

THE SERAPH

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The Seraph

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Virtue of Obedience

Bishop Giles, OFM

Jesus tells us that He came to this earth to serve – not to be served. He came to do the Will of The Father – not His own. We are also instructed that, if we wish to be His disciples, we must deny ourselves, and take up our crosses daily and follow Him. There is something very profound and mysterious in the virtue of obedience. The King of Kings came to serve us, He came to this earth and was obedient unto death on the cross.

The virtue of obedience is specifically commanded in the Fourth Commandment. Honor your Father and Mother. Everyone who has studied the Catholic Catechism is aware of the limits to this commandment. Our fallen natures incite us to ask, but what about this? Or what about that? The answer given is simply to obey in all things that are not sinful. In the religious life, novices are taught that their vow of obedience binds them to obey in all that is not sinful, against the rule, or against their own consciences. The next question that is customarily asked is, how long must we obey

our parents? As long as we live we must honor, love and obey them.

We are also instructed that this commandment applies not only to parents, but also to all authority that is placed over us. We must obey the priest, police, teachers, rulers, judges, employers, etc. Religious must obey superiors, and wives must obey husbands. These, too, are required of us as long as it is not a question of sin. We, obviously, must obey God before men.

Now that we have these burning questions out of the way, the beauty of obedience can be considered. When there is true obedience there is real harmony, peace, and prosperity – there is true and right order. In right order, we obtain a glimpse of Paradise. When all obey the authority that God has placed over them there is conformity (unity) of wills – a singleness of purpose. Conflicts and strife are avoided.

The position of authority is not one to be sought after or

desired. Jesus has instructed us that the greatest must become the servant of all. The honor and privilege belongs to the least, the humblest, the one bound to obey. The superior in the Franciscan community is called the minister; as his duty is to minister to the needs of the rest of the community. A true pope is the “Servant of the Servants of Christ.” He ministers to the bishops who, in turn, minister to their flocks. The same can be said of all authority: police, teachers, employers, etc.; all must labor for the good of their subjects. A husband and father must work to support his wife and children. He must bear the constant burden of providing for all their material needs, but even more importantly, he must provide for their spiritual needs. There is truly nothing as tragic as Catholic parents who fail to provide their children with Catholic instruction in the Faith. Those who do not have the care of their own are worse than the infidels, who do not know God.

Those who are good and faithful subjects are truly set free and are the richest of souls. The subject (child, religious, citizen, wife, etc.) are freed from the concerns that the superior must have for

them. A child should not have to concern himself with providing his own food, clothing, shelter, education; these are obtained and provided by the parents. The student does not have to go through the painful process of discovering truth for the first time; he is handed truths which others have labored very hard to obtain. Religious are freed from many concerns, so that they can direct their attention to the care of their souls. The superiors take on the role of Martha as they are concerned about many things; but subjects take on the role of Mary – who has chosen the better part. They are free to sit at the feet of Jesus and feed their souls with the sweetest heavenly delights.

It is, no doubt, a very hard thing to deny our own wills; but it is a work that is rewarded many times over. When we place our wills at the disposal of another, we are freed from making choices and decisions that are often very distracting and consuming. “What would you have me do?” not only sets us free, but it also relieves us of the moral consequences of many of our actions. Parents and superiors must answer for the crimes of those who are subject

to them. There is a beauty in the religious life in doing all things under holy obedience. Religious are instructed that all their actions – good, bad, or indifferent – when done under holy obedience gain them rich graces and blessings from God. A superior may be absolutely wrong in his commands (and he will have to answer to God for this), however, a subject does not suffer such evil consequences, but rather obtains a great reward for his ready and prompt obedience.

Of all the virtues, obedience is at once the most difficult and the most rewarding. In practicing a prompt, holy, loving obedience; we make a sacrifice of our very selves. This is the sacrifice of our own wills – who we are. There is nothing greater, nor nothing more, than this that we can give or offer. Holy obedience is often considered as a type of holy slavery. Slaves are often physically controlled, but their masters have no way to control the free wills of their servants. In the practice of the virtue of obedience, we freely give even this (our free will) to our superiors and ultimately to God. Obedience binds us as physical slaves, but holy obedience takes

us even further and makes us spiritual slaves as well. In holy obedience, we die to ourselves and truly become an extension of our superior. Not only do we do what we are asked to do, but we even conform our hearts and wills to that of the superior. In true obedience, the superior lives through us – his thinking and desires become our thoughts and desires. When this obedience is offered to God we die to ourselves, but God enters in and lives in us. Our wills become the Will of God, our desires become the desires of God. We make a reality in our own lives what St. Paul became: “It is no longer I, but Christ Jesus living within me.”

What if we are given bad or even evil superiors? As mentioned above, we should obey them except when they command us to disobey God. We must pray even more fervently for them, as they have a lot to answer for. It is a cross that is often given to us by God to bear. There is a saying that we get the leaders (superiors) that we deserve. If we have authority over us that is not the best, we should first consider that, perhaps, we are not deserving of having better authority placed over us. In this

situation, it is clear that we must strive to become better and then, perhaps, we will be deserving of better superiors. Citizens should see a reflection of themselves in their civil rulers. If we want better leaders, we must become more deserving of better leaders. Children should seek to become better children so that their parents' burdens are lessened and they, in turn, can become better parents. Employees should seek to become deserving of better employers by doing the best that they can. Wives should seek to aid their husbands (heads) to become better heads, by becoming, themselves, better hearts. This, of course, is not absolute. There are those in authority that will abuse their positions, no matter what. There is, nonetheless, great opportunity for such subjects to improve themselves, and conform themselves more intimately with Jesus Christ in His sufferings.

The ill treatment or mistreatment meted out to us is either willed by God or permitted by Him, for our own good. Let us constantly remind ourselves that God is in charge, nothing can or will happen without His willing it or permitting it. God wills our eternal salvation, and He arranges

everything for our benefit, if we cooperate with Him. Everything works for the good of those who love God. The crosses, the difficulties, the abuses that we must undergo are purifying fires if we will allow ourselves to become purged in the fire. In putting up with these things patiently and willingly we gain merit for ourselves, but we also aid our superiors in becoming better. It is a kind of passive instruction that the subject offers to the superior. When this is done humbly, meekly, patiently, and most importantly, lovingly it has an impressive power to soften hearts and correct abuses. We are given a beautiful example of this in the life of St. Monica, who brought about the conversion of her husband by seeing him as her master and submitting and obeying him at even great cost and sacrifice to herself. Her submission and docility softened the heart of her husband. He even began to ask her guidance before he made decisions. From there, she led him to the Church and God.

