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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 5 - THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Coming and the Cruelty of Antichrist

“And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.” St Matthew 24:24.

Terrible shall be the signs, the forerunners of the day of general judgment, the last day of the world. Some are to appear a long time beforehand, such as the destruction of the Jewish nation: a people now without faith or king or country: the conversion of the heathen to the true religion, the persecutions of the church. And besides these we have seen wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, the increase of wickedness and sin, men growing cold in the love of God, the want of reverence towards God in the churches and towards priests and spiritual superiors. All these are signs of the approaching end of the world and the terrible Day of Judgment. These signs are the sickness of the earth which is to precede its death; because we are in the dying moments of the world, certain sicknesses of the world must go before. By these things God reminds us that it is approaching the end, so that we may not become too attached to it, too fond of it. Other signs of the coming of the last day are the advent of the Antichrist and the terrible portents in the sun, moon, and stars, and the distress of all nations on earth. Today I shall speak of the coming and the tyranny of Antichrist.

I. Who is antichrist and what has he to do in the world?

II. What should be our thoughts regarding this?

Who is Antichrist? Of what nature shall he be? In the Scripture the Holy Ghost never gives him a proper name, because he did not wish to mention the name of such a wicked man; therefore he calls him only Antichrist, that is, one who is opposed to Christ in everything. Daniel names him a “beast, terrible and wonderful, and exceeding strong” (Dan. 7:7). St. Paul calls him a man of sin, made up, as it were, of vice and wickedness; “The man of sin, the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3). In any case he will be a man of the same nature as we, created by God for the same end, and he shall also have sufficient graces and means given to him to save his soul, if he only chooses to make use of them. This wicked man is to be the offspring of adulterous intercourse, to be born in the Jewish tribe of Dan at Babylon and to be secretly brought up by people of the lowest kind: sorcerers and witches. It is easy to imagine the kind of training he is likely to get from such teachers.

When he comes to man's estate he will at first conceal his wickedness and craft under a mask of hypocrisy and apparent sanctity; he will be very zealous for the law of Moses, and pretend to despise all earthly things; to be an enemy of idolatry and a lover of the Sacred Scriptures. Although he will privately wallow in all kinds of impurity, he will outwardly condemn adultery and decry it as most criminal; he will be very charitable to the

poor; in a word, he will put on such an appearance of virtue that many nations shall desire to have him as their king. He will draw the Jews to his side in crowds, and they will soon look on him and adore him as their long-expected Messiah, when they see that he is a sworn enemy of Christ and the Christian law and an upholder of the Jewish law and its ceremonies, and moreover that they can hope to profit by having him in power.

When he shall thus have raised himself to a high position in the world and secured a great number of followers, then this wicked serpent shall commence to spit out his poison and to spread his authority over the world by craft, promises, and force of arms. Besides Turks, heathens, and Jews, he will attract to his standard and subject to his authority countless numbers of Christians. That he will effect first by the riches, honors, dignities and sensual delights that he will place in the power of all his followers, as Daniel says of him: "He shall increase glory and shall give them power over many, and shall divide the land for nothing" (Dan. 11:39). For besides the immense revenues he shall have from conquered countries, the devil with the divine permission shall discover to him mines of gold and silver, and treasures hidden in the sea: "And he shall have power over the treasures of gold, and of silver, and all the precious things" (Dan. 11:43). Alas! What an attractive bait that will be to ensnare the vain, ambitious, and greedy children of the world, who are already only too willing to grasp such things! How will they be able to withstand this seductive and powerful temptation?

But when Antichrist finds virtuous souls who will not allow themselves to be turned aside from the love of God by promises, flattery, caresses, money, honors, or pleasures, then he will use against them another terrible weapon, namely, tortures such as the most cruel tyrant has never yet even thought of. "For there shall be then great tribulation," says our Lord of him in the Gospel, "such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be" (St. Matthew 24:21). So that even many just and pious servants of God shall yield under the pressure of tortures and deny their God. "And it was given unto him to make war with the Saints, and to overcome them. And power was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation" (Apoc. 13:7). So that he will overcome even the Saints, some according to the body by martyrdom and torturing and putting them to death; and others, which is far more deplorable, according to the soul, by forcing them with cruel torments to deny Jesus Christ and his faith. There will be no choice left between enduring intolerable torture and falling away from the true religion, or else perishing with hunger and want in caverns and deserts.

