



The Sermons of Saint *John Marie Vianney*



Christ the King Books

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First Sunday of Advent – The Last Judgment

Tunc videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nube cum potestate magna et majestate.’ — “And “then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.” —St. Luke xxi. 27.

Not a God clothed with our weaknesses, hidden in the darkness of a wretched stable, housed in a crib, treated with derision and mockery, bowed to earth by the heavy burden of his cross; but a God who, clad in the glorious splendor of his great power and majesty, makes known His advent by the most terrifying manifestations, by the darkening of the sun and the moon, by the falling of the stars and by the upheaval of all creation. Not a Redeemer who comes with the meekness of a lamb to be judged by men whom He tries to gain over to Himself; but a judge in righteous wrath, to judge mankind with the awful measure of His justice. Not a loving shepherd, who tries to find His stray sheep and who pardons them when they have returned, but a God of vengeance, who will separate forever the just from the unjust, who will make the sinners feel His terrible vengeance and overwhelm the just with celestial bliss. O terrible moment, O fearful moment, when wilt thou arrive? O unhappy moment! Perhaps in a few days from now we may observe the harbingers of this, for sinners, so terrible a day of judgment! O sinners, arise from the grave of your iniquities, appear before the judgment seat of God and suffer the treatment the sinner will have to undergo! The godless of this world like to deny the power of God, because they see the sinner pass unpunished through the days of his life; yes, they will even make the bold assertion that there is no God, that there is no hell; or, they say: “God does not take any notice of what we do here upon earth.” Oh, but wait for the day of judgment; on this great day God will reveal His power and show all nations that He has seen everything and taken an account thereof.

St. Luke says that men will wither away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. Oh, my friends, one could wither away for fear and die from fright at the thought of a misfortune which is a thousand times less than what is impending for the sinner and which is sure to be his fate if he persists in leading a life of sin.

My friends, if at this moment, when I am about to speak to you of the judgment to come, before which we must all appear to render an account of the good and evil we have done during this life and to receive thereat our final judgment, which will be either Heaven or hell, I say, if at this moment an angel was to appear and announce to you the message from God that in twenty-four hours by a rain of fire and Sulphur the whole world would go up in flames; if you could already hear the distant rolling of the thunder; if the fury of the storm was beginning to tear down your houses, and if the lightning was growing so vivid that the earth was like unto a fiery ball; if hell was beginning to hurl forth the damned to fill the world with their screams and howls, and if the only way to avoid this misery would be to detest sin and repent, could you then, my friends, listen to all this without shedding streams of tears and imploring mercy? Would you not throw yourself down at the foot of the altar and cry for mercy? Oh, inconceivable folly of sinful man! It will then be too late to repent.

Yes, my brethren, *we shall be judged*; nothing is more certain. Yes, and we shall be judged *without mercy*.

We read in Holy Scripture that God, whenever He intended to send a scourge over the world, always preceded it by a sign, so as to strike terror into the hearts of the people and cause them to implore His mercy. The historian Josephus records that long before the destruction of Jerusalem there was visible in the sky a comet, in the form of a sword, which caused general consternation. Every one asked what is the meaning of this sign? Is it perhaps a great misfortune which God is going to send us? The moon appeared eight nights in the sky without showing any light; the people began to tremble for their lives, when all at once an unknown man appeared, who for three years without interruption passed through the streets of Jerusalem day and night, shouting: "Woe to Jerusalem! Woe to Jerusalem!" He was arrested and scourged to make him stop his lamentations, but nothing would deter him. At the end of the three years he called out: "Woe to Jerusalem! Ah! Woe to me!" At that moment a stone, which had been thrown at him from a sling shot, struck him and killed him instantly. Soon all the misfortunes which this unknown man had prophesied broke out all over Jerusalem. The famine became so terrible that mothers killed and devoured their own children. The city was captured by the enemy and levelled to the ground; the streets were covered with the dead, and blood flowed in

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Epiphany – Called to the Faith

“We have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him.”-Matt. ii. 2.

