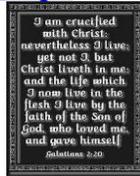




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JMJ

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. 5 = THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Uncertainty of Death

“For he was at the point of death.” John 4:47.

Even rich people must die. Even kings and princes must die. Even young people must die. He of whom the Gospel says that he was at the point of death was the young son of a ruler. Who is, then, free from death? Not one in the whole world. “It is appointed unto all men once to die;” the sentence is certain that he is already on the way, that we must die, and that, too, but once. When shall we die? That is known to God alone, who has fixed the last hour for each one. What follows from this? That he who wishes to die well must be always prepared for death.

It is uncertain when death will come; therefore if we love our salvation we should always be ready and prepared for it.

The servant who knows not when his master will return from a journey must be always ready to receive him. So we must be ready for the coming of our Lord at the hour of death. It is certain that he is already on the way, that we must die, and that the longer we have lived the nearer our death is; but at

what time will he come? In what year shall we die? This year or next? In what month, week, day, hour, moment? No man can tell us that, because no man knows it. Meanwhile we have received a message regarding this matter, delivered by infallible Truth itself. What is that message? You have often heard it; listen to it again: “Watch ye, therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come” (Matt. 24:42). And lest it should appear that this warning was given only to his Apostles he adds: “And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch” (Mark 13:37). The warning is given to all men; no one, no matter who he is, knows anything of the day, the hour, or the moment when I will come to call him. “But of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven” (Mark 13:32).

Since we can die but once, and on the last moment depends our happiness or misery for all eternity, it follows that we must use all diligence to be prepared for this last moment so as to die well; in the same way it follows from this truth that, since we know not when the last moment will come, we should be ready for it all the time of our lives, and therefore that it is the greatest folly to be unprepared and in the state of sin even for a single moment, because that very moment may be our last. Would you, in your present state, be ready to open the door

to the Lord if he should knock, and to travel with him into eternity? Let each one consider his own case and ask himself: am I now ready to die? Reflect a little... If not, why then do you not at once remove the obstacle out of the way, and place your soul in safety? For you can never be sure of the hour at which our Lord will come. Do you dare, oh, unjust man, to await the coming of death, while you still have in your possession that which you obtained by dishonest means? Truly not! Why, then, should you be so foolhardy as to keep those ill-gotten goods, I will not say an hour, but years and years? Would you, oh, vindictive man, wish to die in the moment when your heart is full of bitterness and hatred, anger, and revenge, and your mouth with curses, oaths, and imprecations against your neighbor and your whole idea is to have satisfaction from him who, as you imagine, has injured you? Oh, no, indeed! And why do you not then at once begin, according to the Christian law, to pardon your neighbor from your heart, to be reconciled to him, and to give up the abominable habit of cursing? Would you, oh, drunkard! Wish to die when you come home completely intoxicated, and ill-treat and tyrannize over your poor wife as if she were a dog?

If you received a certain message from heaven telling you that you were to die tomorrow, or in a week, nay, even in a month, would you wait long before preparing yourself for death and freeing your conscience from sin? My opinion is that you would begin at once to settle accounts with your Judge and to lead, for the rest of the time that is given you, a pious, holy life, so that you may not be lost, but may be happy with God forever in heaven. And yet you continue to sin, and intend to remain in the state of sin, although perhaps not a month, nor a week, nor a day, but only a few minutes of life remain to you. Imagine you are now on a bed of sickness; the doctors have given you up and say that you must certainly die in four hours unless a miracle is wrought in your favor; how would you spend those last hours? There is not a doubt that you would look after the interests of your soul, that you would receive the last Sacraments at once, make your will, and do all in your power to prepare for eternity. And why? Because you know that you must die in four hours, that it is all over with you, and that death is at hand. Now, how many sick people are there not, who according to the doctors were bound to die, and yet recovered and are still alive? Cases of the kind are countless. How many, on the other hand, have preserved their lives contrary to the declaration of God and of our faith? Not one. What do God and faith say? That you must die at an hour you know not; He does not fix for you four hours, like the doctors, but one hour, nay, one moment, and you know not when that shall come. If you believe the doctor when he tells you that you have four hours to live, and on the strength of his opinion prepare so carefully for death, why are you so negligent in preparing when God does not promise you even one hour of life? Faith tells you that you cannot be safe from death for a single moment. How, then, can you dare to continue living in sin as you have heretofore lived? How can you be so presumptuous as to remain for one hour in the state of sin and yet expect to go to heaven?