All that should encourage a pious Christian and console him in such tribulations shall then be removed; for this cruel beast in his daring pride shall set himself up as the true God and claim to be adored and to have churches built in his honor. "And the king shall do according to his will, and he shall be lifted up, and shall magnify himself against every god" (Dan. 11:36). All the temples consecrated to our Lord shall be pulled down and desecrated, the sacred images destroyed, spiritual books burned, all priests made away with, and the use of the holy Sacraments and the celebration of Mass utterly abolished. Thus for about four years, the duration of the reign of Antichrist, the public celebration of the Holy Sacrifice shall be nowhere tolerated in the whole world; not a single crucifix shall there be that one might comfort himself in his sorrows by looking at it. He will give his followers another sign, which they are to wear on their foreheads or on their right hands and a man who has not that sign may not buy or sell the least thing, or do any business whatever; and the sign shall be the blasphemous words: *Nego Jesum* ("I deny Jesus").

And this shall be the case especially when Antichrist shall have recourse to the third and most powerful means he is to use to confirm his false doctrine; for, as St. John testifies of him, he shall by means of witchcraft and sorcery perform countless apparent miracles and wonders. Our Lord has foretold that already: "For there shall rise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders" (St. Matthew 24:24). Alas! How many souls shall be misled when this great and mighty monarch, so powerful in the eyes of the world, shall in the presence of Christians cleanse lepers, heal the paralytic, free those possessed by the devil, and even apparently raise the dead to life, and when all these cured by him shall adore him as the true God! How will it be when he commands the sun in the heavens to stand still, and it will obey his command? When he calls forth storms from the sea, and quiets them again? When he shall cause dumb beasts, infant children, nay, even lifeless images to cry out that all that Jesus Christ has taught is false, that he is not the Son of God, but a traitor who is damned forever? When he shall call down fire from heaven to consume those who oppose him or to burn sacrifices in his honor, or to give his disciples fiery tongues, so that they can speak all languages? How will it be when he shall appear to die and to come to life again in three days, and afterwards be carried by the demons heavenwards in the air? How will it be when the legions of those demons disguised as angels of light shall assist

and serve him in visible form, and sing hymns of praise in his honor, as if he were the true God and promised Saviour of the world? Thus shall Antichrist draw to his side almost all the world: the wicked and tepid by riches, honors, and pleasures; the pious and God-fearing by the intolerable torments he will inflict on them; the simple and incautious by the wonderful signs and prodigies he shall perform. “And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved” (St. Matthew 24:24). Three years and a half shall his reign last, after which this cruel man shall raise himself up in the air from Mount Olivet towards heaven, and there our Lord shall strike him with lightning, or shall by his mere voice hurl him down to earth and thence body and soul into the abyss of hell. “And then,” says St. Paul, “that wicked one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth” (2 Thess. 2:8). There you have a short description of Antichrist as a forerunner of the last terrible Day of Judgment. What lesson should we draw from it for the good of our souls?

II. What would you think if Antichrist were to be born soon, so that we should live in his time? For no man knows when that time is to come, as God has reserved the knowledge of it to himself alone. Let us at all events imagine that the cruel man is really in the world, and that we hear and see all that has been said about him; what should we do? Should we dare to renounce Christ and to side with that monster? Should we allow ourselves to be marked with that odious sign: “I deny Christ”? What! Each one of you will say, deny Christ? Side with the demons! God forbid that I should think of such a thing! I would rather die a thousand deaths than be untrue to my Saviour and God, or abjure his faith, in which alone salvation is to be found! I would laugh at the pretended miracles, and trample on the proffered delights of the flesh, the honors, and riches; I would heroically resist the tortures, no matter how terrible; all this I would readily do in order not to lose my one immortal soul and the eternal joys of heaven. Oh, truly, that is a beautiful and Christian resolution! And such should be the determination of each one of us even under such terrible circumstances.

But, alas! Poor mortals that we are with all our resolutions and professions! It is easy for us to say that we would trample on the proffered riches, honors, and pleasures. Now, while we are living in peace and quietness and have every opportunity of considering the matter duly, the least temptation is often enough to make us transgress most shamefully and renounce the friendship of the God who is so worthy of our love. How then can we dare to say that we should be strong enough to resist the attacks of such a monster? Even now, although we learn by daily experience the transitory nature of earthly things, and how soon and easily we can lose them, we are sometimes so beset by the passion of avarice that we sell our souls and our salvation for a miserable coin, and when our conscience or the thought of losing our souls trouble us, we dispatch such thoughts by saying to ourselves: what matter how the money is made as long as I succeed in making it! How then could we hope to be able to trample riches underfoot if they were offered to us in abundance?

