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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

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Reasons for Fraternal Correction

*“Friend, how camest thou in hither without having on a wedding garment?”* St. Matthew 22:12.

Truly, some of the many guests must have noticed that this poor man was not clad in a seemly fashion? Why, then, did no one take the trouble of reminding him in a friendly manner, and warning him to change before the king should come in? If that had been done, the wretched man would have had time to go home and put on something better, if he had it; and thus he would have avoided the great misfortune of being cast into the exterior darkness. But this is only a parable, and not history; if the thing had happened in reality, who knows how the guests would have behaved? Oh, how many there are who daily lose by their sins and vices the precious wedding-garment of sanctifying grace! How many are cast into the exterior darkness of hell who would have amended their evil ways, and escaped those eternal flames, if only they had had some zealous lovers of souls to give them a friendly warning and admonish them fraternally to amend their lives! A thing we might often do, if we only had the good will. But most people do not think of this. And yet it is a duty required of us all by the love of God and the love of our neighbor. But in what manner should fraternal correction be given and in what manner taken? The reasons for fraternal correction are, the love of God and the love of our neighbor.

I. *The love of God requires it;*

II. *The love of our neighbor requires it.*

Fraternal correction means an admonition of our neighbor with the intention of inducing him to avoid evil or to do good. To this correction we are all bound, due proportion being observed, according to our different states and opportunities. If there were no special command given us to this effect; if there were no evangelical counsel to exhort us to it; if it were left altogether to our own choice, still a sincere love of God would certainly impel us to practice fraternal correction. For if I love my friend truly, I rejoice in his welfare, and sympathize with his sorrows and misfortunes, while I spare no efforts to save him from evil. The fact of his being my friend is enough to make me abhor the idea of his incurring misfortune, or suffering harm. Now, the greatest evil, the worst harm, the greatest injury and insult, the worst misfortune that can be inflicted by his creatures on our Lord and God, who is infinitely happy in Himself, is sin alone, by which He is dishonored, despised, contemned, and grievously offended. Sin is an act of rebellion on the part of the creature against the Creator; an odious ingratitude towards the God of infinite goodness; an act of hatred and wrath against the God of infinite beauty a defiance and mockery to the very face of the God who is present everywhere; a shameful abuse of the divine cooperation, for God is forced, as it were, against his will to take part in the offence offered Himself, inasmuch

as He must help to perform the sinful act; it is a shameful rejection of God, of that sovereign Good worthy of all love, and a selling of ourselves to the devil forever for some wretched thing. Sin, as far as it can, attempts the life of the eternal God, and crucifies anew the Son of God, our Saviour who is now reigning in glory. And if an insult of that kind is offered the Almighty in my presence, can I look on with dry eyes, with speechless mouth, with an unchanged countenance, with an undisturbed heart? Should I tolerate that injustice, and not hinder it, if I can, by admonition, exhortation, correction, or complaining of it to others? If so, I should not be worthy of being called a child, a friend, a servant, a creature of God, or, at all events, it would not be true for me to say that I love my God, as I am bound to love Him, with my whole heart, my whole mind, and all my strength

What should we think of a son who looks on while his father is being maltreated by some wicked fellow, and stands there quietly while he is being kicked and buffeted, and does not make the least effort to help him, although he could easily do so? We should say that that son is undutiful, and unworthy of having an honorable man as his father. It is an indelible disgrace to the memory of the emperor Gallienus that, when he heard that his father was taken prisoner by the Parthians, he showed neither anger against the barbarians nor sympathy for his father; but without deigning to say a word by way of answer to the messenger who brought him the news, as if it were of no concern to him, turned to a friend and asked him what he was to have for dinner on that day. To know that his father was in prison, and yet not testify grief thereat, nor declare war on those who had captured him, is a most cruel and unworthy act on the part of a son. In such circumstances, a dutiful son would find in his respect and love for his father a superhuman strength, so that he would be ready to dare wounds, and even death itself, in his efforts to free his beloved parent. Atus, the son of Croesus, was born dumb and remained so, until excitement at a sudden danger, in which his father was, loosened the string of his tongue: Croesus was attacked by a man with a drawn sword, who was about to pierce his heart, when Atus cried out: "O man, slay not my father!" O Christians, is not the Lord God our Father, our most faithful and loving Father, who has not His like upon earth; to whom we pray daily, "Our Father who art in heaven;" who shows us His fatherly love by heaping benefits on us every moment? And we, who say we are His children, see and hear daily the sins and vices with which men treat Him so unbecomingly; we see and hear the uncharitable talk, their swearing and cursing, by which they publicly insult the Almighty, again crucify and slay Him; and shall we tolerate that? Shall we look on coldly, and not rather do our best to put a stop to it? Should we not cry out to the malefactors, "O man, slay not my father?" What are you doing? Why do you speak and act in such a manner? Do not slay our heavenly Father. But if we neglect to do this, especially when there is a hope of our doing some good thereby, is it possible that we have still a child-like love of God in our hearts?

There is no one who has not some friend to whom he is attached; I ask, if that friend were insulted, despised, and ill treated, would not any honorable man be hurt and afflicted, if he were looking on? Would he not feel angry with the person who thus misuses his friend, and try to prevent Him by every means in his power? We ourselves are so sensitive that a word is sometimes enough to put us in a passion, so that we can hardly restrain ourselves from taking revenge if we have the opportunity. Should we not have the same feelings at the sight of the injuries that are offered to God, from whom we have received all the good things we possess, who is our best Friend, and whom we must love more than ourselves? The great God who is not at all in need of our services, is so jealous of our honor and welfare, if we only love Him, that He takes to Himself all the injuries that others do us. "Amen, I say to you," He exclaims, "as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me" (St. Matthew 25:40). Nay, He says even: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of My eye" (Zach 2:8), and threatens the eternal flames of hell to those who dare to nourish hatred and anger against one of His servants.