Let us now consider what is expected of us when civil powers have separated us from those to whom God has bound

us. Children taken away from their parents, for one reason or another, may be released from the daily duties of obedience, but the filial love and respect should continue, at least in their prayers and their desires. Whatever wrongs the parents may be guilty of, they are still the parents that God has given us. If we cannot live with them, or they cannot care for us, we can always pray for them, begging God to have mercy upon them. If we are minors, then we should love honor and obey those who have come to our aid in assuming the burdens that our natural parents are unable to provide. Sometimes, natural parents renounce their duties and obligations and others step in to give us what they can offer; it is they, then, that now have the right to our love, honor, respect and obedience. These are our true parents regardless of biological inheritance.

Sometimes, spouses are separated by the civil “laws” of divorce. The civil authority has no power to dissolve the sacrament of marriage. “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” While we may be physically forced to comply with this unjust regulation of

the state against us, we must remember that in the eyes of God we are joined together until separated by death. Husbands are still bound to provide for their wives and if this is not physically possible, then they must at least pray and do penance for them. Wives, who are separated from their husbands, may no longer be bound to the civil laws of obedience but, the decree of divorce is against the law of God. They should, however, pray for their husbands as they would for themselves. As the subject in the marriage union, wives suffer a much greater injustice when the state attempts to declare a sacrament dissolved. Without the loving authority over her, she is deprived of the material security that is her due. She is deprived of loving guidance that a husband should provide. The subject in all cases has the best position and, therefore, has the most to lose; and suffers the most when God’s order is frustrated.

There are many marriages today that demand that wives and husbands have paying jobs to provide for their families. This tends to disrupt and diminish the roles of husband and wife. There is no doubt that marriage is a partnership, but the husband

is designed by God to be the head. If the wife must aid in the husband's responsibilities, it appears only just and fair that the husband come to the wife's aid in her duties and responsibilities. Then, we suffer the breakdown of roles and positions. Confusion of roles, leads to a breakdown of obedience, a breakdown of unity, and, most terribly, a breakdown of love. Those who find that

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Morality Extracted from the Confessions of St. Augustine

PÈRE JEAN NICOLAS GROU, S.J.

Who is the man, who reflecting on his weakness, dares to ascribe to his own strength, his chastity and his innocence? — B. 2, c. 7.

St. Augustine with reason judged on this head of others from himself. He knew all his own weakness, of which he had made a fatal essay; and he knew that this weakness is natural to man, that he is prone to evil, and averse to what is good, and that of himself he has not the strength to avoid the one or practice the other. The thing is true, even morally speaking. The virtuous Pagans were not purely so; and if they overcame any vice, they overcame it through vicious motives, that were infected with pride and self-love.

But what our faith teaches us, confirms this truth more forcibly. We are taught by it that all the supernatural good which is in us, is due to grace, that of ourselves we can do nothing, that we are not capable even of one good thought, or of one good desire, with respect to our last end. Every

member of the Church professes the belief of this doctrine, which is the foundation of Christianity, humility, and of the gratitude we owe to God. But it is one thing to believe with a speculative faith, and another in practice to conform our sentiments with this belief, so as to glorify God in all we see that is good in us, and never to imagine that we have in the least contributed towards it by our own endeavors.

How rare are the souls who are habitually in this interior disposition! Where are those to be found, who continually carry in their heart an intimate conviction of their weakness and impotency? It can only be the effect of a long, or rather a constant experience.

Now I can hardly discover more than two sets of people, who have, this experimental knowledge of their misery: the one is of those, who, before they gave themselves totally to God, or since they have returned to Him, have fallen into some considerable fault, the remembrance of which being

always present to their mind, cures them of presumption, and keeps them solidly humble: such were David, Peter, Magdalene, Augustine, and many others: the other is of those who have always lived with great purity and innocence, but whom God has tried with great and violent temptations; whom He has led a hundred times to the brink of the precipice, into which they know they would have infallibly fallen, if the all-powerful hand of God had not supported them; those also who in the most perfect service of God, have hardly ever experienced either relish or consolation; who have met with nothing but dryness, aridities, and reluctance to what is good, and have been in continual conflicts with the rebellions of depraved nature.

All such servants of God, whose number is small, if compared with the others, have been truly humble, have been deeply penetrated with a sense of their misery, and of their incapacity of doing anything that is good. A man who has the advantage of knowing himself in this manner, should he overcome any passion, or acquire any virtue, is very far from ascribing the merit of it to himself; he gives all the glory of it

to God alone. He does not prefer himself to any one, not even to the greatest sinners; persuaded as he is that if they had received the same graces which he has received, they would have made a better use of them than he has done; and that if he himself had been in the same circumstances with them, he would have been more wicked than they. Thus thought St. Paul, who styled himself the first of sinners, and said, “Whatever I am, I am through the grace of God”.

Thus thought St. Augustine, who acknowledged that there is no sin, which any one man can commit, but what every other man might commit, if not preserved from it by the grace of God. Thus thought St. Francis, who sincerely believed himself to be more guilty in the sight of God, than a criminal whom he once saw going to execution. We have a difficulty in conceiving how these sentiments could be in the saints; we look upon them as pious exaggerations. But it is because we know not as they did, the great corruption and the extreme infirmity of man: it is because we have not humility: a virtue which does not consist, as it is generally reckoned, in placing ourselves beneath what

we are, but in doing ourselves the exactest and the strictest justice.

As to those who are pure and innocent, but of an ordinary virtue; who are not addicted to prayer, and to an interior life; who have not gone through humiliating trials; they reflect but little on their weakness; they even have but an imperfect knowledge of it; they are therefore apt to presume on their own strength, and to applaud themselves for their goodness, as if they had acquired it by their own industry and fidelity: and it would be well if they did not magnify in their own fancy, the little goodness they do, and imagine that they have virtues, which they really have not.

From hence it happens that they are full of self-love, self-sufficiency, of esteem for themselves, and of a secret contempt for others, with whom they compare themselves with complacency: and are moreover so blind, that the greatest part of them will not know their own portrait which I here set before them. They think themselves capable of everything; they never hesitate at anything, and enterprize all things. Yet

they are cowardly, timid, and pusillanimous, and are forever in a tremble on their account. The smallest fault they commit, frets and disheartens them: they cannot imagine, do they say, how they came to fall. What pride! What supine ignorance of themselves! At the first shock of the slightest temptation, you see them disconcerted, dejected, and on the point of laying everything aside. It is because they rely on themselves, and not on grace.

