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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. 5 - THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

The Pain of Sense in Hell

“He was casting out a devil.” St. Luke 11: 14.

Unfortunate and worthy of pity is the man possessed by the devil! But more unfortunate is the man who on the last day is condemned to the eternal flames of hell, and given over body and soul to be tormented by legions of devils! Oh, foolish mortals, who make deliberate choice of those torments! After having portrayed the pains that rack the soul and mind in hell and drive them to madness, I shall now describe, in order to inspire sinners with a salutary fear, the torments that there torture the body and its senses.

The pains of the body in hell are general, and at the same time unceasing.

The crosses and trials, pains and torments in this world, no matter how great or numerous they may be, are yet so divided and controlled that they never all attack the same man at the same time. Thus he who is poor is not at the same time sick; he who is sorrowful has not to suffer hunger and thirst; he who is persecuted and tormented by one man is not therefore made the object of general execration. A pain in the head or eye does not affect the hand or foot; lameness in the feet does not cause the chest to suffer; the body may be ill at ease, while the mind remains quite vigorous. There is always some part in a man that remains free from pain. But imagine a man who has to suffer all possible torments and pains in the highest degree in every member of his body inwardly and outwardly at the same time. Truly you have then the most miserable wretch, and he could not bear such torments for a moment without a

miracle; every pain, when it reaches its greatest intensity, must either cease or put an end to the patient.

But suppose one were enabled by a miracle to endure such an accumulation of torments for twenty, fifty, or a hundred years, and remain alive during the time; would we not then have a sketch of the state of the damned soul in hell? Not by any means; it would be a mere play or comedy in comparison. The reprobate would, so to speak, laugh at the idea of comparing those torments with what they have to endure in hell. "The worst sufferings one can have in this life," says St. Augustine, "are not only small, but actually nothing when contrasted with the torments of the damned." Why? Because all the pains and torments in the world are but instruments, set in motion by weak creatures; but in hell it is the almighty and angry, avenging God who measures out chastisement to evil doers. If you should unhappily be condemned to hell for eternity, how will you fare? Now you are delighted with the beautiful light of the day, with the flowers, gardens, meadows, beautiful paintings, amusing plays; what a change and what a terrible torment it will be for you when you shall be cast out into "the exterior darkness," into an eternal night! Now you often sully yourselves with lustful glances; you take pleasure in contemplating the beauty of others, in looking at impure objects, and in contemplation of vain apparel before the looking-glass; how fearful your punishment will be in hell, where you will behold nothing but shapes of deformity, into which all the bodies of the damned shall be transformed, and hideous spectres with which the demons shall terrify you forever! Now the eyes are delighted in company, and glisten with laughter and fun, nor do we think of shedding tears of repentance in order to wash out our sins; how that laughter shall be changed in that place of torments, in which, according to the words of our Lord, there shall be nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The same weeping and gnashing of teeth shall be a torment for the ears. An ill-tuned instrument is intolerable to a skilled musician; a crying child in a room, women quarrelling in a house, the howling of a dog in the street, is a torment to many a sensitive individual. How intolerable it must be for the ears to have to listen to that hellish and hideous music made by the shrieks and howlings and curses and blasphemies of demons and lost souls, a music that shall last for eternity!

One of the worst pains of sense is a foul stench. You hold your nose if a dead dog or other carrion is lying in the street as you pass by. Sometimes when graves are opened a foul effluvium rises from them, strong enough to cause the death of any one who happens to be present. It is looked on as one of the greatest cruelties of the tyrant Maxentius that he caused a living man to be bound to a decaying corpse, until the fetid exhalations from it put an end to him. Ah, delicate worldlings! may God save you from hell! You cannot bear the smell of a smoking lamp; what will you do in that abyss in which, for all eternity, you will not have a breath of fresh air? Into which all the filth of the earth flows as to its common center? What will you do in that lake of sulphur in which the bodies of the reprobate shall seethe and boil, each one of them emitting such a fearful odor that it would be enough to fill the whole world with pestilence?

And what of the pain of taste? Hunger and thirst cause such agony that mothers have been known, when urged by the frenzy of famine, to eat their own children. May God save you all from hell! you voluptuaries, whose god is your belly, who swear at the cook for over-salting the soup, who, before saying a word of prayer in the morning, must gratify the palate with food and drink! Woe to you! How are you to fare in hell? Hear what infallible Truth says: "They.... shall suffer hunger like dogs" (Ps. 48: 7); toads and adders shall be their food, not to satisfy their hunger, but to torture them all the more.