This is a blessed and memorable day for us, my dear brethren, on which the mercy of the Redeemer called us in the person of the Magi, from the darkness of unbelief, to the knowledge of the true faith. The Magi came at dawn of day to worship and to acknowledge the Messiah in our name, as their God and Redeemer. Yes, my brethren, they are our forefathers, and our models in the faith. Happy are we, if we imitate them faithfully, and follow in their footsteps. The holy Pope Leo calls out in an ecstasy of love and gratitude: “O angels of the heavenly city, lend me your glowing love, to thank Almighty God for being called to Christianity and eternal salvation.” “Let us, my brethren,” says this great saint, “celebrate joyfully the beginning of our blessed hopes. But let us be faithful to our calling, after the example of the Magi: otherwise we should have great cause to fear, that God might chastise us as He did the Jews, who were His chosen people. From the time of Abraham until His coming, He led them by the hand, and showed Himself everywhere their protector and liberator; and thereafter He rejected them, and thrust them from Him, because they despised His graces.” Yes, my brethren, this precious gift of faith will be taken from us, and given to others, if we do not make a practical use of it. Now, my brethren, do we wish to keep this precious legacy in our midst? Let us follow faithfully in the footsteps of our fathers in the faith.

So as to obtain a feeble idea of the magnitude of the grace of our call to Christianity, we have only to consider what the coming of the Messiah was to our forefathers. He was their God, their Saviour, their Light, their Hope.

As soon as they became aware of the appearance of the star, they at once, without asking any questions, made preparations to seek out their Redeemer. So powerfully did they feel impelled, so ardent was their desire to arrive at the place towards which they were attracted by the star, and towards which grace called them, that they did not delay a moment. Ah, my brethren, how very far indeed are we from imitating them! For how many years has God been calling to us by His grace, by inspiring us with the thought of renouncing our sins, and of making our peace with Him? But we are still deaf and stiff-necked. Oh, when will that blessed day

come, on which we shall do as the Wise men did, and leaving everything give ourselves to God?

Secondly, I say, my brethren, that their faithfulness to their calling was strong; they overcame every difficulty and hindrance which stood in their way, so as to follow the star. And what sacrifices they had to make! They had to leave their country, their palaces, their families and their kingdom, or in other words, they had to leave everything which was most dear to them in this world. To part from them, they underwent the fatigues of a long and troublesome journey, and all this of a very cold season of the year: everything seemed to stand in the way of their undertaking. How much ridicule did they not have to put up with from their equals, and even from the people? But no! Nothing daunts them from undertaking this important journey. You see here plainly, my brethren, that the merit of the true faith consists in this that we sacrifice all that which we love best, to obey the voice of grace which calls to us. Ah, my brethren, if we were called upon to make the same sacrifices as the Wise men did, to win heaven, how small would be the number of the elect! But no, my brethren, if we only do as much for eternal as we do for temporal affairs, we shall be sure to gain heaven. Look at the miser, how he labors day and night to gain money, and to hoard it up. Look at him who is addicted to drink: he works hard the whole week, and then spends his earnings on Saturday night in the saloon. Look at those young people on pleasure bent! Distance is no object to them in the pursuit of pleasures which they find to their cost are mixed with much bitterness. Now, in all these things, you can see for yourself, many sacrifices are required; but nothing hinders them and they all reach their goal: some by deception, others by cunning.

But, my dear brethren, how do we act, when it is a question of our eternal salvation? Almost everything seems impracticable to us. We must admit, my dear brethren, that we are in a condition of lamentable blindness, because all our actions are performed for this miserable world, and we are not willing to undertake anything for our eternal salvation.

Thirdly, my brethren, let us consider what degree the persistence of the Wise men attained. On their arrival at Jerusalem, the star which had guided them on the journey, disappeared. They imagined without doubt that they had reached the place where our Saviour was born, and they thought that the whole of Jerusalem was beside itself with joy at the birth of its Redeemer. What astonishment, how surprised they were, my dear

brethren. Jerusalem not only exhibits no signs of joy whatever, but it does not even know its Redeemer is born at all. The Jews are so surprised to see how the Wise men came to worship the Messiah that the Wise men wondered why such an event was announced to them at all. How little hope these circumstances afforded their faith! Was it not rather calculated to deter them from their journey, and to cause them to return home secretly, for fear that they might become the laughing stock of all Jerusalem? Ah, my brethren, the greater number of us would have done this, if our faith had been so severely tried. It was not without a meaning that the star disappeared: it happened so that the Jews, who kept their eyes shut from such an event, might be called back to the faith; it was left to strangers to show them their blindness.