But, you will say: It is true that the hour and moment of death are uncertain; still people do not die without having some warning of their approaching end. Experience tells us that many thousands live in sin till their old age, and yet they are converted at last. Sudden death is the exception; most people die after an illness, and they can make their confession and reconcile themselves with God, and thus die fortified with the holy Sacraments. So, I trust, it will be with me, and therefore I am not under the necessity of living in fear and dread all my life. Is that really possible? Christians, what are you thinking of?

Many men sin, and are converted afterwards, you say; and you are right. That may be the case with me, you infer. It may be, but also it may not be; it is uncertain. Many die in old age; that is true. But still a greater number die before old age; and that is true also. Perhaps I shall live to be an old man, and then lead a holy life. Perhaps, and perhaps not. Who has told you that? Most people get sick first, and are warned of the approach of death by their sickness, so that they can prepare; I hope for a similar chance. You hope for it; but you may be disappointed! How many people there are who die a sudden and unprovided death? Many young and healthy people, whose last thought was death, have thus left the world and gone to eternal ruin, because it never entered their heads to be reconciled with God. Almost every day you read or hear something of this kind; so-and-so was carried off by a stroke of apoplexy; another was shot by accident; a third was struck by lightning; a fourth was drowned; a fifth was killed by a collision on the railroad; a sixth by the trolley cars. Do you think that God will let you know the day of your death a long time beforehand, so that you may continue offending him by sin until the last moment, and then recover his friendship by a tardy repentance?

Sinner! If death came to you now, and that is quite possible, what would become of you? Oh, if he comes, let him come! I must only have patience. Patience? If death surprises you in the state of sin and you die impenitent, will you suffer that patiently? If he hurls you into the depths of hell, will you suffer that patiently? If you have to weep and howl and gnash your teeth, curse God and yourself, and burn in that lake of fire forever, will you suffer that patiently? Will you then commit your fate and fortunes to such a blind and uncertain chance?

You would not lend your money to any one of whom you could say: perhaps he may give it back to me. Before parting with it you must have some surety that it will be returned. You would not venture your life in a leaky vessel, of which you could say: perhaps she may make the voyage in safety; but you would seek out the strongest and safest ship. And yet, foolish man that you are! You entrust your soul and its salvation to such an uncertainty!

For the sake of your souls, think often and deeply of this truth: I shall die but once. There is but one moment in which I shall die; on that moment depends my salvation or damnation. It is absolutely uncertain when that moment will come; it may come today, this very hour, nay, at once. Therefore I will be always ready to die; therefore I will not remain a minute in a state in which I should be afraid to be surprised by death. I do not mean that we should always live in a state of fear, dread and melancholy. No, that is by no means necessary. To be joyful in the Lord, cheerful, and good-humored harmonizes easily with the meditation on death, provided we are only firmly resolved not to commit a grievous sin, or if we should commit one, not to remain long in the state of sin. He who lives in that way need not fear death, since he is always ready for it; and no man on earth has greater cause to rejoice at heart than he whose conscience gives him this testimony: if death were now to come and hurry me off into eternity I should be prepared for it.

If, then, you find anything on your conscience that troubles it, say to yourself what Eliezer, the faithful servant of Abraham, said when he went to bring home Rebecca, the bride of Isaac. He had come to the house of the bride weary and tired, hungry and thirsty, and was at once invited by her parents to sit down to eat. No, said he: "I will not eat till I tell my message" (Gen. 24:33). But rest a little first, and take some refreshment; then we shall hear what you have to say. No, I cannot do that, nor taste a single mouthful, nor drink, nor sleep, until I have done what I am sent for; the business for which I have come is the most important thing and must be attended to first. In the same manner you must in future take to heart the affair of your salvation, and say and think to yourself: "I will not eat till I tell my message." I will not eat or drink until I have opened my mouth to disclose the sins I have committed and till I repent of them. I will not eat till I have made restitution for my neighbor's injured honor or property. I will not eat till I have been reconciled to my enemy and made friendship with him. I will give myself no rest till I shall have begun to lead a better life. In a word, I am in earnest about dying a happy death and going to heaven; and therefore I am determined never to consent to mortal sin for a single moment for the sake of any man, or thing, or pleasure, and so to live in future that in the supreme hour, when and wherever it may come, I may be amongst the number of those of whom Christ says: "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching" (Luke 12:27). Amen.

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