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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Blasphemy

"He blasphemeth." St. Matthew 9:3

On other occasions, influenced by hatred and envy, the Jews had called him a disturber of the people, a drunkard, a sorcerer who drove out devils in the name of the devil, but all these accusations were as nothing compared to that of being a blasphemer, that is, one who assails the Almighty, who is worthy of infinite honor and glory, with curses and injurious expressions. I will take occasion from the Gospel of today to speak of this fearful sin, which is so common unfortunately, in order to inspire you with such a horror of this crime that you will be shocked at the very name of it.

I. *What is blasphemy?*

II. *What a terrible sin it is.*

I. Curses are often uttered in anger and impatience which ignorant people sometimes look upon as blasphemies, but wrongly; and there are many expressions in vogue which seem to be pious, but in reality are blasphemous. To be able, then, to make the necessary distinction, we must first answer this question: In what does the sin of blasphemy consist? It consists in using injurious or dishonoring expressions toward God, which assail any of his essential perfections, or affirm of him something unworthy of his supreme majesty, or attribute to creatures what belongs to him alone.

The first kind of blasphemy is committed by those unfortunate, miserable and wretched men who, on account of losses, accidents, trials, and miseries, murmur against divine Providence, and break out into the following or similar complaints: Oh, there is no justice in heaven any more; God has forgotten me; he seems to take a pleasure in tormenting me; he cannot cause me greater torment than he is causing me now. What have I done that he should treat me so cruelly? I have not sold Christ, at any rate; I have more to suffer than I deserve. Things have come to such a pass with me now that God can no longer help me. I will not pray any more, nor do any good works, for God will not hear me in any case. All expressions of this kind are grievous blasphemies, because they attack the infinite wisdom, power, goodness, mercy and justice of God. There are others whose blasphemous tongues assail the all wise and inscrutable arrangements of God's Providence. Why, they think or say, should God look after me always? He has enough to do without taking such interest in me and my belongings. God has not made a fair division of worldly goods; he gives one too much, another too little, and nothing at all to a third; one must suffer hunger, while another has abundance of everything. God is not just in allowing that good and pious man to suffer so many afflictions, while he neglects to punish that worthless and wicked fellow. It seems that he who serves the devil is better off and happier than he who is faithful to God. It is easy to say that I must abandon myself to the arrangements of God's Providence; if I do not make my own fortune I need not expect much from them. People who indulge in blasphemy of this kind appear to think that they can govern the world better than the Almighty; like the wicked king Alphonse, who used to say in his

foolish pride: "If I had been God's counselor in the creation, I could have suggested many improvements to him."

2. To the second class of blasphemers, that is, to those who attribute something false or unbecoming to God, belong those who say, for instance, when it thunders: Now God is playing skittles; or, the drums are beating in heaven; or, heaven is falling to pieces. Such people say sometimes to one who is praying: Oh, you are annoying God; let him have a little rest; he has something else to do besides hearing what you have to say. If one is anxious about the future, they say, oh, leave it to God; he had a wise mother. To the same class belong those who attribute to creatures what belongs only to God or to his Saints; this is done by way of showing affection, when some miserable creature is called by another his god, his divinity, his chief treasure, his adorable; or in the expressions, as true as God lives, as true as Gospel, I am as innocent as the Virgin Mary. Although these latter expressions may be excused from blasphemy, still they are not becoming, and they are injurious to God, because they affirm a human and fallible truth with a certainty that belongs only to divine truth.

3. To the third class belong those who, in cursing others, wish that they may be destroyed and ruined by what God has appointed for our welfare and eternal salvation. For instance, may the Blood of Christ, or the Death of Christ, or the Sacrament strike you dead. In a word, all expressions that contain contempt of God or of divine things, whether they are true or false; as, for example: The man above is not of that kind; God is a good man; God is a cunning politician; God knows me well, and he will not do anything to me; the weather-man above must give us a good season. Again, there are people, such as half-atheists and desperate characters, who say: I will believe and live as I will, and then God must give me the place in heaven that I wish to have; St. Peter and I are well acquainted; he will not fail to let me in when I knock at the gate of heaven what have I to do amongst the beggars and other low people in heaven? I will find far more respectable company in hell. All these expressions are disrespectful to God and to divine things. In this, then, consists the sin of blasphemy. And what sort of a sin is it? The most fearful of all.

II. We can deduce the grievous malice of a sin from three circumstances:

1. When we consider who it is who is thereby attacked and offended;
2. Who it is who offers the offence;
3. Why is it that the offence is offered? From these three circumstances we shall see that blasphemy is a fearful sin.

1. Who is thereby attacked and dishonored? It is no other than the God of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, who is worthy of all honor and reverence, in whose honor thousands of happy princes of heaven, Cherubim and Seraphim, with faces veiled through respect, sing their song of praise: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the heavens and the earth are full of thy glory." This God is attacked, dishonored and insulted by the blasphemous tongue. And the insult is offered to him directly. God is dishonored by every sin, as St. Paul says: "Thou, by prevarication of the law, dishonor God." Oh, man! Do you think of what you do when you commit a sin, no matter what it is? You dishonor God, because you refuse to do as he wishes you to do.