But all this only served to strengthen their resolution, instead of causing them to waver in it. Will the three holy kings allow themselves to be frightened after the brilliancy of that light has vanished? Will they, my brethren, give up? O no! We should; undoubtedly much less would dishearten us. They betake themselves elsewhere: they take refuge with the theologians, for they knew that the prophecies which designated the place and the time of the Messiah's birth were in the custody of these theologians. Fearlessly they enter Herod's palace, and ask him where the new-born king of the Jews is, and they explain to him without fear that they have come to adore Him. Although the king was offended at this speech, he was unable to prevent them from undertaking this significant journey; they wanted to find their God at any cost. What courage, my brethren, what steadfastness! O my brethren, how different is it with us, who are afraid of the least ridicule? The thought of "what will the world say" prevents us from fulfilling our religious duties, and from frequently receiving the Sacraments. How often have we not been ashamed to make the sign of the cross, before and after meals? How often has not the fear of men caused us to dispense with the days of fasting and abstinence, for fear of being observed, and taken for a good Christian? What a contrast, my brethren! O what confusion will be ours, if the Redeemer on the Day of Judgment compares our behavior with that of the Wise men, our forefathers in the faith, who would sooner forsake and sacrifice all things, than to resist the voice of grace, which called them?

Let us see how great their constancy was. The theologians told them the prophecies announced that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and that the time had come. They no sooner

received this answer, than they set out for that town. Might they not expect that it would happen to them, as it had happened to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, namely, that the crowd of people would be so great that they would find no room? Could they possibly doubt but that the Jews who had waited four thousand years for the coming of the Messiah, would hasten in great multitudes to prostrate themselves before the crib and acknowledge Him as their Redeemer and their God? But no, my brethren; no one stirred; they were living in darkness, and they remained in it. A true picture of the sinner, who continually hears the voice of God, calling him by the voice of his shepherds, that he must renounce his sins, and be converted, instead of which he only plunges deeper into sin, and becomes more and more hardened.

But let us return to the three holy kings, my brethren. They set forth alone from Jerusalem. How prompt they are! O what faith! Will God let this go unrewarded? No, certainly not. Almost immediately on leaving the city, that same light, the wonderful star preceded them, and seemed to take them by the hand so as to conduct them to that poor dwelling place of poverty and want. It stood still as if to say: Here is He whose presence is sought by you. Here is the expected One. Approach and behold Him. It is He who was conceived from eternity, and who is just born. He has taken a human body, which He will sacrifice, to save His people. Do not let the marks of poverty make you shrink back. He is bound in swaddling clothes; but He is that One who hurls the lightning from the heights of heaven. His look makes hell to tremble, because they behold in Him the avenger. These holy kings feel at this moment their hearts burning with love within them, they throw themselves at their Redeemer's feet, and moisten the straw with their tears. What a sight for kings to behold! An infant lying between two lowly animals, in a manger, and they acknowledge Him to be their God, and Redeemer. O what a precious thing is faith! Instead of being startled at the aspect of poverty, it touched and edified them. Their eyes never tired of gazing on the Redeemer of the world, the king of heaven and earth, the Lord of all things, in this condition. The astonishment which filled their hearts was so overpowering, that they gave to God all that they had, all that they could give Him. At this moment they consecrated themselves to God, for they no longer desired to be masters of their own person. Not contented with this gift, they offered Him their entire kingdom. According to Oriental custom, which

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Passion Sunday – Repentance

“Woe is me, for I have sinned so much during my life” – Confessions of St. Augustine.

