

V1_1st_after_Pentecost= The Necessity of Correcting the Habit of Cursing

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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 + + +

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TRINITY SUNDAY & First Sunday after Pentecost

The Necessity of Correcting the Habit of Cursing

“Teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” — St. Matthew 28: 19.

All the apostolic functions of the Church must begin in the name of the Blessed Trinity. All the Sacraments are administered in the name of the Blessed Trinity. The same name is invoked at the beginning of the Mass, and at the beginning of a sermon. All Christians make the sign of the Cross in this name when they pray. But how perverse the Christian world is in this respect nowadays! For once that we hear the name of God we hear that of the devil twenty, a hundred times. There are many Christians of whom we have good reason to believe that they begin and end all their actions in the name of the devil, so accustomed are they to make use of curses and imprecations. Yet they who are addicted to this habit bring forward all kinds of excuses in order to show that cursing is either harmless, or that, at all events, it is only a small fault; or that, through long continued habit, it is impossible to correct it. But

I. The habit of cursing must be corrected; no excuse to the contrary is of any avail.

II. It can be corrected, for there are means enough: of correcting it.

I. It is a common thing for people to try to excuse and palliate sins. To excuse our misdeeds, and to try to make ourselves appear innocent, is an art in which we are all skilled, and which we have inherited from our first parents. “Where art thou?” (Gen. 3: 9) said the Lord to Adam, after he had eaten the forbidden fruit and incurred the punishment of death. How didst thou dare to touch that tree? Didst thou not know that it was forbidden thee to eat of its fruit, under pain of eternal damnation? Adam answered: I could not help it; “the woman thou gavest to me to be my companion gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Gen. 3: 12). Thou, then, oh, woman, art the cause of the transgression. “Why hast thou done this?” But, she answered. I am not to blame: “the serpent deceived me, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:13). If the serpent had been allowed to speak there is no doubt that he would have made a still more plausible excuse. That is the way in which the children of Adam and Eve still try to excuse nearly all their faults. We always try to shirk the blame, and therefore it is very difficult for us to be cured, because we do not know that we are ailing, and the evil from which we suffer is not outside, but inside of us.

I. This is the great mistake made by those who are given to cursing and swearing. It is not my fault, they say; I cannot help cursing: my household affairs, my neighbors, the people with whom I have to deal they are to blame for it. That surly and drunken man, that idle, talkative woman, that ill-reared son, that disobedient daughter, who causes me such annoyance, that troublesome neighbor, who is such a torment to me; these are the people who drive me to curse and swear; in fact, I cannot get on without it. It is not true; your excuse is not worth anything; it cannot hide your wickedness. You should strike your own breast and say, “through my fault, through my most grievous fault!” The only cause of the wicked language you use is your impatience, which prevents you from bearing the least contradiction; your pride and obstinacy, which make you insist on having the last word; your angry and revengeful disposition, which is aroused at the least opposition; your envious heart, which is filled with bitterness at anything that displeases you in the least. The evil from which you suffer is not outside but inside of you.

2. It is true, say others, that I am to blame: but God forbid that I should be guilty of a mortal sin by cursing! I do not mean what I say. Sometimes, through anger or impatience, I say: May the devil take you! may you be struck dead on the spot! but I do not really wish that evil should happen to the person to whom I am speaking. I talk in that way only to frighten my children when they are disobedient, or to let others who annoy me see that they must amend their behavior toward me. You maintain that you are not in earnest and that you do not mean what you say when you curse; but who can believe that, especially when, as you, admit, you curse your neighbor through anger and impatience. Your limbs tremble with passion, anger is written on your forehead and appears in your countenance, while a volley of imprecations proceeds from your mouth. Who can believe that you are not in earnest? No, my good friend, your excuse is worth nothing.

But whether you mean it or not, is it lawful for you to use such scandalous and hellish language? And do you think that the proper way to correct your children is to curse and swear at them? Did you ever find that it did them any good? The fact is, they pay very little attention to it, for they are too much accustomed to it from you. You put up a straw figure in the field as a scarecrow to frighten the birds away and prevent them from eating the seed you have just planted; for a few days the birds will be afraid of it; but when they see that it cannot move from the place in which you have put it, they lose all fear, and when they have eaten their fill they actually come to roost on the straw figure itself. No, your cursing will do your children no good; it will only make them more obstinate, disobedient and wicked; for they will think to themselves: if my parents are so godless as to curse and swear in that way, I am not bound to have any respect for them. There are certainly means enough to correct the faults of your children in a Christian manner, without having recourse to such a detestable means as that, which only makes them worse.

3. In most cases, say others, I curse and swear through inadvertence and habit, because I have been so long accustomed to it; or else the curse escapes me when I am in a passion, and I am afterwards sorry for it. But to curse through habit without making serious efforts to amend, and to continue in that habit, makes the sin greater, more deserving of punishment, and less excusable. If you were to utter an imprecation now and then, inadvertently, it would not be so bad; but when you bring forward the force of habit as an excuse, you betray yourself and manifest your guilt to its full extent.

4. I curse, another says, but it is nearly always in the heat of passion. And are you blameless therefore? But when the anger and the cursing it gives rise to are habitual, you will never persuade a sensible man that you do not advert to what you say. You are bound to control your anger. “Be ye angry and sin not!” (Ps. 4: 5) is the command that God has given.