It is easy to say that we should laugh at hypocrisy, false doctrine, and pretended miracles. Even now, while we have at hand countless opportunities of doing good, invited as we are to be zealous in the service of God by so many public devotions, having it in our power to frequent the Sacraments almost daily, to cleanse our souls from sin in the sacred tribunal, to feed them with the body and blood of Jesus Christ; having our ignorance enlightened by so many sermons which encourage us to good, warn us against evil, exhort us to avoid the occasions of sin and the evil customs and usages of the world; with all this we still remain so tepid and cold in the divine service, so obstinate in the habits we have once acquired, that sometimes we even attach but little credence to the word of God, or at all events believe no more of it than suits our fancies. What the corrupt world preaches, what we learn from the example of others, what idle people say to us, that must always be true, valid, and lawful; to it must yield the maxims and infallible teachings of the holy Gospel. If we see one who has the name of being pious, of conforming to the customs of the world, we say at once: oh, there can be no harm in it, since such a one does it! So, I repeat, we act in the full light of day. What then should we not do when the use of the Sacraments is abolished, public devotions prevented, sermons and instructions prohibited, and in the midst of general corruption and perversion, a new law promulgated to flatter our sensuality and pride, and that too, confirmed by miracles and supported by a false appearance of godliness and by the approval of the whole world?

It is easy to talk of resisting torments and braving martyrdom! Ah! How could they give up their bodies to the rods, the scorpions, the leaded clubs, the iron hooks, or to be torn and flayed, who are now so delicate and tender that they cannot bear the prick of a needle; who find a fast-day intolerable, and are absolutely unable to

stand or kneel for an hour in church, or to rise early in the morning on account of the cold? How could they allow themselves to be roasted or boiled alive who, if their beds are the least uncomfortable, cannot sleep for impatience? How could they laugh at torments to whom all crosses are terrible, who sigh and moan at the least trial, and give vent to their feelings in oaths and curses at the most trifling annoyance, expressing their dissatisfaction also by giving up the practice of prayer and devotion and the frequentation of the Sacraments? Oh, no! God of goodness! We are not in want of an Antichrist to prove our virtue, our faith, hope and charity by putting us to the torture! We have daily tribulations enough: more than we wish for, to try our virtue! Would that we could only bear them with patience and resignation for thy sake and to gain heaven! Every hour of the day we have abundant opportunity of mortifying our eyes, ears, tongue, sensuality, and evil inclinations; but to do so is often for us a bitter martyrdom that, without any tyrant to compel us, causes us to forget the obedience we owe God's holy law. A word of contradiction, a cross look is sometimes enough to upset our so-called virtue, and change it into impatience, hatred, and anger. What would then become of us in the midst of a terrible persecution, which many even of the holiest and most innocent shall not withstand?

Finally, it is easy to say that we should prefer rather to die a thousand deaths than deny Christ and take sides with his wicked enemy! Already most men are on the side of Antichrist against Jesus, our Saviour. Hear what St. John says: "Every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God, and this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world." Not in person, but in spirit; that is, in his precursors. If you look into the matter you will find not one, but many Antichrists. Are not those parents Antichrists, that is, against Christ, who allow their children all license, bring them up to the vanity and filthy pride of the world, to idleness, and keep them from the zealous love of God and true devotion? Is he not an Antichrist who, contrary to the law of God, cherishes revenge against his neighbor and frequents the dangers and occasions of sin? Is he not an Antichrist who tries to lead a maiden astray from the path of virtue by presents and money? Is not that woman an Antichrist who by indecency in dress and dissolute manners leads others into sin? Is he not an Antichrist who gives scandal by sinful talk and bad example? All these are Antichrists and servants of the devil: every one, no matter who he is who lives contrary to justice and the requirements of his state an Antichrist and a minister of Satan. What better are you for not denying Christ with the lips, or not denouncing your faith, if you deny him in work, and lose him by mortal sin? Of what use will your faith be to you if not to serve for your deeper damnation? What else do you do when you allow yourself to be seduced by the antichrists you live amongst but renounce Christ in work? What is the false oath you have taken but renouncing God for the sake of some trifling temporal gain? When you indulge in impure thoughts and desires, what else are you doing but stamping on your heart the words: "I deny Christ"? When you sin by unchaste touches, do you not bear that same sign on your hand? In a word, every mortal sin you commit in thought, word, or action, is nothing else but a declaration that although you do not abjure your faith in Christ, yet you refuse him the love and obedience due to him, and you refuse it for the sake of some wealth, honor, or pleasure that the spirit of the hellish Antichrist offers you. Amen.

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