Thus spoke St. Augustine, when he thought over his past life, which he had spent incessantly in the abominable vice of impurity. As often as the thought occurred to him, his heart was torn and devoured by repentance. “Oh, my Lord,” he exclaimed, “I have lived without loving Thee; oh, my Lord, how many precious years have I lost! Deign, O Lord, I implore Thee, to efface from Thy memory my past faults!” Oh precious tears, O salutary contrition, which made of such a great sinner so great a saint! Oh, how quickly does a really contrite heart regain the friendship of God! Ah, would to God, that every time we let our sins pass before our mind’s eye we could say with the repentant St. Augustine: “Ah, woe is me. I have sinned much during my life; have mercy on me, O Lord!” How soon would we alter our mode of living! Yes, my brethren, let us all who are here present, confess with the same fervent repentance and sincerity, that we are great sinners who deserve to experience the full wrath of God. And let us praise God’s infinite mercy, who gives us abundantly of His treasures to solace us in our misery. If our sins have been ever so great, and our life has been ever so dissolute, we are sure of His pardon, if we follow the example of the prodigal son and throw ourselves with a contrite heart at the feet of the best of fathers. Now let me show to you, my Christian friends, that our repentance must have this quality before it can procure for us pardon for our sins: The sinner must, in consequence of his repentance, hate his sins sincerely, and detest them. To make you fully understand what repentance, i.e., the pain which our sins should cause our conscience, means, I would have to show you on the one hand the abhorrence which the Lord has for them, and the torments which He had to suffer to gain pardon for them from God the Father, and on the other hand the blessings we lose by committing sin, and the evils which we bring down upon ourselves in the next world; but no man will ever be able to understand this fully. Where shall I lead you, my brethren, to show you this repentance? Into the solitude of the desert, perhaps, where so many saints spent twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or even eighty years of their lives, bemoaning faults which were no faults in the eyes of the world. No, your heart would not be moved by such as these. Or shall I lead you to the entrance of hell, so that you may hear the woeful cries and howls,

and gnashing of teeth, which is caused by the repentance of their sins; but though bitter and hard to bear, their pain and repentance is useless. No, my brethren, you would not learn here the real repentance which you should feel over your sins. Oh, if I could only lead you to the foot of the cross which is still reddened with the precious Blood of our Lord, shed to wash away our sins! Oh, if I could only lead you into that garden of sorrow, where our Lord shed for our sins, not ordinary tears, but blood, which flowed forth from all the pores of His body! Oh, if I could only show Him to you laden with the cross, staggering along the streets of Jerusalem, at every step He stumbles and is driven on by kicks. Oh, if I could only lead you to Mount Calvary, where our Lord died, for the sake of our salvation. But even if I could do all that, it would be necessary that God should give you the grace of inflaming in your heart the burning love of a St. Bernard, who broke out in tears at the mere sight of the cross. Oh, beautiful and precious repentance, how happy is he who harbors thee in his heart! But to whom am I addressing myself: where is he who feels it in his heart? Alas, I do not know. Is it to that headstrong sinner who has abandoned his God and neglected his soul for twenty or thirty years? No, that would be like trying to soften a rock by pouring water over it. Or to that Christian who has neglected missions, and ceased prayers, and despised the admonitions of his spiritual adviser? No, that would be like trying to heat water by adding ice to it. Or, perhaps, to those persons who feel satisfied if they make their Easter duty, and then, year in and year out, continue in the same sinful course of living. No, those are the victims which are fattened to serve as food for the eternal flames. Or to those Christians who go to Communion every month, and fall back into their sins every day? No, for they are like the blind, who do not know what they do, or what they ought to do. to whom shall I address myself, then? Alas, I do not know. Oh, my Lord, where shall I look for it, where shall I find it? Yes, my Lord, I know whence it comes and who bestows it. It comes from heaven, and Thou dost bestow it, O Lord. Oh, my Lord, we implore Thee, bestow it upon us, the repentance which crushes and devours our heart; this beautiful repentance which disarms God's justice and changes an eternity of misery into eternal bliss. Oh, beautiful virtue, how necessary thou art, and how seldom to be found! And yet, without it there can be no pardon, no heaven, and, more than that, without it all is in vain: penance, charity, alms, or anything else we might do to gain the eternal reward. But we may ask, "What does this word