They are humble only in words and in the exterior; inwardly they are ruled by a disguised, subtle pride, which blinds them to their own faults, and renders them very clear-sighted in the discovery of those of others. They criticize and detract; and in their zeal, they are harsh and severe; they are forbidding to sinners, as if they should say to them, "Approach me not, for I am pure."

These same people are extremely selfish, and much attached to their own will and judgment; they are active, bustling, and restless; they are fond of works that attract notice, and of exterior practices of piety. You must not speak to them of the mortification of the heart, or of

a peaceable and quiet prayer; in this their self-love would not find its account. Unless they move their lips, they think they do not pray; their heart is dry, they must draw all from their books. In their notions, mortification consists in the practice of some fasts, some abstinence, or some corporal austerity. And we may easily guess how much they prefer themselves interiorly to those, who lead an ordinary sort of a life. But to curb the reflections of the mind, to moderate the activity of the will, to restrain the imagination, to suppress the sallies of humor, is what they have not the courage to do, nor yet the design of undertaking. But what would such people think, if, on being told that their sanctity depended much more upon the action of God, than upon their own, they were advised to rest upon Him the chief care of it, to allow Him to act, to give themselves

up to Him, and to submit to His operations? These are so many things of which they have no conception, or they treat them as idle and illusive.

These people, adds St. Augustine, have less love for God, than converted sinners have, because the mercy by which God pardons sin, has been less necessary to them; as if the grace which preserves, were less valuable than the remedy which cures, and as if they were not as much, and even more indebted to God's goodness on that very account. The case is, that at bottom, they imagine that their justice belongs to themselves, and that it is, if not entirely, at least in great measure their own work; and on this they rest their hope, instead of placing it solely in God; who, when He crowns our merits, crowns but His own gifts.

NOTE:

**The Seraph is not published in July and August.
We are looking forward to seeing you again in
September.**

Corpus Christi Catholic Church Building Fund



Front of new Chapel (Feb 2017)

As you may know, Corpus Christi is in the process of constructing a new building which will be the church, doubling the size of the present small chapel. The new construction will also allow the present space to be converted to bedrooms and classrooms for Sacred Heart Major Seminary. It is also our intention to restart St. Anthony Minor Seminary in these same facilities. This will provide a Catholic education for all interested young Catholic men.

As of March 2017, we have recently been given an update from the contractor. It will now require an estimated \$75,000.00 to complete the work so Holy Mass is able to be said in this new church. We beg of you to give any financial assistance that you can to this worthy and noble undertaking in order to complete this project in a timely manner. If you are unable to give financially at this time, we appreciate your generosity in offering your prayers and sacrifices so that, by God's Holy Will, we may speedily reach our goal.

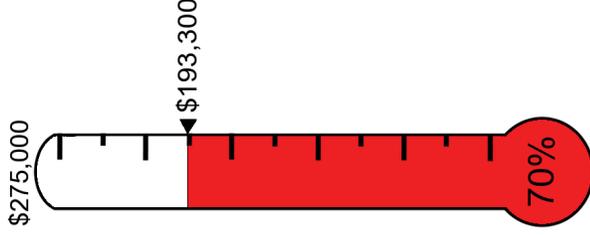
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+Bishop Giles OFM

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View of future Sanctuary (Feb 2017)

Obedience to the Church

Bishop Giles, OFM

Obedience is a command given to us by God. A woman may choose her husband, and in this sense, she can choose the authority that is over her; and a religious may choose which Order he enters and similarly choose what authority is over him. Aside from this, we are subject to the authority that Divine Providence has placed over us. Children do not get to choose their parents. Citizens are subject to the laws of their country, state, and city. Citizens may freely move, but wherever they are, they are bound to obey.

Every baptized Catholic is bound to obedience to the Catholic Church. This is the authority that God has placed over us and we are bound to obey Her (The Church) as we obey God. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. She is the Bride of Christ. As God is our Father, so the Church is our Mother. The Laws of God and the laws of the Church are binding upon us all and we must obey them to the best of our abilities. The laws of the Church are not “laws of men,” they are laws of God given to us through the Church – just as the rules a mother may give to her children are indeed the rules of the father. She is one with

him, she acts and speaks in his name. The Church is guided and protected by the Holy Ghost, what She says is what God says; what She directs is what God directs; what She commands is what God commands. To disregard or disobey her is not disobedience to men, but it is truly disobedience to God.

Since the false “Vatican II Council,” Catholics have been led to believe and follow impostors – a New Church and order (novus ordo). The buildings and properties have been taken over by impostors intent on tearing down the true Church and destroying the souls of Her Children. These impostors have been able to accomplish their goals because they have appealed to the command of obedience. They have demanded and obtained this obedience even though they (as impostors) have no right to it. Once they gained this stolen position of “authority,” they are systematically and gradually tearing apart the Mystical Body of Christ. This is truly a diabolic Judaic-Masonic work. The devils present an appealing picture of “freedom” as they undermine and destroy the laws and authority of God and the Church over men.

While this is confusing to many souls, it is a very simple truth. We owe no obedience to impostors. Impostors have no authority to modify, or annul the laws of true superiors. We are bound to follow all the laws of God and the Church (as far as we are able) even when the visible authority is hidden from us. There is a saying that “the mice will play while the cat is away.” We see children disregard the rules of their parents when the parents are not around, or they think that they can keep their disobedience from being seen by their parents. The world acts this way and it is very tempting, but Catholics know that God is still watching, and we will have to answer to Him. We are bound to keep the laws of God and the Church even when we see no one exacting this obedience from us. True obedience is when we conform ourselves to the will of God and the Church and think and behave accordingly at all times. Even though we cannot physically see God, we know that He is not dead, He is not gone. Even though we may be without a true Vicar of Christ on earth, Jesus is still the Head of the Church and the Church is not dead.

God has promised that the Church will continue until the end of time. The Church is known by four marks: one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. The apostolic aspect

demands that there always be a successor of the apostles in true bishops. The Church can and does continue in the absence of a true Vicar of Jesus Christ (a pope). Jesus Christ is always the Head of the Church. A true pope is merely His representative on this earth for the entire world. Bishops are equally His representatives for their respective areas. Though the number of true bishops is few, the Church continues and She will continue to the End of Time.

