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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 + + +

Volume 4 - THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Great Care That Parents Must Take of Their Children, as Far as Temporal Things Are Concerned

"Blessed is the womb that bore thee!" St. Luke 11:27.

Happy are you parents who will one day be able to say with truth: I have reared, nursed, fed, and supported my children, and taught them during their lives to love Jesus Christ, to be his friends and imitators, his brothers and sisters, so that they may now rejoice forever with their Father in heaven! But, woe! If the contrary is the case, if your son or daughter must cry out from the flames of hell: "Accursed be the womb that bore me!" Cursed be the father who gave me life, the mother who suckled me! Or if it must be said of you: Cursed be the father, or mother, who gave life to, or brought forth, that son, that daughter! Their miserable children are in hell for all eternity, because their parents did not bring them up for heaven, and because they did not support them and look after their temporal interests, as they could and should have done. That such a terrible misfortune may be averted from everyone all faults regarding this important duty should be carefully amended. In my last sermon I proved that parents sin by not caring enough for the support and temporal interest of their children; now I am about to speak to those parents who care too much for their children's temporal welfare, and thus sin by excess.

I. *Some parents care too much for their children and for their sake make an unlawful use of otherwise lawful means.*

II. *Others use unjust means.*

I. Is it possible to be too careful of the temporal prosperity of children, especially when lawful means are used to secure it? Yes; even the care you must have of your children's temporal welfare, if it is to profit them anything, should be regulated by prudence and discretion. Now, there are fathers and mothers of families who depend altogether on their own industry and labor for their happiness and prosperity. They are so taken up with their domestic cares, with their trade, or business, or employment, that they hardly think of God once in the day; they have no time for piety or devotion; they hardly hear a sermon once in the year; they are satisfied with going to confession and Communion once or twice a year, and they are always uneasy, anxious, and disturbed; their thoughts and ideas are constantly turning on making money, and in order to attain that end with greater certainty, they seldom give alms to the poor and needy, although they thus act in a very unchristian and unlawful manner, or else they give alms very sparingly and not according to their means, solely through fear that they or

their children may suffer loss. It is of such people that I speak; and I say, without any fear of being mistaken, or of being guilty of a rash judgment, that they do too much altogether. Their care for their children's temporal welfare is excessive, and therefore I call it foolish and culpable.

They forget themselves in their eagerness to labor for others. They bake the bread to feed others, while they themselves suffer hunger. They are like the oxen that plough the land, but can never reap a crop off it, nor have any advantage from their labor but the straw that is thrown to them for food. They forget their own lives, that their children may have the means of living a few, uncertain years here below, and they keep only the useless straw for their immortal souls, which they allow to remain poor and naked, like a beggar's child, for after death they will have nothing left to live on for eternity. What folly that is! Charity begins at home, especially in what concerns the soul. Do you, then, care so little for your souls, fathers and mothers, that through love of your sons or daughters you neglect your own spiritual welfare, and are prepared to go bare and empty of good works into the house of your eternity? Remember that the judgment of God awaits you after death, and then the question will be: What do you bring for your soul? Where are the good works for which you can expect a reward? Your only care is to leave your children some money, that they may enjoy themselves after you die, so that you leave your poor souls in poverty and nakedness. Give, first of all, to God what belongs to him, and to your souls what belongs to them, and then you are free to look after the spiritual and temporal welfare of your children.

Do you think you can have a blessing on your household when you neglect and refuse to serve him who alone can bestow a blessing on your labor and trouble? If God is not on your side, what will all your care, anxiety, and labor, and trouble profit you? "Except the Lord build the house," that is, helps you to support your family, all that you do for that purpose is labor in vain. You do not act sensibly, therefore, nor prudently, for the welfare and advantage of your children, when you labor and work in forgetfulness of the Almighty and his service. A little of the favor and friendship of God would do more for you and your children's temporal prosperity than half the riches of earth without his favor and grace. The more children you have, the more, if you are wise, you will try to make God friendly to you and yours by good works, so as to benefit by his infinite power and generosity.

Therefore give to God what belongs to God, and to your souls what belongs to them. This should be your first care. Everything else you may leave to the common Father of all, the Ruler of the world, whose most bounteous Providence will certainly know how to bless your moderate labor and care, and to supply the wants of your children, as he himself says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (St. Luke 12:31). Never let a month pass by without uniting yourselves to God by a worthy confession and Communion. When the conscience is at peace and the will is always united with God, your labor is most likely to turn out well. Make a point of hearing a sermon every Sunday, as long as you are in good health. It is only right that, after laboring the whole week for your mortal bodies, you should do something once a week at least, on days specially consecrated to God, for the support of your immortal souls, by giving them their supernatural food and encouraging them afresh in the divine service. In your daily domestic duties, do not forget the good intention; keep yourselves in the presence of God by frequent ejaculations, and you will certainly have the Almighty as your helper in everything you do.

