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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. 4 = THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE

PENTECOST SUNDAY

## The Dignity of Christians, who are Children of God

*“If any one love Me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him.” — St. John 14: 23.*

Charity is not merely the real inclination that we have toward God when we awaken to love him, but also, and chiefly, a constant love, or the state of sanctifying grace, which we receive in Baptism from the Holy Ghost, in virtue of which he makes his abode in our souls and remains there until he is driven out by mortal sin. Of each one of us who is in the state of grace Christ says in the Gospel: “My Father will love him as his own child.” And now, to our consolation and encouragement in the love and service of God, we shall consider that

*By the sanctifying grace which we, Christians, receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God.*

Men have inherited from nature such a great desire of honor and glory, that many raised their ambitious thoughts up to heaven, because they found only men like themselves here on earth, and, as it were, tried to take away the eternal crown from the head of the Almighty, and to place it on their own. Adam and Eve, the first human beings, when they heard the deceitful words of the serpent, “You will be as gods” (Gen. 3: 5), were so tickled by them and excited to such a pitch of audacity that, in spite of all threats, they forgot the command of their Creator and ate the forbidden fruit in order to become as Gods. Although by that sin they placed themselves and all their descendants in the way of eternal death, yet they have had many imitators who strove for divine honors. So general was this ambition among the heathens that in order to have a new divinity it was only necessary for vanity to inspire a ruler with the fancy.

What does most excite our astonishment—the unreasoning folly and audacity of these stupid people, or the goodness of God and his incomprehensible love for them? Instead of drawing the sword of vengeance and humbling their pride, he has found a means of satisfying most abundantly their ambition and desire for divine honors. For what has he done? God has become man, so that he is truly adored in human form. So that man can now say with truth, *God is man, and man is God*. But it does not exhaust his love, nor complete our dignity to have only one man of our nature, Jesus Christ, who is truly God; but, the only Son of God having become man, makes many sons of men to be sons of God. For, in Baptism, in which they are regenerated and receive sanctifying grace, all faithful Christians become adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-natural Son of God, to whom, as co-heirs of Christ, the kingdom of the Eternal Father belongs, as a lawful inheritance, if they bring that grace with them into eternity.

What honor for us! Have we ever thought of it as we ought? What glory and happiness it is for the children of the world to be the friends and favorites of an earthly sovereign! How proud they are if they can show, in their genealogies or escutcheons, the names of illustrious warriors, cardinals, bishops or statesmen, and say: Look, these people belonged to our family. When Christ said to the Pharisees that he was not of this world, as they were, they immediately appealed to the antiquity of their race, descended from Abraham: "We are of the seed of Abraham;" "Abraham is our father" (St. John 8 : 33). Whence comes the dignity and nobility of families in our own days? Is it not from their ancestors who, in former times, made their names illustrious either by valor in war, or by skill in statesmanship, or by other praiseworthy actions, and who were therefore raised to high dignities? And on this account all their descendants are separated from the common people and held in greater honor. Yet, if we consider the matter seriously, how can it be to my praise and honor that some of my ancestors, whose bodies are now crumbling into dust, were great, or skilful, or virtuous people, or were celebrated in their day, if I have inherited none of their virtues or illustrious deeds? And yet such things are looked upon as a great honor and glory. How great are we not, then, oh, Christians! in deed and in reality? How much more reason have we not to boast and be proud of that nobility which the Holy Ghost impressed upon us in Baptism; for we are raised above the Angels and assumed to a share of the divine nature, and we become children of the Almighty God. So that we can cry out, with the greatest confidence, Oh, my God! thou art my Father!

Suppose that a man undertakes a long journey, and on that journey he is burdened with all sorts of trouble and labor, sickness and misery, and is also poor and needy, and knows nothing of his noble birth and extraction; some one meets him and says to him: Sir, do you not know who you are? You are the son of a great nobleman; your father, who is very rich, has ordered me to tell you this and to conduct you to his house. What do you think would be the feelings of that man on hearing such unexpected news? If he were not in danger of being deceived, how great would not his joy be? Would he not think, oh, how happy I am! I am the son of a rich lord! I should have known that sooner; hitherto I have not known myself. This really happened to Don John of Austria. He was brought up in his childhood by an ordinary citizen, whom he always looked upon as his father. When he had grown up, Philip II., King of Spain, who alone knew the secret, was out hunting one day with his courtiers in a forest, where he met the citizen and his son. As soon as the king saw the latter he leaped from his horse and embraced the young man, to the great astonishment of all present, and to the still greater astonishment of John himself, who, looking upon himself only as a poor boy, did not know what to think of the affair. The king took him respectfully by the hand, and said, "Away with these rags (for the boy was poorly clad); they are not fitting to your dignity. John, you are the son of the great emperor Charles, and I am your brother." Think, my dear brethren, how the young man must have felt, how he must have been overwhelmed with joy; for he was brought with great pomp and magnificence, alongside the king, his brother, to the city and to the royal palace, where he thenceforth received every sign of honor and respect, as the son of such a great father.