The Church has established a law that we abstain from eating meat on Fridays. This law is still in effect and all Catholics must observe it—even though impostors teach otherwise. The Church laws decree that authors, printers, and publishers obtain approval and permission before presenting works on morals and doctrine to the world. This law, as with all laws, are for our protection and aid. Impostors intent on destruction have pretended to remove this protection and aid. True Catholics must not give in to the disregarding of these laws—no matter how worthy, true, or right they think they are. We are bound to attend and support our local parish, as opposed to going from one to another, with itching ears to hear what pleases us. Granted, that there are not a lot of true parishes for us to attend, once we find the

closest one to us, we are bound to support and attend that one. We are bound to contribute to the support of the Church (our parish) even if we are unable to physically attend Mass there on a regular basis. The practice of many “Traditionalists” of attending ceremonies at various churches, but not contributing to the support of that church, is reprehensible. To take and not give, is thievery, and is in no way commendable. We must regularly support our parish and through the parish, the entire Church. The wealth or poverty of our particular parish or the entire Church is irrelevant. All the members of the Mystical Body spiritually benefit from the Mass and Sacraments She offers – even when we are unable to physically partake thereof.

The Mystical Body of Christ continues in the Catholic Church (not the Novus Ordo). When we cannot physically obey some of Her laws, we should strive to spiritually obey them. If we cannot attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, we can spiritually unite ourselves with the True Sacrifice where it is being offered. If we cannot get to the Sacrament of Confession, we can form the desire to do so, we can make frequent and fervent Acts of Contrition. Spiritual writers instruct us to strive to make frequent “Spiritual Communions” when we are not

able to physically receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

When the material or physical compliance with the laws of God and the Church are not possible, we must strive to spiritually comply as best we can. We must do what we can materially, and then strive to perfect this obedience with increased conformity and unity with the Will of God. We must not ask what it is that we want or desire, the correct question is: what does God want and desire. He has made His Will known to us through The Church – His Mystical Body, His Bride, His living Presence with us upon this earth. We may not know all that He has taught, nonetheless, we are bound to obey what we do know, and strive to learn and comply with what we do not yet know. We should be ever eager to know more and more about God and His Mystical Body. We must not obey only in word, nor only with a servile material compliance. Love demands that we renounce our own wills (or rather conform our wills) so that we will nothing but what God Wills. Our goal is to have His Will constantly living within us.

A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

III

HEROIC HEIGHTS OF UNSELFISHNESS

*“... by the thousands who
strong in their resistance
against misfortune, sorrow and
temptation. ...”*

(Continued)

Thousands of episodes, thousands of misfortunes — how many had I witnessed! Forgotten people, lost people ... everything gone ... “and land, and home, and, save memory, all.”

I met the sad procession and I approached the Salesian Father who walked disconsolately at the rear.

“Verboten!” sounded in my ear.

The German soldier, obedient robot, waved me on my way. I stood aside and stared at the winding, broken line disappearing down the long road, unable to lift a helping hand, to say a word, to caress a child, one of the many barefooted scrawny little beings that filed passed me.

In the meantime, in other towns, there was still the problem of the

old and the very young. They had been left alone in their small worlds and now ran the risk of being sent to concentration camps.

While Father Feller, S.J., another member of the Pontifical Commission, tackled the problem in Rome with the Central German Command, I did what I could with local ones.

In my conversations with them, I had often discussed the situation of these people. I finally succeeded in reaching a solution. In a verbal agreement with the Germans, which naturally had no official character, it was stipulated that the aged, the children, and the sick would be allowed to stay on in the evacuated areas until we would be able to move them to a place of refuge, on condition, however, that they were to stay within the boundaries of certain institutions where they were all to be gathered together. Anyone who stayed outside these limits would be taken to a concentration camp.

The necessary work for the final transportation of these poor people took longer than we had expected and another difficulty

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arose. The food ran out and we had no means of obtaining more as the evacuation order forbade access to the zone.

Again, I appealed to the German authorities.

A few hours later, the German soldiers themselves gave us part of their rations to feed those in our care. They kept their promise faithfully.

Father Charles Egger, a third member of the Refuge Commission and an indefatigable worker, had on many occasions accompanied the Vatican busses in dangerous trips to the North. He had made valuable contacts in various cities and towns of Central Italy, in the hope of being able to give definite help to many of the refugees. Many of the bishops, however, had been forced to refuse his plea as, just to mention Assisi, the localities at their disposal were by that time jammed to the doors with old and young.

The bishops of Gubbio and Città di Castello, towns in the region of Umbria, however, answered in the affirmative. These towns seemed particularly appropriate, situated as they were far from the principal roads. Besides, the Allied advance through Umbria was expected to be a rapid one. Sad to say, these

JUNE 2017

hopes were not to be fulfilled.

In the beginning of May the trek began. This time the aged traveled in busses. Although they left all they possessed behind them, on finding themselves lovingly cared for by the Little Sisters of the Assumption and eating the food provided them, their worn faces brightened.

The superior, who with her Sisters, had done so much in the town for the sick and the wounded, was difficult to persuade, when the moment came for her to decide whether or not to leave her cloister, her statue of St. Joseph, near the convent lake and the little church overlooking the panorama of valley and distant sea. She could not make herself believe that it was really necessary for her to break away from the place where she had spent most of her life after leaving her native France. She made up her mind at last and followed her old charges into exile. To tell the truth, I did not have to insist too much.

In the subsequent weeks, the Home she had left behind was almost completely destroyed. Years later, I saw it rebuilt and I met her again.

“Monsignor, you drove me into the hardest act of obedience in my whole life.” She said this to me

17

with a smile, referring, of course, to what had happened on that May morning.

On leaving, the children had a wonderful time. One incident amused us all very much. Among the Sisters, one was worried over the convent dog. It was a large shepherd, its long hair almost entirely white. Just as we were about to start, the little Sister insisted that the dog go along. There was a moment of perplexed waiting. I could not see how the animal, fine though he was, could travel along in the same conveyance as the old folks and the children. But the little Sister was stubborn and her stubbornness lent a humorous note to the day. Heads hanging out of the bus windows, the children laughed gaily at the arguments. It was evident that they wanted her to win. That decided me. They wanted that dog. And so the dog became one of the passengers. He was a good old dog after all and the children's friend, as big dogs generally are, often growling at us older ones, but allowing their small tormentors the most unusual privileges.

