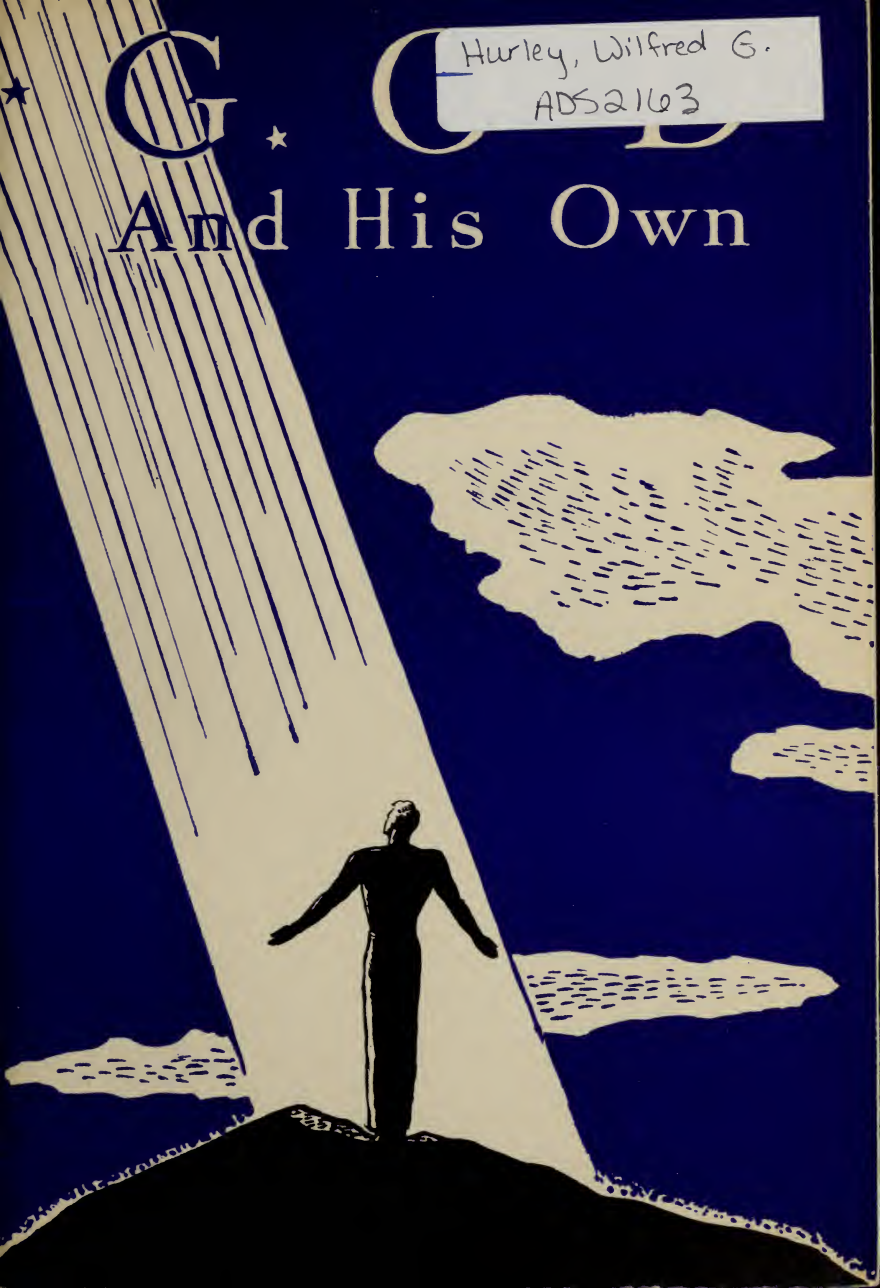


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GOD AND HIS OWN

By

WILFRED G. HURLEY, C.S.P.

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*“This is our one supreme mission—To live the truth
of Jesus Christ! To show it forth to others!”*

AMLETO GIOVANNI CICOGNANI,
Apostolic Delegate to the United States.



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GOD AND HIS OWN

GOD IS!

“Change and decay all around I see,” says the hymn.

And down through the ages, priest, poet and philosopher tell how all things pass away. Nothing is fixed.

