

V1_14th_after_Pentecost= The Presumption of Every Sinner

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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 + + +

VOL. I = THE BAD CHRISTIAN

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Presumption of Every Sinner

“He will sustain the one, and despise the other.”—Matth. 6: 24.

“No man can serve two masters;” no one can serve God, and at the same time the devil, the flesh, or the world. Now, what does man do when he commits a mortal sin? He hates his God, who is his lawful Master, and loves the world, or the flesh; he sustains the devil, and despises his God. Oh, sinners, is there one among you who finds it hard to acknowledge his sins and repent of them? Let him only consider well what it means to have treated his Lord and his God with contempt, and he will find therein cause enough for the most profound sorrow and detestation of his offences. This sermon will be profitable not only for sinners, to arouse them to repentance and amendment, but also for those who have already repented of and amended their wicked lives, to keep them from relapsing into sin, and also for the just and the innocent, to give them a greater knowledge of the malice of sin, and thus inspire them with a greater horror of it.

Every one who commits a mortal sin treats his Lord and his God most contemptuously.

How great is the Lord our God? If I could say how great God is, then either I should be another God, or God should not be what he is. For he alone can understand and say how great he is, and he can say it to no one but himself; because no understanding outside of him can comprehend the height and greatness of his majesty. Ask the heavenly hosts of Angels who surround his throne and see him clearly how great this Lord is. They will turn away from you in silence, and, trembling with awe, veil their faces before him, as if they could not bear the brightness of his majesty. The philosopher Simonides, on being asked about the essence and perfection of God, requested three days’ time to consider the question, and at the expiration of that time deferred answering for another three days, so that his answer might be complete and satisfactory. Three days, indeed, and three days again! If all the Cherubim and Seraphim were to spend a whole eternity thinking of it, they could neither understand nor explain what a great Lord God is. This is all we can think and say, with the Psalmist: “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and of his greatness there is no end.” If we consider his power, who can resist him? He is the Lord; to will and to accomplish is the same thing to him. Does he wish to create the world and all that is in it, or millions of worlds vaster and more beautiful than this? He requires no help, no instrument for that purpose, but a single word, the breath of his mouth, as the royal prophet says: By the word of the Lord the heavens were

established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth.” And where does he place the world? On what foundation? “He hangeth the earth upon nothing.” Let the most clever inventors, the most experienced masters and talented artists of the whole world put their heads together and see whether they can find any way of making even an apple remain unsupported in the air without falling to the ground.

And yet that great and powerful Lord you and I, and all who commit mortal sin, insult by despising his authority, his majesty, and his almighty and supreme power. Is it not “the Lord himself against whom we have sinned?” (Is. 42: 28.) For what else is sin but a transgression of the divine commands, an opposition of a created will to the will of the Creator, a rebellion and disobedience by which man refuses to do what God commands him to do, or does what God forbids him to do? Hear how this great Lord complains of all sinners: “I called, and you did not answer; I spoke, and you did not hear; and you did evil in my eyes, and you have chosen the things that displease me” (Is. 65: 12). This very day the Lord says to you and to me that we must keep within the bounds of the law he has laid down for us, and never refuse him our service. But what answer do we give him when we commit sin? “I will not serve” (Jer. 2: 20).

Yes, so shamefully do we treat God whenever we transgress his commands! He says to us that we must sanctify the Lord’s Day, and devote all Sundays and holydays to his service alone by good works; but we answer: no, we will not serve; we will spend those days in gambling and drinking. He says we must honor father and mother, and treat them with due respect, obey and love them; but, with all disobedient children, we answer: no, we will not serve. He commands parents to “bring up their children in the discipline and correction of the Lord” (Ephes. 6: 4); to train them up in his fear and love for their last end, not to teach them worldly vanities, but to keep them from evil and lead them on to good. No, says the father or mother, I will not serve; you may command me a thousand times, but I will not obey. “I say to you, love your enemies” (Matt. 5: 44); forgive them from your hearts; do not cherish hatred, anger, or a desire of revenge. But the vindictive man refuses to obey; let me only get my enemy in my power, he says, and I will revenge myself in spite of God’s command; I will not obey; I cannot and will not endure the sight of that man. He commands us not to steal, nor to injure another man’s property, either by word or deed, or to hinder another’s prosperity, or to retain anything unjustly. No, is the answer; I will not serve; I will steal whenever I can; I will get possession of that property unjustly; I will not make restitution. He commands us not to commit adultery, nor to give way to impurity even in thought or desire, much less in words or acts; to avoid dangerous company, and to renounce at once that unlawful attachment. But the answer is again, I will not serve; I prefer thy creature to thy command; I will give every freedom to my eyes, ears, and other senses; I must gratify my lusts. He commands us not to curse our neighbor, nor to wish him harm, nor to speak ill of him, nor in any way to scandalize him, or give him occasion to sin. But his command is disregarded; I will not serve, is the answer; I will not obey. He says: But I am the Lord thy God who command thee! No matter, I will not obey. But I will punish you in hell with the demons if you are disobedient! No matter, I disregard thy threats; I will not serve.