One of these trips was rather turbulent.

At Castel Gandolfo, there was a large house where many poor

children had been gathered together. On May 29, it was decided to transfer them to Cita di Castello in the Umbrian region.

I started out at dawn from Cisterna, where I had been staying overnight in a cave, to reach Castel Gandolfo. About five o'clock, I was caught under a sudden air attack the Americans were launching against the German positions. I sought shelter and luckily escaped any harm.

Not to run further risks, I took a roundabout way to my destination. It was an unfortunate choice. I had just reached the flat country around Lake Nemi, when a rain of machine-gun bullets pelted the road around my car. The marksman must have been having a good time with me, for the game became a little too accurate for my peace of mind. Again, I came out of it safely.

At last I reached the Home where I was to organize the departure and was about to stop, when I made a sudden decision to go first to the papal villa which was not too far away.

Hardly had I gone three hundred feet, when I came to a sudden stop, a sinking feeling clutching at my heart. A terrific explosion behind me made me fear the

worst. My fears were realized in full. The Home I had just left with the waiting children had been hit by bombs. I could visualize only death and destruction. The thought of the little ones froze my blood with horror.

As soon as the bombers disappeared, I turned back and rushed to the scene. I found the youngsters cowering in the kitchen, a long, low building set apart from the Home. Some sat on the floor whimpering, others clung to the skirts of the two assistants. Dishes, cups, benches, and tables were white with plaster. One small boy stood near a table, drawing circles with the slow, unconscious movements of an automaton. Another toddled toward me from a corner.

“Father, I want to go home . . . my mother wants me . . .” she begged.

One by one they crowded around me, each with his own particular request. Those who had run away to seek safety in the nearby forest drifted in from the open door, dazed with terror.

A child peeked in, pale, hair ruffled, not daring to enter, expecting no doubt that at any moment the kitchen would fall on top of him. His eyes wide with terror, he stared at his companions

as if unbelieving that they could still be alive. He made no move to enter. I went to him, took him by the hand; led him to the others, asked him where he had been.

“Behind those trees . . . no one could see me . . .” and his mouth trembled pitifully.

In broken phrases he told of his adventure, of the dropping bombs near where he hid. His heart beat fast with the excitement of the tale, but he did not cry. No strength for that.

Unable to do anything then, as a number of the children had not come back and could not be found, we decided to wait till four in the afternoon. Then I asked my small charges to line up in front of the ruined houses, so that I could keep an eye on them. They had eaten and calmed down considerably and were beginning to chatter among themselves, interested in what was going on.

In my hand I held a list of names. As each name was called, a voice answered, sharp and high or low and distracted. At each answer, one of the assistants helped a youngster into the bus.

Again a roar and once more the planes flew overhead. The faces before me froze with renewed terror. A child burst into tears, an

older girl started running toward the woods, most of my listeners forgot to answer. I continued reading, the women did their best trying to reassure them. But before they could be stopped, all of the children had streaked toward the trees and vanished. The only one left was the little tot who had been afraid to go into the kitchen and who had been close to me all day.

Another long wait. I sat down close to a low wall, the child in my arms. I tried to allay his fears. My words fell on deaf ears, deaf to them, but not to the crash and the uproar of the death from the sky. A thousand feet from us a tree was torn from the ground and blown clear away.

The women prayed out loud and at last there was quiet, but the quiet was filled with foreboding. What had happened to the children?

Suddenly my little friend burst into sobs, uncontrolled, racking, his fright, the tension of the day dissolving at last into tears. I was relieved. Better those tears and sobs than the wide-open eyes staring into space. At least I knew that his mind was not lost.

We relived the experience of a few hours earlier. One by one the children returned and without being told this time, took their

places. I called the roll. Once, twice, a third time. Three did not answer.

The busses were filled, the motors running, the children, forgetting what had happened, were chattering and even laughing.

“Here we go!” they shouted.

Before leaving, I carved three names on a wooden cross, the names of the three little victims lying on the hillside. They would not again shout with joy, but neither would they tremble from the fear of death.

At a given signal the busses started. The children had suddenly become very quiet. Even the young understand that parting may be a time for reflection.

Our first stop was Vatican City. We arrived without further mishaps. A wooden barricade had been built around the great Square of St. Peter’s and we went through the gate, the Swiss Guards on watch. It was a strange sight to see them carrying guns.

In the courtyard, Cardinal Canali was waiting for his guests. The children were awed into silence, but as he came forward smiling, they lost their self-consciousness.

They stood before him, dirty, ragged, pitiful, their faces still showing the strain of the day. The cardinal had given orders for a good meal to be prepared in the open. At the invitation to sit down at the table, eyes brightened and everyone looked expectant and happy. They sat down and ate hungrily. Now and then, they raised their heads to gaze in wonder at the cardinal and at the members of the diplomatic corps, English, American, French, who had come down from their apartments in the adjoining palace and who gazed in pity on those starved small waifs.

By the end of the meal, they talked and exchanged opinions. As we listened, we marveled at their mature reasoning. In a few months they had grown old, their acquaintance with cruelty and suffering and death had aged them far beyond their young years.

Months later, I met some of these same children in a home for orphans. Many recognized me and seemed glad to see me. I reminded them of the tragic moments that had brought us together. By then, they had forgotten the horrors of war, or perhaps remembered them only as a vague faraway dream. They lived in comparative comfort at the time and the sad days had mercifully been wiped

out.

The rest of the journey was successfully accomplished under the leadership of Father Egger. On the return trip, however, the busses, fortunately empty of children, were machine-gunned and one was demolished.

Shortly after the fourth of June, the day the Americans entered Rome, we heard that some of the children who had been sent to Gubbio were being held as hostages by the Germans and that, together with other inhabitants of the town, they had been taken to the Castle of St. Ubaldo, which overlooks the town.

That area was still in German hands, but I set out immediately, intending to wait until the Allies took the town and then to enter it and find out the truth. In a matter of hours my driver and I arrived at Umbertide. At the crossroads leading toward Gubbio, we came upon an English sentinel.

We stopped and asked him whether we could go farther along the road. He looked at us as if we were mad.

To be continued.

