to you: Be only grateful to God for the benefits received from Him, and all the other benefits that you can wish or desire will be added unto you.

God expects us to be grateful for the benefits He confers on us, His sole object therein being that He may be able to do us still more good; therefore we should offer Him our constant gratitude for even the least benefit, and give Him thanks unceasingly.

All of us on this earth are poor, needy beggars, who have to knock at the door of the almighty Father to ask for alms. All that we have and are comes from the hand of God: God alone is the Giver and Dispenser and Preserver of all the goods we have or hope for. With reason, then, does the Apostle St. James say: “Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration” (James 1:17). Therefore he who is in want must have recourse to the almighty God. And, oh, how easy it is always to have audience with this Lord, any day or any hour! He awaits our petitions with the greatest desire to share with men the treasure of His gifts and graces, which cannot be exhausted, no matter what calls are made on it. The only return He expects for His gifts is gratitude; and the only reason why He expects that is that He may be, as it were, compelled and forced to bestow still greater and more numerous benefits on us. If I thank a man who has done me good, I am still under an obligation to him and am still his debtor, for He has a right to demand a favor from me. If I thank God for the good He does me, He places Himself under an obligation to me for my gratitude, and becomes, as it were, my debtor, for He binds Himself to repay me for my first act of gratitude with a fresh favor.

Such is the teaching of the example of Jesus Christ; for it is most worthy of note that almost invariably before performing a miracle, especially one that was particularly beneficial to men, He first gave thanks to His Eternal Father. When He was about to feed the hungry multitude in the desert, and had not more than five barley loaves at hand, what did He do? “And Jesus took the loaves: and when He had given thanks, He distributed to

them that were sat down” (St. John 6:11). After He had given thanks, the few loaves were multiplied to such an extent that five thousand people had enough to eat, and there was left as much as filled twelve baskets. When about to raise Lazarus from the dead, who had already been four days in the grave, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. When He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice Lazarus, come forth” (St. John 11:41, 43). And the dead man came to life at once. That most wonderful of all miracles, and at the same time the greatest benefit He has conferred on us, namely, the Blessed Sacrament, in which He has given us Himself, God and Man, as the food and drink of our souls till the end of the world, He did not wish to institute until He had first given thanks. For as the priest says on the altar, in the words of the Evangelist, “Who the day before He suffered took bread into His sacred and venerable hands, and having raised His eyes to heaven, to thee, God, His Almighty Father, giving thanks to thee, blessed,” etc. The same happened when He changed wine into His precious blood; for the priest continues: “In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands, giving Thee also thanks, He blessed,” etc. All this is to teach us that our petitions for future gifts should arise out of our gratitude for preceding ones, and also that gratitude is the best means of increasing and multiplying, even miraculously, as was the case with the loaves and fishes in the Gospel, the gifts and graces of God we already possess.

Just souls have always had happy experience of this. When the divine anger was about to destroy the whole sinful world and all its inhabitants, Noe and his family were saved. And why was Noe the only one who found grace? Why were he and his family saved, when all the other inhabitants of the earth were drowned in the deluge? He had not implored that favor of God, for he knew nothing of the impending calamity until God revealed it to him, and yet God had resolved to save him even before he asked. What was the reason of that? What great merit had Noe in the sight of God more than others? Hear what St. John Chrysostom says in explanation of this, representing God speaking to Noe “Thou art the only one whom I have found grateful; and therefore, when all the others are perishing, I command thee and thy family to enter the ark.” For the people of those days were like brute beasts in their forgetfulness of God, and they ascribed the temporal goods they enjoyed to nature and their own industry, so that they did not thank their Creator for them. Noe, on the other hand, acknowledged with grateful heart that he owed all to God; and hence he and his family were saved from the general destruction in reward of his gratitude, although he had not asked that favor from God. Again, after the deluge, God was fully appeased, and made not only to Noe and his family, but also to all their descendants, that magnificent promise, “I will no more curse the earth for the sake of men;” never shall it be again inundated by a deluge; “I will no more destroy every living soul as I have done” (Gen. 8:21). What moved God to make this promise? Nothing but the gratitude of Noe, for hardly had he set foot on dry land, when, “he built an altar unto the Lord, and taking all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar” (Gen. 8:20), as a thanksgiving for being saved from the flood. He so pleased the Lord thereby that he received that promise for himself and his descendants of never again being afflicted by such a calamity.