But there is a great difference between blasphemy and other sins. Other vices are confined, so to speak, to God's creatures. Pride is a great vice, by which one arrogates to himself praise and honor that do not belong to him, and looks down haughtily on others. Injustice is a great sin, for by it the property of others is stolen and kept. Impurity is a great sin, which defiles both body and soul. Drunkenness is a great sin, by which a man deliberately deprives himself of the use of reason. Anger, hatred, envy, revenge, persecution, injuring others, detraction, cursing and swearing, all these are great sins, by which one gives vent to his ill feelings against the servants of God. But it still remains true that all these sins appear small when compared to blasphemy, for that is the only most terrible sin which attacks God himself directly and dishonors him.

2. Who is it that dares to offer it? I might ask, like the Pharisee: Who speaketh blasphemies? It is a poor mortal, a worm of the earth. Yes, he who is rottenness, and the son of man is a worm (St. Luke 5:21). He who is utterly powerless, and who must depend on God for everything, dares to open his insolent mouth against heaven, and to use the tongue which he cannot even move without God's help in cursing and reviling the Almighty! And what kind of men are they who are guilty of such a grievous crime? Are they Turks, heathens, or idolaters? It would be less intolerable on the part of such as those. "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it," is the complaint that our Lord makes by the Psalmist: "And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hid myself from him" (Ps. 54:13). But they are Christians,

brought up in the house and true Church of God, who have been consecrated in Baptism as friends and children of God, relations and brethren of Jesus Christ, who often eat the bread of Angels, his flesh, at the table of the Lord, and who are called to be heirs of the kingdom of heaven. They are Christians who, in preference to all other people, receive abundant graces and benefits every day, every hour, every moment, from God. And I ask, must Christians revile God, blaspheme him and curse him? The Turks are severely punished if they mention even the name of their prophet Mahomet in anger; nay, although they are sworn enemies of the Christian religion, they dare not curse by the name of Jesus Christ, whom they reverence as a great prophet. But Christians, who adore Jesus Christ as their God, who uncover their heads and bend the knee whenever his Holy Name is mentioned, treat that Name so disrespectfully, revile and blaspheme it, whenever they get in the least passion, or anything is said or done to vex them!

3. And why should we give way to blasphemy? Oh, my God! Says St. Augustine, with bitter tears, how is it possible for a man to be so wicked as to seek nothing by sinning but to sin against and offend Thee? Is a man given to the lusts of the flesh? Alas, there is nothing wonderful in that! Corporal beauty and sensual pleasure are very powerful attractions that offer a gentle violence to the human heart. Is a man given to avarice and injustice? He is blinded by a love of riches, which will help him to supply all his wants. Is a man ambitious? The mind is easily captivated by the praise of others and by the desire of their esteem. And yet, although we are born with those inclinations, not one of them should be sufficient to induce us to sin. But alas, it is for the purpose of satisfying those inclinations that sin is committed! Ask one who has killed another why he has done so. Either to get his money, he will answer, or through fear of being injured by him, or through desire of revenge and having satisfaction for an insult. If he were to say that he knows not why he killed the man, unless it was to have the pleasure of killing him, we should hardly believe him. Such are the words in which St. Augustine bewails the sin of theft that he committed in his youth by stealing berries out of a garden, not through fondness for them, but through sheer love of mischief. And it is in that way, but very much worse, that blasphemers act whenever they speak so as to dishonor God; for there is nothing whatever to impel them to such a sin but a desire of reviling and insulting the Almighty. Tell me, blasphemer, what pleasure or profit do you find in speaking so disrespectfully of God, in cursing by the holy Sacraments, or by the Blood and Death of Jesus Christ, in treating the divine Majesty so contemptuously, or in making such a profane use of the Word of God? Do you find any bodily pleasure in it? Does it make you richer or more influential in the world? You gain nothing of the kind. What, then, induces you to commit such a fearful sin? Nothing but your more than diabolical malice in venting your anger against your Creator.

Wretched mortal, what harm has your Creator done you? Has he ill-treated you that you thus revile him and insult him? "Oh, my people," he asks by the prophet Micheas, "what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? Answer thou me." Dear Christians, whom I have purchased with my precious Blood, what harm have I done you? Have I ever given you the least cause to be angry with me, that you now attack me and my name so fiercely? Have I not given you countless proofs of the most tender, fatherly love? I never cease doing good to you for a moment, and, ungrateful mortals that you are, you repay my benefits by such shameful injuries. "For seventy years," says St. Polycarp, when his persecutors tried to induce him to deny God, "God has done me nothing but good; why should I deny him?" Blasphemous Christians, how many years of your lives are now past, during which you have been enjoying the benefits bestowed on you by God? How can you dare to blaspheme his holy Name? No tyrant threatens you with torture, there is neither wheel, nor gallows, nor sword, nor lance, nor rack, nor gridiron to force you to forswear your God and curse him; there is no one in the world who threatens you with death, no one who promises you either pleasure or profit; there is nothing that can compel or induce you to blaspheme, and yet you insult God so grossly! Your sin, then, can only proceed from sheer diabolical malice. Nay, from more than diabolical malice, for the devils tremble at the name of Jesus. It may be that the demons in hell are always blaspheming God; still the blasphemies of men are more wicked and less to be excused. For when the demons blaspheme, they do it only in thought and desire; while you, oh, man, do it with thought and word! The reprobate curse God on account of the severe tortures they have to suffer; and there is pity for the wretch who is impaled alive, or broken on the wheel. But you, oh, Christian, who have received nothing but benefits from God, what reason have you to offend him by your blasphemous tongue? Amen.

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