Men come and go; all flesh is as grass; thrones crumble; kingdoms pass away; the oldest trees die at last; the mountains slowly alter; even the earth shall some day dissolve and the sun burn out, and the universe go back into the nothingness from whence it came.

And where is that which is eternal, abiding and firm?

God!

Who was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

The one sure fact upon which the tired mind can rest.

God!

God Who is Infinite power. Infinite knowledge. Infinite wisdom. Infinite justice. Infinite mercy. Infinite love.

A fact! The one and only fact that has no “maybe,” no “perhaps,” and no “sometimes.”

A fact more beautiful than the sky, more comforting than an oasis in the desert land, more clean than holiness, more majestic than any poetry—that God was, is, and ever shall be.

The one fact that when we learn, we never have to unlearn.

The one fact that stays always with us.

The one fact with which no one is able to argue or dispute.

The one fact that is utterly, absolutely, and everlastingly free of doubt.

God!

GOD AND HIS OWN

The real glory of man is his intelligence.

Although it is not so much the intelligence that counts, as the application, and the result of this application.

Emerson had a glimpse of all this when he wrote that a great institution was but the length and shadow of a man—a man who put his intelligence to work.

Such a man the world honors and rewards well.

It is the same in the worship of God.

Intelligent and reasoning beings, you have been created by God.

Hence, may I suggest, God demands an intelligent and reasoning service.

That you, His creature, strive to know your Creator to the best of your ability.

That you use your intelligence to know your God because as you know God you will love Him. And with your love of God, will come your service.

Consequently, your service to God is only the application of your intelligence to the things of God.

And while a man is free to thus apply himself to the things of the world, he is not free in regard to his God.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind”—is His first Commandment.

Thus God not only expects this, He demands it.

And it is only justice.

So it was that Christ spoke of those who had labored well in His service, as “The Just.”

For any man to act contrarily, is to be unworthy of his creation.

GOD AND YOU

This is God's world.

He is working out His purpose in ways that are best to the Divine Wisdom.

Oftentimes you are too eager, or you lack patience, or you lose heart.

You overestimate the importance of your service, of your finite wisdom, or the little time allotted you.

You worry and fret over events and tendencies, or lose enthusiasm, or waver in your hope for good.

This is wrong.

"I have not come to do My will," said Christ, "But the will of Him Who sent Me."

And again, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed: "Father—not My will but Thine be done."

If you wish quietude of heart, this must be your life. God knows best.

And "Whatsoever God doth, He doth it for your good."

Browning, not much of a Christian perhaps, yet has left us this thought:

God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world."

Hold to this Truth! And see how quickly and completely life will change for you.

HAPPINESS

“You want to be happy!” And who does not?

And yet there is so little happiness! So much unhappiness! So much misery in the world!

Why is it?

One reason is because you know not what you seek!

You seek things which, even if attained, will not satisfy you.

Will not bring you happiness.

For instance, you may seek money.

Now money is necessary. Without it you might starve. Suffer. But with it comes pleasure. Opportunity. Flattery. Diversion.

But when money becomes a goal, unhappiness is bound to result.

So it is with Fame. Fashion. Pleasure.

Because they are only accompaniments of life, to aid you in bearing your burdens.

To make them the object of your life is to court disaster.

You may think you are happy, but you are only deceiving yourselves. Your happiness is counterfeit!

There is only one real happiness. Only one true happiness.

And that is to do the Will of God, no matter what the cost.

And though the way may be long. The night dark. The burden heavy.

In your hearts you will be singing.

Poverty. Sickness. Persecution. It does not matter.

For God is with you!

And God is all!

"GIVE ME THY HEART"

You are a living child of the living God!

And yet have you ever really grasped this basic truth of life?

When the Apostles asked Jesus how to pray—He answered—"When you pray, pray thus: 'Our Father.'"

"Our Father" is the Infinite God. The Infinite God Whose very essence is Love and Knowledge.

But, "Infinite" means that it cannot be limited by any number.

Do you see what this means to you?

That no matter how many share in God's knowledge and love, each individual remains the object of ALL of God's knowledge and love.