‘repentance’ mean, and how can we tell whether we have it or not?” My brethren, if you will listen to me, I will explain to you how you can find out whether you have it or not, and if you have it not, how you may obtain it. Now, if you ask me what repentance is, I tell you that it is an anguish of the soul and a detestation for past sin, and a firm resolve never to sin again. Yes, my brethren, this is the foremost of all conditions which God makes before pardoning our sins, and it can never be dispensed with. A sickness which deprives us of speech, may dispense us from confession; a sudden death may dispense us from the necessity of giving satisfaction for our sins during life, but with repentance it is different. Without it, it is impossible, absolutely impossible, to obtain forgiveness. Yes, my brethren, I must say with deep regret that the want of repentance is the cause of a great number of sacrilegious confessions and Communions, and what is still more to be regretted is the circumstance that many do not realize what a sad state they are in, and live and die in it. Now, my friends, if we have the misfortune to conceal a sin in confession, this sin is constantly before our eyes like a monster which threatens to devour us, and it causes us to soon go to confession again, so as to free ourselves from it. But it is different with repentance; we confess, but our heart does not take part in the accusation which we make against ourselves. We approach the Holy Sacrament with as cold, unfeeling, and indifferent a heart as if performing an indifferent act of no consequence. Thus we live from day to day, from year to year, until we approach death, when we expect to find that we have done something to our credit, only to discover nothing but sacrileges, which we have committed by our confessions and Communions. Oh, my God, how many Christians there are who will discover at the hour of their death nothing but invalid confessions! But I will not go further into this matter, for fear that I may frighten you, and yet you ought really to be brought to the verge of despair, so that you may stop immediately, and improve your condition right now, instead of waiting until that moment when you will recognize your condition, and when it will be too late to improve it. But let us continue with our explanation, and you will soon learn, my brethren, whether you had the repentance in all your confessions, which is so absolutely necessary for the forgiveness of sin. I said that repentance is an anguish of soul. It is absolutely necessary that a sinner weep over his sins either in this world or the next. In this world we can wipe out our sins by repentance, but not in the next. We should be very

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Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – The Soul

“And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it.” —Luke xix. 41.

SYNOPSIS.—Jesus weeping over Jerusalem because He foresaw the loss of so many souls. I. What a soul really is. II. Our obligation toward our soul.

I. The value of a human soul. God alone knows its beauties and perfections. The soul an image and likeness of God. The destiny of the soul. The soul filled with desires which cannot be gratified in this world. The soul capable of the love of God and also of serving Him. God giving His own flesh and blood for the food of this valuable soul.

II. Care to be taken not to lose this soul, if God Himself wept at the thought of its loss. He deplored the loss of souls also in His prophets. Amos. Jeremias. Christ in all His sufferings had but one object: the saving of our souls. The value of our souls also demonstrated by the work of the devil. Therefore, the knowledge of the value of your soul should prompt you to save it.

When Jesus was about to enter the city of Jerusalem, He wept over it, saying: “If thou wouldst at least have understood the grace I bring thee, and wouldst have derived benefit therefrom, then thou wouldst have still obtained forgiveness; but no, thy blindness has gone so far that all these graces have served only to harden thee, and to increase thy misfortune; thou didst kill the prophets and the children of God, and now thou wilt reach the pinnacle of thy crimes by putting to death the Son of God Himself.” This it was, my dear friends, that caused Jesus to shed copious tears when He was about to enter the city. In the calamity thus foretold, He foresaw and deplored the loss of so many souls, far more guilty, because favored with so many more graces, than the Jews. What moved Him so deeply was that, notwithstanding His merits and His bitter passion, which would have been sufficient to redeem more than a thousand worlds, the greater part of humanity would be lost. Indeed, even among ourselves, He perceived those who despise His graces and employ them only for their own destruction. Who would not tremble, when seriously thinking of saving his soul? Has not Christ warned us under His tears: “If my death and my blood do not serve for thy salvation, they will arouse the everlasting wrath of my Father?”

Is it conceivable, my friends, that in spite of all Jesus has done for the salvation of our soul, we could be indifferent? For the purpose of expelling this indifference from among us, let me endeavor to show, you:

- I. What a soul really is.
- II. Our obligation toward our soul.

I. My dear friends, if we would really appreciate the value of our souls, with what care and zeal would we not try to save it! But we never really comprehend its value. To show the great value of a soul is impossible to mortal man. God alone knows the beauties and perfections with which He has adorned a soul. Let me point out to you that God has created heaven and earth, and all they contain, and all these wonders have been created for its benefit. Our catechism gives us an indication of the magnificence of the soul. If you ask a child, "What is understood by saying that 'man is a creature whose soul is made to the image and likeness of God?'" the child will answer, "That the soul, like God, possesses the faculties to reason, to love, and to act on its own free will." This, my friends, is the highest testimonial to the qualities with which God has adorned the soul, that it was created by the three persons of the Most Holy Trinity after their own likeness. A spirit like unto God, capable for all eternity of recognizing the sublimities and perfections of God; a soul which is the object of love of the three divine persons, a soul capable of adoring God in all His works; a soul whose whole destiny will be to sing the praises of the Almighty; a soul which has freedom in its actions, so that it may give its affection and its love whosoever it pleases. It is free to love God or not love Him, but when fortunate enough to turn to God in love, then God Himself seems to be the will of such a soul, and dwells therein in happiness. We may positively state that, since the creation of the world there has never been anything refused to a soul if it was given over entirely to His love. God has instilled our souls with desires which find their gratification not in this world. Give a soul all the joys and treasures of this world, and it will not be satisfied, for the simple reason that God has created the soul for Himself. He alone is capable of satisfying its longings.