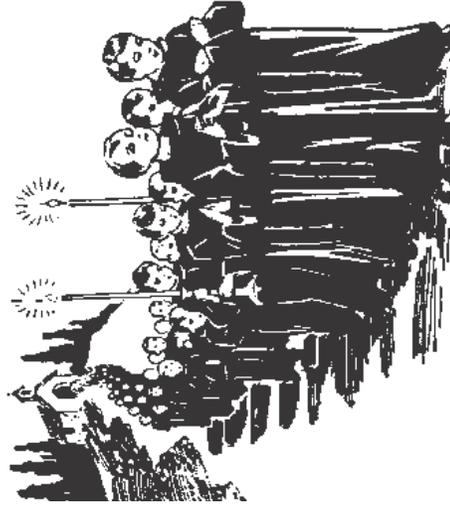
Sister Agnes' Favorites

“O Blessed Mother! teach us simplicity.

Help us to become children in thy school.
Let us know nothing else than this entire
surrender of ourselves to God, this simple
and spontaneous act of the heart, as we
cast ourselves into the Arms of Jesus and
promise Him our fidelity.

To love Jesus, to do His Will, to accept all
from His Hands - this, good Mother, shall
be our secret, as it was thine.”

By the Rev. Joseph Schryvers, C.S.S.R



Franciscan Saints

JUNE 11

THE SERVANT OF
GOD ACHATIUS

A Boy in the Garb of the
Friars Minor

To the miracles with which God supported the Order of St. Francis at its entrance into the world belongs the life of the saintly little boy Achatius. This five-year-old little son of a distinguished family saw the first Friars Minor when they came to his native city of Thorout in Flanders, in 1218.

The child felt so great a veneration and love for the religious, that he begged and begged his parents to have a garment like theirs made for him too. His parents considered the request just a childish fancy, and believed that by the next day the little one would no longer remember it. But Achatius did remember, and kept on urging his request until his parents granted it.

Achatius now wore the Franciscan habit with capuche and cord,

went barefoot in sandals, and in all things observed strictly the rule of the Friars. Money, he could not be induced to accept, and when someone secretly put a coin into his drinking cup, he begged God with much concern to forgive him for having unknowingly failed against the rule. All these actions of the little boy bore no indication of childishness. Rather, he evinced an understanding that was far beyond his years, coupled with fervent devotion at prayer, and the earnest demeanor of a perfect religious in all his conduct.

On Sundays and holydays, he gathered the children of the neighborhood about him, taught them the Our Father and Hail Mary, and warned them against the faults usually committed by children of their age. On a certain

feastday, when his mother made her appearance in a red silk dress in which she admired herself with no little vanity, little Achatius said to her as he pointed to a crucifix in the room: “O mother, look at your Savior hanging there on the cross streaming with blood. I fear your red dress may lead you to hell.” The mother was so struck by the words that she took the dress off and never wore it again. On another day, his father came home much the worse for drink, and began to swear and curse. Then the holy child nestled close to him and said: “Dear father, don’t do that. Didn’t you hear in the sermon that those who do such things will not get to heaven?”

angelic soul back into the hands of his Creator, in 1220.

The account of Achatius’ life is from the report of an eyewitness, Thomas of Cantimpre, later auxiliary bishop of Cambrai. The chronicles of the order mention the blessed child on this day.

WHEN CHILDREN DIE

1. As great an honor as was the life of Blessed Achatius for the order whose child he became, so painful was the early death of the holy child for his parents. It was said of Rachel at the death of the holy Innocents, who glorified the early Church: “She would not be comforted because they were not” (Matth. 2:18). So it may have been with the mother of Achatius, and so it is quite often with the mother of any child. But, Christian mother, should it not be a consolation for you that your child was also God’s favorite, and that He took the child to Himself so it might praise Him with the angels of heaven and remain forever in His love? “He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners, he was translated” (Wis. 4:10).

2. Consider what an advantage it is to the child itself if God takes it to Himself so early. Of course,

After two years of his admirable religious life, the Lord took the innocent child to Himself. He prepared himself for death in a very edifying manner. He contritely confessed all his childish failings and earnestly longed for Holy Communion. But the pastor believed it best not to give Holy Communion to this seven-year-old child. When the hour of his death drew nigh, Achatius consoled his weeping parents and relatives, admonished them always to lead a Christian life, and then gave his

life is a blessing, since one can gather new merits for eternity with every new day. But on the other hand, as long as we live, how many dangers there are of being eternally lost! Who knows what might have become of the child at a later time. Is it not proper to assume at the death of innocent children that that is exactly why God's goodness reclaimed them, because He foresaw that later they would be lost? "He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding" (Wis. 4:11). Should you not thank God for that? Moreover, how much labor and suffering every person has to bear in later life! Perhaps you yourself have already wished that you had died when you were a child. And would you begrudge that to your child?

3. Consider what a blessing the death of a child is to its parents. Death early in life is a warning for everybody that he, too, may soon die. But for parents the death of an innocent child is a consoling assurance that they now have a little intercessor in heaven, who will obtain special graces for them. It is related of the parents of saintly Achatius that later they both entered a convent. We may be sure their child had something

to do with that. And if your child has to suffer a great deal before death, and finds that very painful, for having already reached the age of reason, then its reward will be greater in heaven and its intercession will be more powerful. Direct the child to consider innocent Jesus on the cross, and think of yourself as being the Sorrowful Mother. An innocent, dying child may also say: "If you loved me, you would indeed be glad because I go to the Father. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:28, 2). — Only see to it that you may one day enter that place.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(At the Burial of Children)

Almighty and merciful God, who, when little children who are born again of the water, depart this mortal life, dost forthwith without any desert of theirs bestow upon them life everlasting, as we believe Thou hast done to this little child; grant, we beseech Thee, that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all Thy saints we may serve Thee here with pure minds and be forever united to the blessed little ones in Paradise. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

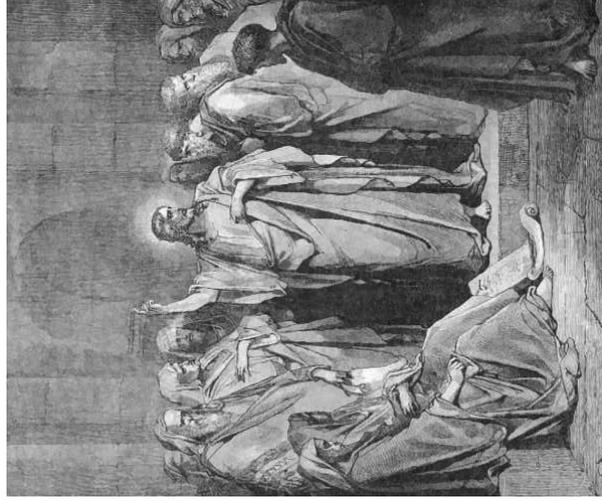
OR,

CONSIDERATIONS ON
THE IMPORTANCE, AND
HAPPINESS, OF ATTENDING
TO THE CARE OF OUR
SALVATION.