In other words, the truth of all truths, that God knows you and loves you as though you were the only one in all creation!

You, and you alone! As though no one else, or nothing else, existed.

And that is why what you think, and what you say, and what you do, matters so tremendously to God!

That is why your evil thoughts, and words, and actions, are so truly terrible to Him.

And why your good thoughts and words and deeds are so utterly dear to Him.

And there is no loophole to all this.

Because God is what He is!

And this is no pious, ultra-holy thought! It is the simple, eternal truth.

Furthermore—the crushing beauty of it—that it need not have been, but rather God willed it thus, to love you so.

And the overwhelming length, and breadth, and depth of His love!

That He freely chose to love you in this manner.

He and you alone—in all the universe.

Does anything else in life really matter?

And these are His words to you, and you alone:
"Give Me thy heart."

TODAY

On Napoleon's mantelpiece stood a clock. Across the face of the clock were written these words:

"I never turn back."

If you see a duty today, do it with decision.

If God inspires you, act instantly.

Live as though every day were your last, your only day.

Certainly tomorrow will not perpetuate the circumstances of today. Your relationships will not be the same, your opportunities will not be the same. Your contacts with others will be utterly different.

No man can do tomorrow what he can do today. No one properly can do tomorrow's task who has neglected to prepare himself properly by doing his best today.

When the day is ended it is gone.

Never to return.

And the hands on the clock cry out the same message to you as they did of old to Napoleon.

"I never turn back."

It was probably this thought that inspired the poet:

"Another day is ended

How many more to live?

Alas, too many wasted,

My God, forgive . . . forgive."

LIVING IN THE PRESENT

It is a well-known saying: "We generally save the best in us to use on some future day that never arrives."

How true this is.

Half of the human race lives in the past and the other half in the future.

The wise alone live in the present hour and exhaust its possibilities.

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knoweth not what a day may bring."

Time is not given to us in years, but in days.

Death may spare you, but desire may fail you.

Tomorrow may find you ambitionless, desireless.

Philip Sheridan was asked why he never lost a battle. He replied: "Because I threw all I had into each battle. And never had the least desire to live after a battle unless I was the victor."

When the Almighty God gives you a day, do not neglect it or spoil it.

But rather, Live it! Fully! Completely!

Live in the present! Today!

PEARLS OF GREAT PRICE

De Quincey pictures a woman, sailing over the water in a boat, awakening out of a sleep to find her necklace untied. One end hangs over the side of the boat and pearl after pearl drops into the stream. While she clutches at one just falling, another drops beyond her grasp. How true this is of our lives.

Like these pearls, our hours and days drop one by one and are forever beyond our reach.

I remember one time speaking to a Religious who had called me to the telephone.

“Did I keep you long?” I asked.

“Not so very long,” she replied. “I had just time enough to say a decade of the Rosary.”

How many of us utilize our time thus?

These precious moments that are bound to come into everyone's life, waiting at the telephone. Waiting for a street car or a train. In the dentist's office. Do you utilize them for the glory of God and the good of your soul?

Or do you, God, forgive the phrase, “Kill Time”?

Omar Ibn Al Halif, the Arabian philosopher, tells us there are three things that do not come back.

The spoken word!

The sped arrow!

The neglected opportunity!

Realize that they do not come back.

That even while you would grasp them, they are slipping away.

Out of your reach forever.

Never to return.

WASTED TIME

Horace Walpole (writing in 1791 to Miss Berry), speaks of the Duchess of Gordon's "Busy Day":

"She first went to hear Handel's music in the abbey; she then clambered over the benches and attended Hastings's trial in the hall; after dinner to the play; then to Lady Lucan's assembly; after that—returned to Mr. Hobert's faro table, gave a ball herself the evening of that morning, in which she must have got a good way; and set out for Scotland the next day."

The names of people and places change.

But we are the same human beings.

What a lot of running back and forth we do, and to no purpose.

Fruitless days.

Wasted time.

This is not living our lives!

There is only one way to make life worth while.

There is only one way in which to live.

There is only one answer to the riddle of life.

You will find it in the Catchism. It is this:

"God made me to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next."

THE NEW DAY

You are beginning a new day.