5. No sooner has the curse escaped my lips, than I am sorry for it at once. That is quite right; still you have wished evil to your neighbor. I am sorry from my heart for all the sins I have committed; but unfortunately they have been committed all the same. Certainly, by a supernatural sorrow and repentance I can wash out my guilt and obtain pardon of my sins in the sight of the good and merciful God; yet I can never get rid of the fact that I have committed them. The same sorrow is to be found, with regard to any other vice, in all those who still have a conscience and who wish to save their souls; when their anger is

over, their passion cooled down, their desire for revenge satisfied, and their wicked passions gratified, then they are sorry for what they have done; yet there is no doubt that they have committed sin by yielding to their evil inclinations.

You have killed a man, and you are very sorry for what you have done when you see his dead body lying at your feet; are you therefore not guilty of murder? Therefore, Christians, do not seek to excuse yourselves, or to palliate that abominable habit of cursing and swearing by such frivolous pretexts! You should rather devote all your efforts to using the proper means to get rid of that habit. It is clear that cursing cannot be excused from sin, that the habit of it must be amended, and that there is an obligation to that effect under pain of sin. But how am I to do that? some will say; I have become so accustomed to cursing that I cannot give it up now. Still you can do it, if you go the right way about it.

II. There is no doubt that it is a very difficult thing to give up at once a bad habit that one has been accustomed to for a long time; for it becomes a second nature, and offers a kind of violence to the reason and the will. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil" (Jer. 13: 23). This is the worst punishment that God inflicts on the hardened sinner, namely, to allow him to become so obdurate that he despairs of being able to amend. And that punishment is inflicted especially on those who are given to cursing: "He loved cursing and it shall come unto him" (Ps. 108:18). I call as witnesses of the truth of this you who are given to this wicked habit. Have you found any improvement in yourselves in this respect for years past? You cursed yesterday, you will curse to-day. For the last two, four, six, ten years, or longer, you have been in the habit of cursing, and you are as bad this year as ever you were. You have confessed it hundreds of times, but there is no sign of improvement yet; you will confess it again, and I am afraid you will be no better. Each time, you will say, I have cursed I am sorry for it; I will never do it again: but all to no purpose.

But no matter how difficult it is to give up a bad habit of long standing, yet it is not impossible; otherwise you would not commit sin by continuing to curse, because God does not require impossibilities from us. You must bridle that slippery member; you must do violence to it, and use the proper means, and you will, with God's help, get the better of your bad habit.

1. The first means is the fear of God. If there were a law that every one who curses must put a dollar in the poor-box, would it be impossible for you then to give up the habit of cursing? Not at all; and, indeed, a fine of a dime would be enough to induce you to conquer it immediately. And what punishment has God threatened to inflict on those who violate the command not to curse? Perhaps a fine of a dollar? Ah, listen to the words of the Apostle: "Railers shall not possess the kingdom of God;" they will be condemned to hell for all eternity. Oh, you who are addicted to this evil habit, what are you thinking of? The dread of being fined by an earthly superior is enough to put you on your guard, to restrain your tongue, and to cure your wicked propensity; but the fear of offending God, who threatens you with the loss of heaven and the eternal pains of hell if you disobey him, is not able to make you give up the habit of cursing! But you do not think of such things, and therefore you continue in your wicked ways, without any attempt to amend.

2. The second means is prayer. Of Jesus Christ, when he healed the dumb man, we read: "Taking him from the multitude apart," and looking up to heaven, he groaned, and said to him: Ephpheta, which is: be thou opened; and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right" (St. Mark 7: 33, 35). If you are in earnest to curb your wicked tongues, and to speak right in future, lift up your eyes to heaven, and let your humble sighs and prayers ascend to the throne of God; for it is from him that you must seek the help that you would in vain look for elsewhere. If, according to St. James, no man can tame his tongue, what are we to do? There is One in heaven who can tame it; to him we must go for help, and beg of him to keep our tongues in check. If you wish, then, instead of a cursing tongue, to have one inflamed with the fire of love, you must resolve every morning to avoid cursing during the day; and since you know how weak you are, and how powerless to amend your bad habit, you must with childlike confidence beg of God to help you and to free you from it.

3. The third means is co-operation with God's grace. Besides praying, you must co-operate with the grace of God. Here again we can learn from what our Lord did, when he healed the dumb man: "He put his fingers into his ears, and, spitting, he touched his tongue, and said to him, ephpheta, - -which is, be thou opened." Oh, if all who are addicted to this evil habit would frequently command their tongues sternly and sharply, and enforce their command by a penance; for instance, if they said: I command you to abstain from cursing, or otherwise not to touch a drop of wine the whole day, or not to eat meat, or to fast in the evening, or to give a certain alms to the poor, or to say a rosary, I am certain that the bad habit would soon be eradicated, and the tongue would be kept under due restraint. The threat of the rod, and the recollection of the pain it causes, are enough to make the most disobedient child submissive; the whip, well applied once or twice, can tame the most fiery horse; much more, then, will a severe, self-imposed penance help a reasoning being to abstain from evil. Only try it; it will certainly help, and when God sees that you are really in earnest with your efforts to amend, he will not refuse to help you with still more powerful graces.

Ah, may God preserve you from the folly and madness of losing your souls for the sake of cursing and indulging in a vice that can bring you neither profit nor pleasure? Make up your minds, once for all, to give up that hellish language! Begin your amendment this very day; continue it to-morrow and every day of your lives. Amen.

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