

Reminder that the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Thursday are Rogation Days in which the Church would have us pray the Litany of the Saints. Ascension Thursday is a Holy Day of Obligation.

V5_5th_after_Easter= God's Earnest Wish to Save the Souls of All Men

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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 + + +

THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

VOL. 5

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

God's Earnest Wish to Save the Souls of All Men

“Not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work: this man shall be blessed in his deed.”— St. James 1: 25 (from today's Epistle).

Good Christians, you endeavor to do the will of God in all things, and have firmly resolved to do it to the end; therefore you are among those who are on the right road to heaven, and if you are true to your determination, you shall infallibly possess the kingdom of heaven. Go on as you are going, and be of good heart. Yes, many say, some of whom are pious and timid, while others are wicked and half despairing: how do I know what God means to do with me? Whether He has enrolled me in the number of His elect who are destined for heaven? And if He does not want me there, what will all my efforts avail? These disturbing thoughts are encouraged by those whose doctrine confines the goodness of God in such narrow limits, as if He selected for heaven only those whom He has determined to bring there by predestination, as it is called, or a choice made of them from eternity. To help souls to lay aside this saddening thought, and to encourage all to serve the Lord with zeal and joy, I will now prove the contrary, and say:

God has an earnest, and, as far as He is concerned, an efficacious will to bring all men to heaven.

God has created all men for no other end but to be eternally happy; He has an earnest wish and desire that all should be happy; He gives to all sufficient means to attain eternal happiness. And it is in this will that the vocation to heaven consists, of which our Lord

says: "Many are called". (St. Matthew 20: 16) that is, all are called. This calling and earnest will of the Almighty to make all men happy has no regard to the merits and good works of men, but comes solely from the goodness and generosity of God. But as God has left men free, and will not force any one to go to heaven, but has resolved that each one should use the means provided according to his own free will, and thus gain heaven, so He has, besides the general will, another that rests on our co-operation and merit; namely, to grant heaven to man if he uses, as he can, the means provided, does good, and perseveres in the love and grace of God till the end of his life.

To illustrate this: Suppose there is a rich man who has no wife or children, and who therefore adopts a poor student, making him heir to all his property, an inheritance that the student cannot possess unless he takes it of his own free will, as all testaments require; for although I am made heir by will, I cannot be compelled to accept the inheritance; I am free to do so or not. Now, in this case it is evident that the first will of the rich man, by which he desired to make the student heir to his wealth, came simply from goodness and charity, without any reference to merit on the student's part; but the other will, by which he desires that the student should really take possession of the inheritance, is not absolute, but conditional, namely, if the student consents to take it. So does the Almighty act with us: that He created us, adopted us as His children, prepared the inheritance of heaven for us, and richly equipped us with all the means necessary to gain it, all that is an effect of the mercy and goodness of God, and we have contributed nothing whatever thereto; but the actual taking possession of heaven depends also on ourselves, and this latter God wills, not absolutely, but on condition that we accept and merit it. Now, as future things are as clear to him as the present, if God sees that this or that man will use the means provided, keep His law, and persevere in His grace, then His wish and desire is fulfilled, and He says: that man shall possess my eternal kingdom. And in that decree and determination consists so-called predestination, or choice and election to heaven, of which again our Lord says: "Few are chosen."

From this it follows, first, that the smallness of the number of the elect does not arise from the fact that God only wishes a few to be saved, but rather from this, that only a few really wish to merit and accept eternal salvation. Secondly, all men can be in the number of the elect if they only wish earnestly to make use of the proper means, and to persevere in good to the end. Thirdly, God has no antecedent, absolute will to send any one to hell; He wills it only under this condition: if man, through his own fault, wills not to merit heaven, and so to be damned. Finally, when God determines to send any one, no matter who he is, to hell, He is, as it were, forced to do so; He does it, so to speak, with vexation, regret and against His antecedent, general will, by which He wishes and desires to make all men happy. All men are God's adopted children; He loves them more than any earthly father ever loved his offspring; He tells us so Himself; and for all He has prepared eternal happiness. Now, if He finds among them rebellious, undutiful children, He does not at once on that account withdraw from them His fatherly care, as all sinners daily experience; He tries to convert them by making them uneasy in conscience, by temporal adversity, by secret inspirations and warnings, and He offers them His grace as before, if they return to Him by true repentance and amend their lives; but if all this does no good, if they still continue to act as His enemies and remain impenitent until death, then He is forced, in order not to neglect His duty as Judge, to change His mind, as it were, and to

exclude them from the number of His children, and imprison them for eternity. Hear how He complains of this by the Prophet Isaias: “Ah! I will comfort myself over my adversaries, and I will be revenged of my enemies;” alas! I am at last forced to do this! “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not.” Now I must do what I am very unwilling to do: “Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate” (St. Matthew 23: 37, 38).