You are to return to the world where you have often gone astray.

You are meeting old and new temptations.

You have the occasion to strengthen your weakened character.

You are to be trusted again with neglected opportunities.

You are to influence the minds of others.

You are to help in the molding of characters.

You are to assist others in the deciding of happiness for their present and future life.

What a priceless gift! A New Day!

Yet, how uncertain. What lies before you? It may be your last day! At least you know it has brought you a day nearer your death and judgment.

How important it is that you seek God's Almighty and wise council, ask His blessings, implore His grace, beg His protection against temptations.

Down on your knees!

“ . . . Hallowed be Thy name; . . . and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

BE YE HUMBLE

Deep is the sea, and deep is hell.

But the evil and degradation of sin is yet deeper!

There are the sins of the world—the sins of the flesh—but the most dreaded of sins is the sin of Lucifer! The sin of Satan! Pride!

Because even if you expose it in your motives, and expose it in your thoughts, complacent in its own detraction, it will seem indignant virtue.

Hence, do not strive for humility by searching into yourself.

Rather look away from evil and look upon good.

Thus in viewing the stars above you, you will be taught your own littleness.

Could a sparrow look upon itself it might marvel at its abilities.

But let it look at an eagle, and it sees how mean a thing it is.

For all things hinge upon comparison; to the greater, great is small.

Therefore see that your aim reaches higher than yourself.

“Be ye perfect,” said God, “even as I am perfect.”

With such a standard, pride flees.

Yet this standard was set by God Himself.

And not to mock us, it would seem, but rather to instill into our minds the glorious destiny, waiting for us, who are the living children of the Living God.

LEST YE FALL

Watch your Reading!

How much of your daily reading is of sordid doings; the dirty details of a divorce case, the gruesome and abnormal happenings of a murder trial; the sentimental slush about a murderer's behavior in cell or court; the trash of his "philosophy" of life; the "psychology" of his mental outlook, his cheap counsel to those who have not taken human life.

But you may ask: "The sensational press, the lurid magazines—are they not real picture books of life—recording its struggle and success?"

No! To the contrary!

No one views scenery in a tunnel. No one enjoys the beauty of the mountains by going down a mine shaft.

Good fruit is found in orchards, not in garbage cans.

The springs of living waters do not flow through sewers.

If you wish to enjoy the sublimity of Niagara, the best way to do so is to take your stand on the bank. It is a mistake to think you can get a better impression by going over the falls in a barrel!

Thus while your reading can be an influence to uplift, inspire, and glorify your soul, unfortunately it also can be a source of sin. Sin that may lead you far from God.

It can accustom you to lewd thoughts, evil desires, and if you are not thoroughly acquainted with your Faith, there may be danger of doubt and error.

God gave you intellect and reason.

He expects your good use of it.

Hence leave these degrading writings out of your life—forever.

Instead, read healthful, inspiring, Catholic literature.

Because reading good literature, your soul must turn to God as naturally as the rose turns its face to the sun.

OF LITTLE FAITH

Many people in many lands grew wealthy due to the war and its sufferings.

They were labeled "Profiteers," a title of vicious import.

But there were other men who gave their all. There were men who lost their sight, their nerve, their limbs, their minds. They gave their all!

They are the Soul of our Country—without them and their Sacrifice, we would not be!

The history of the Faith is much the same.

There were millions of men who gave their all that we might have the Faith which is ours today. Laying down their lives—gladly—eagerly—for God and the Faith!

In high places as well as low.

In every group of martyrs were found the laity, priests, Bishops and Popes.

As a matter of fact, the first thirty Popes, were without exception, martyrs.

Millions of women and even little children were glad to give their all—and did—even to death.

The story seems unending, from the day when St. Peter was crucified at Rome in the year 69, even to our own sad days with the bloody persecution of the Church throughout the world.

And we also have our profiteers.

Men and women who have the Faith with its blessings, its comforts and its joys. But due only to the sacrifices and privations of their forebears.

Men and women who are doing nothing. Neither to help it, to spread it—not even concerned that their children receive it.

Careless, indifferent, weak, hypocritical, so-called Catholics.

"Ye of little Faith."