II. If I can save my neighbor from some great danger, misfortune, or calamity, without any great loss to myself, there is no doubt that the law of charity binds me to do so under pain of sin, even if the man were nothing to me otherwise. Thus, if I were to refuse a piece of bread, that I can easily spare, to a man who is on the point of dying of hunger, or not to help out of a pit one who has fallen into it, and whom I can save by merely stretching out my hand to him, or not to give due warning to a blind man whom I see to be in imminent danger of falling over a precipice, who would say that, in such circumstances, I am free from a sin of cruelty and want of charity? I should evidently act against the fundamental law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" for if I were in similar circumstances I should reasonably wish some one to help or warn, or pull me out of the pit, or save me from dying of hunger.

Now, if the law of Christian charity requires of each one to help his neighbor if he can when the latter is suffering from danger, what, how much more does not the same law require us to help our neighbor in that utmost danger and necessity of the soul, on which all depends, and to try to save him, if possible, from the wretched state in which he is? And that can be done, and without any harm to us, nay, to the great merit of our souls, by fraternal correction, admonition, and reproof, as Christ tells us, "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him;" act the apostle towards him; admonish and reprove him. What will be the consequence? "If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother" (St. Matthew 18:15). Oh, what an act of charity! To have saved the soul of one's brother! To have saved a soul, that is more precious in the sight of God than all the treasures of earth, which have been created by God for the sole purpose of saving souls! To have saved a soul, a precious pearl, for the sake of which the Eternal Son of God left all that is in heaven, came down upon earth, and labored hard for thirty-three years! What a gain to prevent that soul from being condemned to curse and blaspheme its God forever; to help it to love, praise, and bless Him for eternity in heaven! No sacrifice is so grateful to God as zeal for souls. To pray, fast, distribute our goods to the poor, build churches and temples to the great God, and found hospitals for the sick and refuges for the poor, are indeed meritorious and holy works in the sight of God; but to save even one soul is a work of charity which far surpasses all the others in greatness and merit. Although you may give immense sums of money to the poor, you will do a great deal more by converting one soul. For he who gives money to a poor man appeases his hunger; but he who corrects a sinner hinders him from committing sin. In the one case, the body is saved from the pangs of hunger; in the other, the soul is saved from the flames of hell. "My brethren," cries out St. James, "if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19, 20).

It was this consideration that made the Apostles and their successors travel through the whole world, preaching the Gospel, and filled them with indescribable consolation and joy, in the midst of their many trials and sufferings. If they had been asked what was the reason of the incessant labors they undertook, of their unwearied activity, they would have answered that it was to gain the precious souls of their brethren that were redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, for the sake of which they would be quite ready to sacrifice their comfort and convenience, their honor and good name, their health and their lives, and, moreover, to undergo public disgrace and all the torments of martyrdom. This was the gain that Jesus Christ himself sought as the reward of all his labor, and of the bitter death He suffered on the cross, as He Himself says: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (St. Luke 19:40).

If we cannot with the Apostles and apostolic men go about the world to convert the souls of our brethren and win them over to God, yet we have many an opportunity of showing zeal for souls by hindering, lessening, and decreasing the number of our neighbor's sins, by fraternal correction and admonition. We see and hear daily that the great God is offended by many sins; that the precious souls of our fellow-mortals are hurried on in swarms to eternal ruin; and although we might sometimes hinder that to a great extent, we do not take trouble to do so; it gives us as little concern as if a cat or a dog were falling into a pit.

Ah, would to God that there were not to be found in such great numbers those murderers of souls who, instead of endeavoring to further the honor of God and their neighbor's salvation, seem to devote all their efforts to extending the kingdom of the devil and bringing other souls along with their own to hell! By their impure talk, and the indecent pictures they expose publicly, or by reading bad books, or dressing in a scandalous manner, they are to many an innocent soul the occasion of sinful thoughts and desires. They act as go-betweens to encourage an impure passion; they are teachers of the devil's school, who endeavor by ridicule, and even threats, to turn away from their devotions the pious who otherwise have no sympathy with their evil ways; nay, even parents are sometimes guilty in this respect, by not tolerating innocence and piety in their children, and by acting as devil's agents to corrupt the innocent by word and example. O scandal-givers! O betrayers of souls! See how terribly you sin against the love of God and your neighbor! Woe to you when the angry God will demand of you the souls that you have ruined! when that curse shall fall upon you which Jesus Christ has uttered against all who give scandal: "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!"

Let us resolve, never in future to allow an opportunity of hindering evil or doing good to pass by, when we have any hope that our warnings or admonitions will be effectual. Let us prove that we love our God, not merely with the lips, but in reality, with our whole hearts, since we thus take an active interest in furthering his

honor and preventing sin. Let us show thereby that we love our neighbor, not merely with the lips, but with the heart and sincerely, since we thus try to save the souls of our brothers and sisters from hell, and to bring them with us to heaven, where our joy and glory will be all the greater, the more companions we have with us to show us eternal gratitude for the love we had for their souls, and to join with us in praising God forever. Amen.

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