David, considering the benefits he had received from God, cries out in astonishment: “What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?” (Ps. cxv. 12.) He does not say, what shall I render to the Lord for all the things he hath given to me or bestowed on me? But, “all the things he hath rendered me.” Why? What does he mean by that? “To render,” means to give a person something I am bound to give him in gratitude. Was God, then, bound to give David anything out of gratitude? It seems as if David was the first to give, and God then gave him something in return. What did David give? Gratitude. He thanked his God for the benefit of creation and preservation: and this gratitude was looked on by God as a benefit for which he should make some return. It was as if they were vying with each other as to who should make the best return. God gave to David; David thanked Him; God rewarded this gratitude with fresh favors; David again thanked God; this gave a fresh impulse to the divine liberality; and so, since the gratitude of David was unceasing, God could not stop conferring favors on him. This it was that excited David’s astonishment. O my God, he exclaimed, how is this to end? “What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?” When Anna, who had long been unfruitful, at last bore a son, Samuel, she hastened to offer him in the temple for the service of the Lord in token of gratitude, and she intoned this joyful canticle: “My heart hath rejoiced in the Lord. There is none holy as the Lord is; for there is no other beside thee, and there is none strong like our God” (I. Kings 2:1, 2). Anna was now quite satisfied; she had obtained her request, for she had given birth to a son; and she desired nothing more. But God was not satisfied with that, because Anna showed herself grateful to Him, and therefore He, too, had, so to speak, to show Himself grateful to her. “And the Lord visited Anna,” says the Scripture, “and

she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters; and the child Samuel became great before the Lord” (I. Kings 2:21). See what Anna gained by this transaction, “that is, by her first act of thanksgiving.” God gave her five children, which she never asked Him for, because she showed herself grateful for the first child He gave her.

Ah, Christians, which of us must not acknowledge that he is in need of the divine goodness every moment of his life? And who does not wish to receive still more numerous and greater benefits from God? Nothing is more agreeable than to receive a good thing that we are eager to possess. But gratitude is the key to the inexhaustible treasury of that Lord of infinite wealth. Go with confidence and ask of Him what you wish; all you have to do is to return thanks for what He has already given you, and the new gifts and graces are already prepared for you. “Be nothing solicitous,” says St. Paul “but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6); for gratitude gives prayer its greatest efficacy. Do you wish, therefore, to be in good health? Then thank God for the health He has given you hitherto. Do you wish to have means to support yourself and your family? Then thank God for the daily bread He gives you. Do you wish to bring up your children well, so that God may bless them? Then thank Him that He has preserved them in innocence up to this. Have you some affair on hand that you wish to bring to a successful termination? Thank God for having so often helped you in your business and aided you with His fatherly protection. Are you visited by suffering, crosses, or trials? Thank God for having saved you from still worse, which many others have to complain of. Have you suffered loss in your temporal affairs through misfortune? Thank God for having preserved to you so long what His Providence knew to be for your good, and for having now taken it away for the same reason. Are you well endowed in temporal matters? Thank God for it and through Christian charity share your wealth with those who have nothing, that so God may preserve it to you. If you have little, then thank God for that, too, and through gratitude give to Him, in the persons of the poor, some of the little you possess.

Again, if you have done anything for your soul to the honor and glory of God, return Him most humble thanks for the grace He has given you, without which you could not do the least good action. But you must know that to say to one’s self, “I do no good” (as is the custom with many, who undervalue and despise all their prayers, Masses, holy Communions, and other works of piety and devotion, although they try to do them well; and who look on them as if they were of no value whatever), is not humility, as those people imagine it to be, but ingratitude towards God, for thus the grace of God is not appreciated and prized as it should be. No; no matter how small the good work is, you must look on it as a benefit from God, and thank Him for it, that you may thus receive more grace, and be able to do still more good. You have some good in you, but you have nothing of yourself; this thought will make you neither proud nor ungrateful. Learn to be thankful even for the smallest benefit, and let not one gift go without expressing your gratitude for it so that you may thus become worthy of greater favors.

Christians, if you wish to obtain great favors from God, thank Him for small ones. Worldly goods are the least of the benefits that God bestows on us, although He does give them to the grateful. It is to heavenly, supernatural, and eternal goods that our wishes and desires should tend; and these we shall obtain in abundance from God, if we are only grateful to Him always. The grace of persevering in the friendship of God, the grace of a happy death, oh, what a magnificent grace! Can we desire any greater gift than that on which our happiness for eternity depends, and which is of the utmost importance for us? For no man with all his good works can merit it in the present arrangement of God’s providence. And who will obtain that grace? Do you wish to know? He who during life was grateful to God. We can purchase this inestimable gift of perseverance from God so cheaply by gratitude! Let us resolve, then, to be more grateful than we have hitherto been, and never will we cease in all our actions, which shall be directed to God’s honor and glory, to thank Him for all He has done for us. Our first thought in the morning when we awake, our last thought at night when we retire to rest, all our thoughts, words, and actions during the day, whenever we think of God, shall be nothing but a constant *Deo Gratias!* Thanks are to God! Eternal thanks be to God for all the good He has done us. Praise and honor be to the God of goodness now and forever. Amen.

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