You are our shame!



THE GREAT THOUGHT

Want of thought and ignorance are closely allied.

One is often taken for the other.

Holy Writ, even, ascribes to both the same effects.

For instance: That ruin which in Job (iv. 20) is ascribed to ignorance, in Jeremias (xii. 11) is attributed to want of thought and reflection.

Though the centuries pass we remain very much the same human beings.

As in the times of Job and Jeremias—so we are today!

Although we know there is an eternity, yet we go on in sin, because we do not reflect, we do not think!

St. Ambrose tells us: "We fear nothing because we see nothing." And he goes on to compare men to Asps, who see on all sides yet do not see that which is directly ahead.

Yet how can you believe in eternal punishment, and nevertheless rest quietly in sin?

"He that feareth," said St. Bernard, "takes care. He that neglects evils falls into them."

"Remember thy last end; and thou shalt not sin forever" (Eccl. vii.).

Eternity—what does it mean to you?

Even as you think—it is drawing closer and closer!

Eternity! It was the great thought—the "Magna Cogitatio" as he called it—of St. Augustine.

The great thought changed the great Libertine to a greater Saint.

"Think! Think of Eternity!" he cried.

It saved his Soul.

May it save yours!

NOW IS THE TIME

Perhaps the time of strongest temptation to live wickedly is immediately after making strong resolutions.

A relapse into sin seems most natural.

After making such resolves the exaltation, happiness and rejoicing raises us up to the third heaven.

Then Evil begins its strongest assault.

The inclination to sin attacks from within.

Not that there will be a swift fall. That does not necessarily follow.

But rather it is by giving in to small temptations. Little yieldings.

To stand invincible for a month or two is the hardest task for the soul that has thrown off the slavery of Satan.

The greatest bravery is needed. Bravery in obeying conscience.

But by standing firm against the first assaults, you have won.

For with each assault repulsed, the attack becomes weaker and weaker.

Now is the time to be more brave. More courageous. More self-sacrificing.

The struggle to conquer will be hard.

But the sweetness of victory will well be worth it.

Now at this time, above all other times, there must be no slackening. No compromise.

So "Forward!" then—

"In God's Name."

THE PURPOSES OF LIFE

For what then were you born?

To fill the year with daily toil for daily bread, with sordid pains and pleasures?

To be but one in a great procession?

To clear a few acres of the forest?

To till a few acres of land?

To acquire a trifle of wisdom?

For more than these has God given you life.

It is to grow stronger in strength of character.

To check the chafing will with discipline.

To aim at your own happiness, is an end idolatrous and evil.

And even so, you will never find it.

For happiness is like a roadside flower.

Pluck it, and it withers in your hand; pass it by, and its fragrance will refresh you.

Thus self must be trampled under foot.

You must be "tried as it were by fire."

Then, and only then, shall you become as the pure gold refined in the furnace.

With a character lovable to God. And pleasing to His eyes.

DON'T SMILE

"My thoughts are not your thoughts," said God, "nor My ways your ways."

We seem essentially egotistic. Conceited.

We are very prone to sneer. To smile, depreciatingly. Because in our conceit and ignorance we do not understand.

Wellington's own mother raised her hands in despair because her boy "was such a dunce."

The teachers of Goldsmith used the poor boy as a butt for ridicule.

Sir Walter Scott was given the pet name "Block-head."

James Watt was beaten as a "lazy and time-wasting boy" because he dabbled with steam-power.

The world mocked and jeered. Sneered and smiled.

But now they bow down in homage and admiration.

You see a man saying his Rosary.

Or a woman going through the early morning hours to weekday Mass.

You see another working zealously selling tickets for some church affair. You see a man or woman giving up his time to teach Sunday School. Another acting as a "big brother." Another going to Communion every week.

I won't say you sneer, but you do smile pityingly. Do not do it.

The day may come when they shall shine as stars in the great Heaven throughout all eternity. Loved by God. The admiration of all.

While you may consider yourself lucky if you are even saved.

LIVING YOUR LIVES

There is a certain worldly wisdom which is fatal to happiness—here and hereafter.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a little verse about it. He began: "Two men looked through prison bars; the one saw mud, the other—stars."