BY THE REV. J. FLETCHER, D.D.

“Give me understanding, and I
shall live.” — PSALM cxix.

1834.



XIII

CONSIDERATION ON HELL

THE principle, which engages us to seek for what we consider the comforts, and advantages, of this life, is strong, lively, and ardent. It is a portion of our constitution, implanted in our hearts by the hand of Providence, for many useful, and important, purposes; and when properly employed, and regulated by the rules of wisdom, it conducts both to much private happiness, and to great public good. — There is, however, another principle, or impulse, in our nature, which is still stronger, and more active,

than the above; and which pervades, with equal force, the whole mass of the human race. It is that, by which we shrink from pain; and entertain a horror for whatever we look upon, either as fatal to our lives, or as ruinous to our comforts. The case is, that, as there is nothing that we value so much as life, so there is, of course, nothing that we dread so much as what either tends to destroy it, or that threatens to make it miserable. This fear it is, that constitutes the chief source of our self-preservation.

To convince ourselves more fully of the force of this powerful principle, we need only to remark, what men everywhere do, — and

what, perhaps, ourselves have done, — for the preservation of our lives, or for the recovery of our health. On the occasion of any illness, which threatens us with the serious danger of death, — besides the solitudes, and fears, which then distress, and agitate us, — there is no remedy, however disgusting, — no operation, however cruel, — no expense, however burthensome, — that we do not submit to, in order to prolong, — although it be only for a few years, — the little period of our career. In like manner, when there is question of any painful, — although not mortal, — disease, or suffering, what impatience do we not feel under them; and what care, and study, and endeavors to remove, or mitigate, them — sacrificing, for this purpose, every pleasure; and submitting to every kind of privation. It is so, too, more or less, under the pressure, — or even under the mere apprehension, — of any considerable misfortune.

We are then, again, all anxiety, fretfulness, and despondence; — neither excited by any amusement, nor gratified by any pleasure. Everything appears to us dark, sullen, and disgusting. Such as these are the feelings, which we experience under the infliction, and even under the

dread, of the passing evils of this transitory life.

Wherefore, comparing evils with evils, and great calamities with little ones, — let us now consider, what our sentiments ought to be, respecting the sufferings, and miseries, of the wretched victims of the divine displeasure, in the world to come. For, if here we are miserable under our slight afflictions, — if here we tremble at the very prospect of any severe torment, or operation — then it is certain, that the sight of the torments of those unhappy beings should harrow up our souls to the most painful sensibility; and forcibly impel us, — since those same torments may soon be ours, — to employ every effort of our prudence to escape them.

I. To form any adequate idea of the punishments of hell, and of the sufferings of the damned, is not given to us, during the present state of our existence.

It is with these, as it is with the rewards of heaven, and the happiness of the saints. For, just as the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart conceived, what God has prepared for His faithful servants, — so neither can our senses measure; nor our imaginations, or reason,

comprehend, — the severity of those sufferings, which, in His justice, He has treasured up for the punishment of His enemies. He is, indeed, infinite in all His attributes; and therefore, as in the infinitude of His love, He bestows unspeakable rewards upon His elect, so also, in the infinitude of His justice, He inflicts inexpressible punishments upon the reprobate. He is, alike, a God in hell, as He is in heaven.

In order to give us some ideas of the bottomless abyss, it has pleased His Divine Wisdom to lift up, — as He has done in regard of heaven, — a little portion of that veil, which hangs before this seat of desolation. It is described to us, in the sacred Scriptures, as “a land, all dark; and covered with the shades of death; — a land of misery, where no order, but everlasting horror, dwells.” It is depicted, as “a torrent of brimstone, enkindled by the breath of the Lord; — a Gehenna of fire, which cannot be extinguished; and where everyone shall be salted with fire; — a furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.” Speaking of the wretched victims of this dreadful place, St. John says of them: “The smoke of their

torments shall ascend up, forever and ever; and they shall have no rest, neither day, nor night.”

Thus, also, St. Paul adds: “They shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction, before the face of the Lord.” Such as these are a few of the frightful portraits, presented to us, of the place, and punishments, of the damned.

II. From them we may deduce this general idea, that, precisely as heaven is the assemblage of all good things put together, without any, the slenderest mixture, of pain, or evil, — so is hell the seat of every kind of misery, and distress, — without any, the slightest, shadow of happiness, or comfort. It is the scene of every kind of torment; the region of every form of horror. Fire, it would appear, is the great instrument of God’s indignation. And then, what a fire! — a fire, enkindled by the omnipotence, and fanned by the anger, of an insulted Deity; — a furnace of burning brimstone, compared with whose heat our furnaces of molten lead are soft as the breezes of a refreshing wind, — a torrent, an ocean, of raging flames, fed by the fuel of unextinguishable sulphur. And it is here, — in the midst of this dreadful deluge, that the wretched victims, — bound

hand and foot, and fast riveted to beds of red-hot iron, — are left eternally to agonize, and burn.

Here, then, let us pause a moment. — If in this life we find it hard to bear a mere spark of fire, falling upon the hand, and remaining there, but for the space of a few minutes, — what ought we to think of sufferings like the above? But, suppose such feeble spark to remain burning upon the hand, for the space of a week, or month, — can we imagine, that we should not be willing to sacrifice any earthly comfort, or to renounce any worldly advantage, for the purpose of being delivered from the annoying torture? Such, certainly, would be our choice. And if so, — is it not, therefore, madness to expose ourselves to torments, like those which the damned endure? — torments, which, besides being infinite in pain, are, moreover, eternal in duration.

III. When we have formed to ourselves the idea, that hell is the seat of indescribable torments, we have equivalently convinced ourselves also that, of course, it is a place inaccessible to every kind of comfort, or consolation. Alas! comfort, or consolation, in that frightful abode, there is none.