Yes, my friends, our soul is capable of loving God, and the love of God alone forms its happiness. If we love Him, all the good and the pleasures which we could ever hope for on earth or in heaven, are ours. We are furthermore enabled to serve God, that

is, to glorify Him in our works and actions. There is nothing, down to the most insignificant action, by which it would not be possible for us to glorify the Lord, provided we perform this action out of love for Him. Our occupations upon earth are different from the occupation of the angels in heaven only inasmuch as we cannot as yet behold the Lord with our human eyes, but only with the eyes of faith.

Our soul is so noble, adorned with such beautiful qualities that God entrusted every soul to the care of a prince of His heavenly household, to a guardian angel. Our soul is so precious in the eyes of God, that in His wisdom He could find no worthier food for it than His own divine body, of which the soul may partake as its daily bread, if it so desires. St. Ambrose says, that God esteems our soul so much, that if there had been only one soul in the world, He would not have considered it too great a sacrifice to die for this one soul. He said to St. Teresa: “Thou art so agreeable to me, that, if there had not been a heaven, I would have created one for thee alone.”

“O body, how happy thou art!” exclaims St. Bernard, “to harbor a soul which is adorned with such beautiful graces!” Our soul is something so great, so precious, that nothing but God alone surpasses it. God once showed a soul to St. Catherine. She found it so beautiful that she exclaimed: “Oh, my Lord, if my faith did not teach me that there is only one God, I should believe this soul is another God. I can now understand that Thou hast died for so beautiful a soul!”

Our soul, my dear friends, will be as immortal as God Himself. Can we be surprised, therefore, that God, knowing the value of the soul so well, weeps such bitter tears at the loss of such a soul?

II. Now, let us consider how much care we must employ to preserve in our soul its great beauties. Oh, my friends, God is so sad over the loss of a soul that He even wept over it. Already in His prophets, He weeps and bewails the loss of souls. We can see this clearly in the person of the prophet Amos. The prophet says: “When I had retired into solitude and meditated upon the terrible number of crimes which God’s own people committed every day, and when I saw that God’s wrath was ready to descend upon them, and that the abyss of hell was about to open and devour them, then I gathered them together, and said to them, with bitter tears: Oh, my children do you know what my occupation is by day and by night? It is to recall to my mind, in the bitterness of my heart, all

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Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

– Humility

“Every one that exalted himself shall be humbled; and he that humbled himself shall be exalted.” —Luke xviii, 14.

SYNOPSIS.—the necessity of humbling ourselves. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Humility most pleasing to God.

I. Humility a virtue most necessary.

II. Our reasons for practicing this virtue.

I. Humility as necessary for our salvation as the sacraments of Baptism and Penance. Pride produces every sin, humility every virtue. Nothing as pleasing to God as this virtue. Children loved by our Saviour because they are humble. The Blessed Virgin owes her great exaltation to this virtue.

Christ mentions humility first in the Beatitudes. Humbleness also pleasing to men. Humility the foundation of all other virtues. In what humility consists. Exterior and interior humility. Exterior humility: (1) Avoiding to praise ourselves, (2) hiding our good deeds, (3) feeling no pleasure when praised by others, (4) avoiding disputes, (5) not feeling sad when despised by others, (6) not excusing our faults. Interior humility: (1) thinking little of ourselves, (2) not minding if others know our faults, (3) satisfied if others surpass us in good qualities or wealth.

II. We should be induced to practice humility (1) by the consideration of God's glory, (2) by the example of Jesus Christ, (3) by our own wretchedness.