How easy it is to go through one's entire life seeing only the mud.

Grubbing for money, reading trashy literature, dancing, drinking, retelling immodest stories—totally immersed in the lower things of life.

While prayer, Holy Communion, spiritual reading, and all those things of God which tend to fit us for the life which is to come, are neglected.

Meanwhile the years slip by.

One year less to live.

One year nearer to death.

And the gates of death open to—Eternity!

Thus the wise man of the Scriptures:

"I will lift up mine eyes"—

To the Stars—

To the Heavens—

To God.

ONWARD AND UPWARD

On Jacob's ladder, crowded with moving figures. There was no angel standing still. All were in motion, either going upward or passing downward.

Is it not the same in the life you are leading? There is no standing still. You are either advancing or retreating.

Gladstone once said that "To live is to change." He never said a truer thing.

You ought to grow wiser as you grow older, and you ought to grow better as you grow wiser.

Relentlessly the years pass by. But, however far you may have wandered from our God in the past, the past is now gone.

And "Let the dead past bury its dead."

Yet you cannot escape the thought that God has spared you in His mercy that you might have another chance.

Should this not be a stirring call to better ways of living in a religious awakening? In a life of, at least, monthly Communion? Of avoiding profanity? Of faithful attendance at Sunday Mass? Of each and every one of those things that tend to lead you up the ladder of life, to God?

Is this not real wisdom?

Then act upon it!

And as the days turn into weeks, and the weeks turn into months, as you approach closer and closer to eternity, may your lives become more pleasing in God's sight, and your hearts more lovable in His eyes.

IMMORTALITY

Belleau Wood and the Marines! The zero hour and "over the top."

The grizzled old Sergeant turned to his men.

"Come on, Marines," he shouted. "Do you want to live FOREVER?"

The old Sergeant had well grasped one of the most poignant facts of life.

That the way to immortality is through sacrifice. Service. Even unto death.

"He that loses his life for My sake, shall find it."

It is hard. Very hard at times, to live up to the teachings of Christ.

And none knew it better than Christ.

He came to bring a sword.

"Unless you deny yourself you cannot be My disciple."

To follow Christ means to carry a cross. The servant is not above the Master.

And no cross, then no Crown.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God!

But the Kingdom of God suffereth violence and only the violent conquer it.

Conquering by penance, self-denial. Self-control and self-sacrifice.

It is a hard road. Oftentimes long, tedious, soul-searing.

But at the end of the road—Immortality.

FAME

What is Fame anyway?

Probably every reader has read the "Burial of Sir John Moore."

Yet he was only an ordinary General. Some successes. Some defeats.

He was being hard pressed by Marshal Soult and had just about held his own.

On the Walls of Corunna he was killed in battle, and might have lain there with hundreds of his soldiers, unrecorded, unknown.

However, as the lifeless warrior was hurried to a hasty grave, in the silence of the night, the funeral procession was seen by an Irish Pastor, from a remote country parish.

The inspiration was given and soon all the world knew of his burial.

"Not a drum was heard and not a funeral note"—so sang the poet.

Sir John Moore became one of the immortals.

Worldly fame seems to be about one-tenth merited. The other nine-tenths is luck, chance, call it what you will. But, our eternal glory in Heaven does not depend upon mishap, good fortune, or chance.

It depends entirely upon our own merit.

The sham, glitter, and noise of this world are of no avail.

For God searches the hearts of men.

"I am the Judge and I am the Witness," said God.

Propaganda, newspaper ballyhoo, mob acclaim, mean nothing.

Such fame is transitory. Passing as the time passes.

Would' you be great with true greatness? With eternal greatness?

Then become the least of men.

Give away what you have. Ambition. Fame. Love of money.

And seek the Kingdom of God.

BE VALIANT

It was in the year 1918.

The day of the big parade in New York City.

Close to the President hovered the Secret Service men. Worried. Uneasy.

Finally they gathered around him. Arguing. Ex-postulating. He should not march in that parade.

They told him of the ugly stories. The rumors. The hidden threats. It would mean his death to march in that column.

"The country cannot afford to lose its President," they said.