One dismal night, which will never know the dawning of one morning; — one constant gloom reigns always there; — no sun, nor star, nor breath of air. There are, indeed, flames, that issue from the dreadful fires; but they are flames that give no light, — flames, that serve only to render darkness visible; and to discover to the miserable prisoners fresh scenes of woe, — specters, and demons, and furies, and objects in every form, that is disgusting, horrible, and terrific. It is so, too, with every other sense, as it is with the sight. For, as each sense had been the medium, and instrument of sin, — so also has each sense its own peculiar torment. Thus, the ears are forever assaulted with the groans, the shrieks, and the howlings, of despair; — the smell, with the stench of filth, and the loathsome exhalations of infection, and putridity; — the taste, with the blood of vipers, and the gall of dragons; — whilst upon the feelings of voluptuousness, and the sense of carnal pleasure, every punishment is inflicted, which the just vengeance of an angry God can devise.

Considering, then, these frightful circumstances, who but must feel, that it is truly “a bitter

thing to fall into the hands of the Living God?" And when, too, we reflect, that many of the unhappy victims, who are now suffering in this abyss of woe, were, but yesterday, exulting in all the pomp, and circumstance, of pride, and honors, — surrounded with splendors; pampered with luxury; reveling in dissipation, — too delicate to put up with any hardship; too nice to bear any privation, — when we reflect upon this, can we, again, but be sensible of the blindness, and the folly, of their conduct? Oh, how fatally is their lot now altered! Now, they would deem it their highest consolation, if they could creep into the deepest caverns to hide their defilements from the face of the Lamb. They would think themselves but too happy, if now the mountains would fall upon them, and crush them at once into nothing.

IV. But, after all, we have not considered the circumstance, which, beyond every other, in all this scene of misery, renders the situation of the damned so superlatively dreadful. This is, the Eternity of their sufferings. This it is, that forms the bitterest ingredient in the whole bitter cup of their afflictions. To suffer as they do, is cruel: but, to suffer, as

they must do, — FOREVER, — long as God Himself shall exist, — this it is, — this feeling, — that fills them with despair. If only they could hope: — if they could hope, that, even after millions of ages, their torments would, one day, end, even this expectation would soothe their agonies, and more than half cheer the gloom of their frightful abode. But, no; — even this feeble expectation is denied them. So, let not only millions, but even ten thousand times ten thousand millions, of ages roll away, — their sufferings, meanwhile, will be no nearer the term of their duration, than they were on that dreadful day, when they first entered into the dismal region. Yes, it is a frightful truth, that the sea itself does not contain so many drops of water, nor the universe so many grains of sand, as eternity comprises ages.

With these considerations, then present to our minds, can we help owning the evil of sin, and the madness of exposing ourselves to such accumulated miseries for the pitiful sake of a few moments' satisfaction here? No; when we view the torments of the damned, and measure the length of their captivity, we cannot any longer wonder, either at the piety of the

saints, or at the severity of their penitential rigors. Their rigors, when thus considered, as the means of appeasing the divine displeasure, and of preventing eternal sufferings, — appear to us but as acts of the most consummate prudence. At all events, it is certainly thus, that we shall, ere long, be induced to regard them.

V. It is, accordingly, — after having stated to us the torments of the damned, — that our Divine Savior represents to us the feelings of these unfortunate victims. “*There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.*” The case is, that no sooner is life departed, and the soul separated from the body, than the understanding, and all the faculties of the mind, — being now freed from the clogs of matter, — become clearer, and more enlarged. They now see things in their true colors. They see the malice of sin in all its deformity; and the loveliness of virtue in all its charms. They, now, comprehend the baseness of their own ingratitude; and the undutifulness of their past misconduct. They discern clearly the glory, which they have lost; and the misery, which they have

incurred. They feel, that they might have been happy, but would not. Hence, therefore, their “weeping;” and the ever-flowing torrents of their tears.

“*There shall be weeping,*” adds our Savior. Oh, could we only once catch the sound of these wailings, — of the shrieks, and groans, which re-echo through the vaults of the dread abyss, — what a horror should we feel of the frightful place; and of sin, which is the source of all its miseries! Yes, oppressed with all the bitterness of grief, and the anguish of remorse; stung with the recollection of what they have foolishly forfeited; and writhing under the agonies of their torments, — the lamentable sufferers, more furious than so many wild beasts, — bellow out their despair, and forever curse their former madness. For, if David roared under the sense of his sins; — if Esau was filled with consternation, and “*with a loud cry, wept,*” because he had foolishly sacrificed his temporal birthright, — think, what, then, must be the agony, and lamentations, of the damned. “It was I” — they, each of them, exclaim, — “that have brought all this upon myself. Life and death were placed before me;

and I madly preferred the latter. Eternal happiness was once in my power; but now I shall never taste it. It is gone; gone away, forever. God justly afflicts me; because I contemptuously turned my back upon Him; and preferred to His love, and service, the empty satisfactions of a sinful life.” Such are the griefs, and such the bitter wailings, of the damned.

“*And there shall be,*” — continues our Savior, — “*gnashing of teeth.*” By this expression, His intention is to convey to us an idea of the rage, and despair, which reign in the hearts of these wretched beings. Tormented in every sense; lost to every ray of consolation, — a miserable eternity ever present to their memories, — ages without hope; and one night without end; — sensible too, — alas! too feelingly sensible, — for what paltry trifles they have exchanged their claims to everlasting glory, — under these feelings, they gnash their teeth with fury; and their hearts are burst with self-reproach, and indignation. Meanwhile, under all this accumulation of distress, they weep, and burn unpitied, — the object; of the insults, and derision, of cruel, and exulting, devils, scoffing at them as fools, for having so sillily lost their

God, the glories of heaven, and the delights of eternity. Hence it is, that the prophet compares them to a wild bull in a net, struggling on every side, — but struggling in vain, — to get free.

Wherefore, having thus seen the many, and inexpressible, misfortunes, which are the fruits of sin, let us consider well. Certain indeed it is, that, did we but seriously reflect upon the sufferings of the damned, not only should we tremble at the evil of sin, but we should give ourselves no rest, until we had returned to God by repentance, and done something towards appeasing His displeasure. Not even should we venture to lie down, this very night, to sleep, till we had taken some steps to conciliate his friendship and to awaken hope. We should run instantly to the feet of Jesus, — aware, that any delay might possibly prove our ruin. God asks our hearts, today; He may not, in consequence of our neglect, do so, tomorrow. Therefore, let us run to Him at once. And however criminal we may be, — though our sins be red as scarlet, — He will receive us to His arms; forgive us all our offences; and His blood will purify us.

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