II. I speak to you now, misers without conscience, to whom it is a matter of indifference whether you make your profits justly or unjustly, as long as you can make them at all.

"Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man" (Eccles. 10:9), who has gone so far as to set his heart on money and riches, for there is no law, human, divine, or natural, that he is not ready to violate in order to hoard up wealth. He does not pay his workmen; he keeps shopkeepers and tradesmen a long time waiting for their money; he falsifies his accounts, so as to escape paying his just debts; he gives bribes to lawyers, that his opponent in a lawsuit, although his case is just, may lose it. Merchants of this kind sell bad wares as if they were good; tradesmen keep the material belonging to others, that is left after having finished their work; shopkeepers change weights and measures; public officials allow themselves to be bribed against the interests of justice; the rich lend money to the poor in time of want, at usurious interest; the powerful abuse their influence to rob widows and orphans, under a pretence of legality; servants steal from their masters; others receive stolen goods, paying for them very cheaply, or keep what they find without making any inquiries for the owner, cheating their neighbors in different ways for a paltry profit or a worthless gain.

The Lord says, by the prophet: “They shall build up, and I will throw down” (Malach. 1:4). they will gather together, and when they think they have something I will scatter their possessions to the winds. God will either take away from you, by a premature death, those children for whom you now sacrifice your conscience and your eternal salvation, so that your ill-gotten wealth will fall into the hands of strangers, or else the saying, “Ill got, ill gone,” will be verified in your case. Avaricious parents generally have spendthrift children, who very soon make away with what has been unjustly acquired; or else an angry God, who has borne your wickedness so patiently, will know how to punish you for it by all kinds of calamities, so that your children and your children’s children will be brought to bitter poverty.

And that is what God threatens: “This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth, for every thief shall be judged... I will bring it forth, and it shall come to the house of the thief, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof” (Zach. 5:3). The inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish, “so that no one will know what has become of them, and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach” (Eccl. 4:9). The children of the wicked “shall be oppressed with want” (Job 20:10). They will have to beg their bread some day or other at the doors of those whom their parents wronged. “The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly; and when he hath the things he coveted, he shall not be able to possess them. There was nothing left of his meat,” which he should have shared with the poor, “and therefore nothing shall continue of his goods” (Job 15:21). Achan wished to enrich his family by unjust means, when he kept for himself the gold he found in Jericho, and therefore he and his whole family were destroyed by fire. Giezi attempted to gain money unjustly, when, against the command of his master Eliseus, he received presents from Naaman, and therefore he and all his descendants were smitten with leprosy (4 Kings 5). King Saul tried to become rich by saving the most valuable possessions of the Amalecites from destruction, and keeping them for himself, against the command of God, and therefore his children were not allowed to succeed him on the throne (I Kings 15). Achab had seventy sons, whom he wished to enrich, and in reality he made them exceedingly wealthy, but because he defrauded Naboth of his vineyard he brought fearful calamities on himself and his sons (4 Kings 5). He himself died a violent death, and the Sacred Scripture says of his sons: “Jehu slew all that were left of the house of Achab, till there were no remains left of him” (4 Kings 10:1). Woe then, I cry out with the Prophet Jeremias (22:13): “Woe to him that buildeth up his house by injustice.” Foolish parents that is the way in which you build when you use unlawful means to secure your children’s prosperity. You can leave them no other inheritance but a malediction from God!

And even if, as rarely happens, God sometimes, in his inscrutable designs, allows your wickedness to prosper, so that you can make your children rich and give them a good position in the world, then your desire is quite fulfilled, is it not? Most unfortunate people that you are! Your whole thought is how others may live comfortably for a time when you die, and you never think of the unhappy death that awaits yourselves! Do you then, give yourselves up to the devil, along with your children, for a handful of money? Your children, I say, for they will either restore what you have gained unjustly, or they will not. If they do their duty, to what purpose have you saved money for them? To no purpose, unless to give them the trouble of restitution, and to reduce them to poverty, while you are suffering the torments of hell! If they do not make restitution when they learn the injustices you committed, oh, woe to them then, for they will certainly be lost for all eternity! Could you treat your children more cruelly than that? And suppose that, by the mercy of God, they save their souls; you are still lost forever. What greater folly could there be than to ruin one’s self for the sake of others, and to walk deliberately into hell that they may live a few years in comfort and pleasure?

And yet there are parents who have reached such a degree of folly and madness that they never trouble themselves about the hereafter. Christian parents, it is the God of truth himself who assures you that if you leave unjustly acquired wealth to your children, you are lost forever; and if you try to enrich them by unlawful means you incur the sentence of eternal damnation, the eternal death of the soul!

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