The President smiled. Grim. Determined. Firm.

"I will march," he said. "You may be right. It may mean my death. But," he continued, "the country cannot afford to have a coward for President."

"God hates a coward" is an old saying. There is every reason to consider it true.

And there is no doubt that the opposite is true. "God loves the valiant."

And so with His Church.

God's Church cannot afford to have its children cowards.

Hence be valiant in the Faith.

Raise your hat when you pass a church.

Refuse—politely if you can—but refuse, to eat meat on Friday.

Make a reverent genuflection when you enter into a church, not a careless nod.

Be proud to be known as a Catholic. And a good Catholic.

Your valor will win the heart of God, and the love of His Church.

And, may I suggest, the deepest respect of the non-Catholic.

THE INDIVIDUAL

A great Naval Battle—perhaps the greatest the world has ever known, in regard to its far-reaching consequences—was finished!

The victory for the English Navy was, to a great extent, due to the clarion call of its leader:

“England expects every man to do his duty.”

Today the little mustard seed of “Christ’s Church” sown in Judea has grown into a great tree, spreading far and wide over the entire world as Christ Himself had promised. Firm and immovable as the Rock on which it was founded. Greater, stronger, and more powerful today than ever before.

And yet, as always, the forces of evil are marshaled against it.

The Evils of: Divorce; the Diminution of the Birth Rate; the Extinction of Family Life—Social Disorders that are nullifying and making a joke of our civil laws. The Vicious Competition in Business Life which has not even the decency of savage warfare. Infidelity and Irreligion and Paganism oppose in battle array.

It is a fight to the finish, against the forces of evil.

Every Catholic, be he man, woman or child, is expected by God to do his duty.

CONFIDENCE

Confidence means two things.

It means that one is certain of his ability to perform an assigned task.

Secondly, it means that one ENJOYS the work in assurance that one can do it well, and so he is happy in his work.

The great surgeon goes to the hospital, not with fear and trembling, but with the certainty that he will do his work well, and so he is happy in his work.

Now, as it is in the things of this world, may I submit, it is so with the things of the next.

We think too much of "saving our souls." And just "saving" them, nothing more.

And whether we realize it or not, we are toying with the idea. We have not the confidence that we will save them.

And yet if there is one certain thing in this world it is that we have the ability.

We are the living children of the Living God. And while all things are possible to us, Salvation is a task. Yet we can perform it WELL.

Let this realization become an integral part of you.

And the task will become joyful. A glorious adventure. You will actually enjoy it.

Your path may lie through suffering. Hardships. Misunderstanding. Laboring.

It won't matter.

You know that God, your Father, is with you. You feel His loving eyes upon you.

The yoke DOES become sweet. And the burden light.

That peace is yours that passes understanding. And happiness. And love.

And because you are seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven, all things do work for your good.

This is not conceit because conceit is based upon error and self-pride. While confidence rests in God.

And God is Truth.

INFLUENCE

Away up among the Alleghanies there is a spring so small that on a summer's day a single ox could drain it dry.

It steals its unobtrusive way among the hills, till it spreads out into the beautiful Ohio.

From there it stretches away a thousand miles, leaving on its banks more than a hundred villages and cities and many a cultivated farm.

Then joining the Mississippi, it stretches away some twelve hundred miles more, till it falls into the emblem of eternity.

It has become one of the greatest tributaries to the ocean.

So with moral influence.

It is a rill—a rivulet—an ocean, and as boundless and fathomless as eternity.

That stray word, that word of pride, or scorn, starting from your lips is a trivial thing.

No, it is not!

It deepens that man's disgust at godliness. It sharpens the edge of that man's sarcasm. It shamed that half-converted one out of his penitent misgivings.

It produced an influence, slight perhaps, but flowing on to Eternity. Growing greater and greater as it flows along.

The power of influence.

Born with you, grown with you, strengthened with your strength.

It speaks, it walks, it moves. In every word of your lips, in every act of your life, in every thought of your heart.

You cannot live to yourself.

You must be either a light to inflame, or a tempest to destroy.

You may forget this secret, silent influence; but it flows on relentlessly.

For good or for evil.

For God or for Satan.

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