When king Pharaoh was told, on the part of God that he should allow the Israelites to go, he answered at once: “Who is the Lord that I should hear his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” Pharaoh paid no attention to what God said. But he would have shown far greater pride and insolence if he had said: I know the Lord, but I will not hear his voice, nor receive any commands from him. What the shameless pride of Pharaoh could not do, that you do, oh, sinner! For you acknowledge God to be your supreme Lord and Master; you know full well what he so earnestly requires of you, and yet you dare say to him that you will not hear his voice, nor listen to his command, nor obey him, nor serve him. Is not that despising his authority and supreme power? Is not that an act of rebellion against his will? If the Lord were your equal, could you act more insolently toward him? But, you think, far be that from me; I have never said such a thing in my whole life; I have sinned, not through contempt of God, but for the sake of gain or pleasure. True, you have not said it in words; but you have by your sinful actions, which speak louder than any tongue could. If I give you a blow on the cheek, although I keep silent, and do not say I wish to hurt you, you feel it all the same, and I have insulted you; for I know well that you do not like it.

You command your servant-maid to do something; she says nothing, but does not obey; you may command or threaten as you will, she continues obstinate. Do you not think her guilty of contemning your authority? You certainly do not propose to yourself contempt of God as the end and aim of your actions; but in reality you do condemn him, since you know that act to be in direct opposition to his express command. Can there be a greater presumption?

Miserable man, what makes you so daring and insolent as to provoke one who can in a moment hurl you into the depths of hell? Suppose I held you by the hair of the head suspended over the parapet of a bridge, ready to drop you into the water; how would you behave toward me? Would you struggle against me, abuse and curse, and try to beat me? Oh, no; you would keep quite still, for I need only open my hand to let you drop into the river below, where you would be drowned. I think you would rather be inclined to talk very gently to me, and to beg my pardon most humbly, if you had ever done anything to offend me. And yet, if I let you fall, I should only take away your temporal life; I could not do your soul the least harm. Now I ask you, has not your Lord and your God got you in his hands far more than I should in that imaginary case? When, how, and where he wills, he has complete power over you. If he withdraws his all-powerful hand from you, where will you fall? Not into a river, from which you might possibly be rescued, but into the abyss of hell, thus losing not only the temporal life of the body, but the eternal life of the soul. He is the Lord whom Christ tells us to fear: "Fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell" (Matt. 10: 28). Nor would it cost him any trouble to do this in a moment; for all the creatures he has made are so many executioners who stand ready to do his bidding, and to inflict punishment on you. They all cry out against the sinner, just as Abisai did against Semei, who was reviling his king, David: "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? I will go and cut off his head" (2 Kings 16: 9). The lightning and hail are ready to strike him. The demons are only waiting the word to carry him off. If the Lord only gave a sign there would be an end to the sinner. And yet, oh, man, you, who are so completely in the hands of God, in all places and at all times, dare to defy and provoke him, to despise his commands, and to say by your actions, I will not serve thee, oh, Lord; I will not do as thou commandest!

Many may think that God is too strict with his poor creatures, that the pains of hell are too severe for a single sin, and that it is not right to have to spend a whole eternity in fearful torments for a momentary pleasure, that may have been consented to only in thought. True, it is a severe punishment to have to spend a hundred years, a hundred thousand years, in hell, and yet to have hardly reached the beginning, not to speak of the end of eternity, and that, too, for one sin that was committed in a moment. But if we consider the malice and presumption with which it was committed, we shall find that it is not the momentary pleasure which is so severely punished, but the perverse will with which the sinner has enjoyed that pleasure, knowing that he was acting against God's express command. And if we remember what a great Lord he is who is thus despised, and whose majesty is thus insulted, knowingly and deliberately, and for such a miserable thing, by one who is always in the power of that Lord, then we shall understand why the punishment of hell, instead of being too severe for one sin, is not severe enough, and that God shows his mercy even when chastising sinners eternally.

What, oh, sinners, are the thoughts and resolutions that this truth inspires you with? Will you still continue in the state in which you now are? Ah, I beg of you, change at once! You have against you a great Lord, whose enmity you have first provoked by wanton insults, and from whose power you can never escape. Do you intend to sin again? Ah, think of what you do! The duration of the sin is short, the pleasure or profit it brings you is small, but the injury you thereby offer to God is exceeding great. If you are ever assailed by a violent passion or temptation, if company or occasion is about to lead you into sin, if the desire of unjust gain, or of revenge, or the unlawful love of a creature almost compels you to transgress the divine law, then, I beg of you, wait a moment; say to yourselves first: where am I going to? What am I doing? God is present and sees me. What a fearful temptation it was that Joseph had to endure in Egypt from the continual solicitations of that wanton woman, Putiphar's wife. And yet the mere thought of the injury he would do his master by consenting was enough to keep him from sin. "How can I

do this wicked thing,” he said, “and sin against my God?” (Gen. 39: 9.) Such, too, should be our dispositions in all temptations and occasions of sin. Shall I sin against God? We should say: no, I cannot do this evil thing.

How often and how shamelessly have we not offended God hitherto! Alas, we have been able to do many wicked things, for we have done them, and have sinned against him in thought, word, and deed, and have despised him by trampling under foot his holy law. But that same God whom we have offended, and who is as good as he is great, desires not the death, but the repentance of his disobedient servants. Let us, then, say, full of contrition and sorrow: I have sinned against thee, but I am sorry for it from the bottom of my heart. Have mercy on me, according to thy great mercy. I will at once do thy will by candidly confessing my sins, and will never again, during my whole life, consent to sin, but be zealous in thy service, as I have been hitherto shameless in insulting and despising thee. Amen.

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