Ah, Christians! what a happiness and cause of joy it is for us to be in a state of grace! Come, says Jesus Christ to each one of us, open your heart, raise your mind above the filth of earth to heaven. Why are you troubled on the journey of life? Have you hitherto known who you are? Rejoice, for you are a son, a daughter of a great King; a kingdom is prepared for you, which has neither limit nor end. Come, you are a child of God, and I am thy brother! Hear, ye poor; the world gives you scornful names, and looks upon you as a wretched people, as the scum of the earth; but the great God calls you his children; Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, calls you his brothers and sisters. Do you but serve your heavenly Father truly, be careful not to lose the grace of the Holy Ghost by mortal sin, and your nobility and dignity will far excel that of all the heathen kings and emperors of the world. Principalities, kingdoms, empires, no matter how glorious and magnificent they may be, are as nothing compared to the title of child of God. Dear brothers and sisters, exult and rejoice; we are children of God.

St. Margaret of Cortona, as she once knelt before the crucifix in meditation on the bitter sufferings of Christ, heard him speaking these words to her: "What dost thou want, my poor little one?" Whereupon she answered: "I want nothing but thyself, oh, Lord Jesus!" And on another occasion, as she was thinking of the immense love and goodness of God to us mortals, she took courage and spoke thus confidently to her Saviour: "Thou hast lately called me a poor little one, and I am so in reality; for every good thing I have in my soul and body is an alms which I have received from thee; but, my dear Lord, when shall I have the consolation of hearing thee call me thy child?" And then she got this answer, by an inward inspiration: "When thou hast cleansed thy soul from all stain by a general confession." For some days Margaret redoubled her penances. She repented of and confessed all the sins and the smallest faults of her life with the greatest sorrow, whereupon she heard, after holy Communion, the sweet and long-desired words: "My daughter." At these words she cried out aloud, "Oh, infinite sweetness of God!" Oh, happy word—my daughter! So has the great God called me.

Would not each one of us rejoice also if we now heard the same words from the lips of Christ: my child, my son, my daughter? But it is not necessary that he should speak to us so clearly, if we only have a conscience free from sin and are in the state of grace, our own conscience will say the same words to us as St. Paul writes: "For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" (Rom. 8: 16). "But if sons, then heirs also, heirs indeed of God, joint heirs with Christ," and that is the only thing that a Christian should boast and be proud of. "We glory in the hope of children of God," whether we are of high or lowly birth, rich or poor, honored or despised by the world, matters nothing and is not worth troubling ourselves about; for temporal prosperity cannot cause us real joy, nor can temporal misfortune cause us real misery; we glory in the hope of the children of God. Our highest honor and greatest happiness, our only joy consists in this, that we are children of God.

But, alas! amongst all the titles of honor and prosperity that are in use amongst men, there is not one less thought of than that of child of God. With what courage, energy, and frenzy are not all the others sought after? We ruin ourselves with lawsuits to gain possession of a handful of earth; whole families dispute about the difference between mine and thine; there is any amount of quarrelling and contention about some ridiculous question of precedence, or rank, as if everything depended upon it; but the title of child of God is willingly given up to any one who thinks it an honorable one. The grace of the Holy Ghost, the divine adoption of us as children, which nothing on earth can equal, is looked upon as of no value; the majority do not think of it, nay, they do not even know what it means, nor have they any idea of the dignity to which it raises them. St. Paul, meeting some disciples of St. John on the way to Ephesus, asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" Do you believe in him? No, they answered, "we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost" (Acts 19 : 2). My dear brethren, must I ask the same question to-day? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Do you fully understand this truth, that sanctifying grace makes you children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ?

As long as we are in the state of grace we are children of God. An infallible faith assures us of this, so that parents may say, I must not look upon my children as mine, but as God's, and I must carefully bring them up for the end and object with which their heavenly Father has entrusted them to me; that is, to the praise and love of God. I must be very careful not to lead them to evil by word, or work, or example. I must keep a watchful eye upon all their actions and omissions, instruct them in good, chastise them, as a parent should, when they commit a fault, so that they may not become vain children of the world, or be led away from the path of the children of God, and be delivered over to the devil as his prey, through my fault. We are children of God. Therefore, the rich and noble may say, I must not look contemptuously on any one, no matter how poor or lowly he may be, but I must consider all as children of God. I am a child of God, each one may think for himself, and therefore I must act as becomes the high dignity of the children of God, as a child of God ought.

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