St. Paul speaks of this truth in terms so clear that they cannot be clearer: “I desire therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all piety and chastity; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all” (I Tim. 2: 1, 6). There He says not once, but several times, that God wills all men to be saved. God Himself says the same to the prophet Ezechiel, and confirms it with an oath. “Say to them: As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live” (Ezech. 33: 11). Now, if God does not wish to exclude even the sinner from heaven, whom should He then refuse to bring there? Truly, if any one on earth deserves to be abandoned by God the sinner deserves that fate, for willfully and wantonly he sets himself against the divine majesty and openly insults it. After our Lord had spoken the parable of the good shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine sheep and goes over hill and dale in search of the one that is lost, and when He finds it brings it back on His shoulders rejoicing, He adds these words: “Even so it is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (St. Matthew 18: 14). But if God does not wish that one of the least should be lost, that is, be damned forever, then He must necessarily wish to save them all and make them eternally happy, for, excepting in the case of infants who die without baptism, there is no alternative between being lost forever and being eternally happy.

Again, if God had not signified anywhere in Holy Writ this wish and desire for the salvation of all men, then would I say to him who ventures to think the contrary what our Lord said to the obstinate Pharisees: “Though you will not believe me, believe the works” (St. John 10: 38). If you do not trust my words, then look at the works I do; from them you must see that I am true God. In the same way I say: Oh, ye of little faith! If there are no words or arguments to convince you that God earnestly desires the salvation of all men, then believe His works at least; see what He has done for all men. God loves all men, and that, too, with a most tender love, precisely because He is their Creator, their Author and Father. Now, if God loves all men, He also wishes and desires the welfare of all, for therein love consists. Hence He wills and desires that all men should be saved, and none lost; for what greater misfortune could He wish to any one than to wish that He should not be saved, but (for this follows as a necessary consequence) be excluded from heaven and from the number of the elect and be sent to the everlasting fire of hell? Does not our Lord say of Judas, who wished to be damned through his own fault: “It were better for him if that man had not been born”?

He has given up His Son to a painful death for all; therefore He is willing to grant heaven to all. This one consideration is enough for me, and it should suffice for any

thinking man to hold it as certain that God has an earnest, antecedent will to save all men, if they only wish it. I cannot believe anything else when I think that God has suffered death for all men that they may be freed from eternal death. And is it not infallibly certain as an article of faith? “He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered him up for us all” (Rom. 8: 32). And what has not this Son endured for our salvation? How could the Son of God give clearer proof of His most earnest will to save us? What more could He do to evince His great desire for our eternal welfare than to suffer and die as He did to secure it? Or what can the heavenly Father be not ready to give us, after having sacrificed for us in such a manner His dearest and only begotten Son? Shall He then refuse to give us heaven who has given us His only Son? That is, shall He refuse us a penny after having bestowed on us inexhaustible treasures and riches? This argument is not mine, but that of the great St. Paul, who says after the words already quoted: “How hath He not also, with him, given us all things?” (Rom. 8: 32.)

Finally, if God has not an earnest will to save all men, but only the predestined, that is, those whom God has, without any regard to their merits, selected for heaven from the great multitude of men, whom He rejects; and if Christ died for the predestined alone, then the whole foundation of Christian hope falls away, and no one is left any heart to do good and to work for heaven. For why should I take that trouble when I know not whether my labor will help me to get to heaven or not? I should not like, and should not dare to trust my life to a sailor, unless I am sure that He means to bring me into port, and that He does not intend to leave me to drown in the middle of the river. Nor could I place any hope or confidence in God as far as regards my salvation if I did not know whether He really desires, as far as He is concerned, to bring me to heaven or to send me to hell, without any regard to my good works. But that I could not know if it were true that, as far as He is concerned, God has not the earnest wish to save all men, but has rather determined by an antecedent will to damn the greater number; for in that case I should have far more reason not to hope than to hope for salvation. No; that cannot be true, for it is opposed to the evident promises of the Sacred Scripture, to the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, to the goodness and mercy of our heavenly Father, to the basis of the Christian’s hope, to the general belief of the true Catholic church, in which alone salvation can be found. Amen.

Taken from:

SHORT SERMONS FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR

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