Could our Redeemer, my dear brethren, have pointed out to us more clearly or distinctly than in these words the necessity of humbling ourselves, of holding ourselves in disesteem in our thoughts as well as in our words and actions, so that we might be exalted to sing the praises of God for all eternity? When Jesus once was in the company of Pharisees, and beheld that many of them boasted of their good deeds, and how they despised others, He gave them this parable: “Two men,” He said to them, “went up into the Temple to pray. The one was a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood proudly erect, and prayed by himself thus: O God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, and give a tithe of all I possess.” This is his prayer, St. Augustine tells us. You can very well perceive that this prayer is only an affectation of vanity and pride. He does not come to ask God to grant him grace, but to extol himself, and to treat

with contempt those who really do pray. The Publican, on the other hand, stood afar off from the altar, and did not even venture to raise his eyes up to heaven. He struck his breast, and said: “My God, have mercy upon me a sinner.” “I say to you,” Jesus Christ added, “that this one went home justified, rather than the other.” The Publican’s sins are forgiven him, but the Pharisee, with all his good deeds, returns to his home more culpable than when he left it. If you wish to know the reason, it is this: The humility of the Publican, although a sinner, was more pleasing to God than all the superficial good works of the proud Pharisee. And Jesus Christ in this example, demonstrates that everyone who exalted himself shall be humbled, and he who humbled himself shall be exalted. Yes, dear brethren, the only way which leads to exaltation in the next life is humility. Without humility, that lovely and rare virtue, you will be as unlikely to reach heaven as without Baptism. Let us, therefore, to-day, dear brethren, understand the duty of humbling ourselves, and the motives which should encourage us to do so. I will show you:

- I. That humility is a virtue which is absolutely necessary for us if we wish to please God by our actions, and to be rewarded in the next life.
- II. That we have every reason to practice it, toward God, as well as toward ourselves.

I. Before making you comprehend how greatly we stand in need of this beautiful virtue, which is as necessary as Baptism, as necessary as the Sacrament of Penance after mortal sin, I must tell you in what consists this amiable virtue, which gives to all our actions such great merit, and adorns all our good works so abundantly. St. Bernard, the great Saint who practiced it in such an extraordinary manner, forsook fortune, friends, parents, and relations to pass his life in the desert with wild beasts, and there to lament his sins, tells us that humility is a virtue by which we learn to know ourselves; and it is just this which impels us to think little of ourselves, and above all things not to take pleasure when we are praised. I say (1) this virtue is absolutely necessary for us if we wish to see our actions rewarded in heaven, for Jesus Christ Himself has told us that we can as little expect to gain heaven without humility, as without Baptism. St. Augustine tells us: “If you ask me which the first virtue is for a Christian, I tell you that it is humility. If you ask me which the second is, I say to you it is humility. If you again ask me which the third is, I still say that it

is humility, and as often as you ask me this question I shall always give you the same answer.”

If pride produces every sin, we can just as well say that humility produces every virtue. With humility you have everything which you ought to have to please God and to save your soul, and without humility all the other virtues will be of no avail. We read in the Gospel that some mothers presented their children to Jesus Christ that He might bless them. The Apostles wanted to turn them away, but our Lord would not permit this, and He said to them: “Suffer the little children to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” He embraced them, and gave them His blessing. Why did the divine Redeemer receive them so lovingly? For the reason that children are simple, humble, and without guile. If, therefore, my dear brethren, we desire to be received kindly by Jesus Christ, we too, must be simple, and humble in everything that we do. “This,” St. Bernard tells us, “was the beautiful virtue on account of which the eternal Father regarded the Blessed Virgin with delight, and if this virtue,” he says, “drew down upon her God’s regard, it was also by her humility that she conceived the Son of God. If the Blessed Virgin is the Queen of angels, she is also the Queen of the humble.” St. Teresa once asked our Lord why the Holy Ghost imparted and revealed Himself in the Old Testament, to the Patriarchs and Prophets, but does so no longer. Our Lord answered her that this happened because they were more simple and humble; but now men have a false heart, and are full of pride and vanity. God does not impart anything to them. He does not love them as He did the good Patriarchs and Prophets who were simple and humble. St. Augustine tells us: “If you were profoundly humble, and acknowledged that you were nothing, deserved nothing, then God would grant you abundant graces. But when you exalt yourselves, and think so much of yourselves, then He will withdraw Himself from you, and abandon you to your misery.”

In order to show that humility is the most beautiful, as well as the most precious of all virtues, our Lord begins His beatitudes with humility, by saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven.” St. Augustine tells us that the poor in spirit are those who have humility for their portion. The prophet Isaiah said to God: “Lord, upon whom does Thy holy spirit descend? Is it perhaps upon those who bear a great name in this world, and upon the proud?” “No,” said the Lord, “but upon those that are humble of heart.”

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