This terrible hunger shall be accompanied by a burning thirst that shall last forever. The damned shall cry out: hear, all ye fountains, brooks, torrents, lakes, seas, even ye morasses and muddy pools, give us only one or two drops of all the waters that flow by unused and

unclaimed! But the answer shall come from the hellish tormentors, the evil spirits: yes! We shall bring you a cooling drink at once! Molten lead and brass, the gall of serpents, the poison of dragons! Come, luxurious gluttons and voluptuaries, this is the table to which you are invited, this the drink prepared for you! You may have heard people bad with fever crying out: for the love of God, give me a drink of water, and after having got it complaining of thirst just as loudly as before: Oh, what a terrible thirst I am suffering! Is there anything like it? And while the water is being brought to them they look at it eagerly, and, so to speak, drink it up with their eyes before it touches their lips. Now put together all the thirst, dryness, heat, and fever ever suffered by the sick, and all will be as nothing compared to the fearful thirst felt by even one of the reprobate in hell.

Finally, with regard to the pain of touch, which is situated in all the senses and members of the whole body, suffice it to say that the damned live in everlasting fire, which rages both inside and outside them always. There is fire in the skin, in the flesh, in the eyes, in the ears, in the throat, in the hands and feet, in the nerves, in the marrow of the bones, in the whole body, so that it is like a glowing iron in the fire; and, as we have seen already, that fire is raised miraculously above its nature, so that it tortures, not merely according to the properties of fire, but at the same time inflicts on the body all kinds of pains and torments.

The most terrible thing in those hellish agonies is that they are not only general, but also incessant, uninterrupted, continual. The pains that one has to endure in this life have two properties that make them tolerable: they are either slight and trivial, and then are easily borne, or else they are violent, and their intensity in a short time makes weakened nature insensible to them, as we find to be the case with the sick, who, when near death, feel no more pain. And no matter how long a pain lasts, it is not always equally violent; it is interrupted or lessened occasionally. But in hell it is quite different; the damned soul will be tortured without hope of rest, for every moment of eternity it will suffer every imaginable kind of torment, without even a moment's interruption. Father Abraham! cried out the rich glutton from hell, I have but one favor to ask of you. I am suffering terrible tortures in these flames; give me one drop of water, only as much as you can take up on the tip of your finger! Only one drop, so that at least while it is falling on my tongue I may feel a momentary alleviation! So will the lost soul cry out after a thousand, a thousand million, a thousand times a thousand million of years; but not even that much refreshment will be given to it for all eternity. For all eternity without interruption the eyes shall be tormented by darkness and hideous spectres, the ears by howlings and curses, the smell by an intolerable stench, the taste by fearful hunger and thirst, the feeling by the fire in which the whole body is immersed; the damned soul shall be tortured without hope of rest forever and ever.

Oh, unhappy people who are condemned to hell! Oh, eternal hell! is it possible that hell is the place in which they are buried who die in mortal sin? It is an article of faith, and sinners are well aware of it and believe it. And there are still sinners in the world? Alas! yes, and in countless numbers! And do they all wish to go to hell? Yes; for they are certain that the lives they lead will bring them thither. Such is the belief, such are the lives even of those who hate nothing so much as trouble and discomfort; who wish and desire nothing but an easy, comfortable, sensual, pleasant life; who place their happiness in the gratification of the eyes, ears, and tongue, in the pleasures of taste, smell, and touch; who tremble and shudder when one speaks to them of mortification of the senses, of self-denial, of penitential exercises; who, that they may devote themselves all the more freely to the gratification of their senses, laugh at the word of God, the Gospel truths, the warnings and menaces of the faith, God himself. Are those people going to hell to suffer for all eternity those terrible, general, unceasing pains and torments of that inextinguishable fire? Yes; they must make up their minds to that, for such is their belief; such must be the end of the lives they are leading. And why do they wish to go to hell? For the sake of that momentary, carnal pleasure in which they now take delight;

for some temporal gain; for the love of a mortal creature; to gratify a passion; to be in harmony with the perverse world. And do they damn themselves for such trifles? Do they lose all for such worthless things? Do they choose hell, that terrible abyss of torments, for such a short-lived gain? Have those people completely lost their reason?

And yet hell shall be filled with those fools! Have not we ourselves often been so foolish, when we committed mortal sin for the sake of such wretched things, and thereby made deliberate choice of hell-fire? Alas! what have we done? What is to become of us? If we descend in spirit into hell, we find there souls that committed the same sins that we have been guilty of, many who have committed far less sin than we; many, and indeed many millions of angels who have sinned but once by a momentary thought. Oh, woe to us, then! for we have often deserved hell-fire by thought, word, and deed.

Since the choice is left to us, let us select that which is easier. We can and will not burn forever in hell; therefore let us do penance and begin at once, for our time may be short and death may hurry us into hell. Let us detest our sins with a repentant heart above every other evil; acknowledge them in their minutest details in confession; be sorry for them to the hour of our death, and from this moment lead a different life, a life of penance, that by a timely amendment and contrition we may avoid the terrible, eternal pains of hell. Amen.



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