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Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

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EASTER SUNDAY.

ON THE GREATNESS OF THE EVIL OF SIN.

Purge out the old leaven,—1 Cor. v.

THE old leaven, which the Apostle here exhorts the faithful to purge out, is sin: which like a poisonous leaven, has infected from the beginning, and still continues to infect the whole mass of mankind. The Jews, as you know, by one of their ceremonial and figurative laws, were strictly prohibited at this holy time from eating, or even keeping in their houses any thing leavened. The meaning of which ceremony is explained to us by St. Paul in the lesson of this day. where, alluding to the practice of the Jews, he exhorts us to purge out the old leaven, in a spiritual sense, and to become a new lump, as we are unleavened; for Christ our pasch is sacrificed: meaning that, the figure being fulfilled in Christ, must also be fulfilled in us. That as to the figurative paschal lamb, the mystical food and victim of the Jews, is substituted the real paschal lamb Jesus Christ the innocent Lamb of God, and the divine food and victim of the Christians; so, to the figurative purging out of the leaven practiced by the Jews, might succeed our spiritual purging out of the leaven of sin, that we may thus be worthy to partake of the flesh of the real paschal Lamb; of whom the Jewish paschal lamb was but a type and shadow. *Wherefore concludes the apostle, let us feast not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

At present therefore the Church of God by a special law obliges her children to purge out this old leaven of malice and wickedness, that, being thus cleansed from the defilements of sin, they may worthily celebrate the true Christian passover, by approaching to the holy sacrament of the altar.

Many of us, I trust, have already purged out this old leaven of sin; and some have already eaten their paschal lamb; while others are going this morning to partake of the same heavenly food. But of all those who have eaten, or who are going to eat their paschal lamb, are there none among us, in whose houses, that is, in whose interior, in whose souls, nothing of the old leaven of sin is to be found? Have all so purged it out, as to have become a new lump, an unleavened bread pure & unmixed? Let such as have done so approach with confidence to the table of the Lord, and feast with joy on the bread of life, for to them it is a feast indeed. But if any are conscious to themselves of still retaining in

their hearts the leaven of sin, the leaven of malice and wickedness; let not such presume to eat of the christian pasch. For, as Moses of old declared to the Jews that whoever, during the time of the passover, should eat leavened bread, that soul should perish out of Israel; (Exod. xii. 15.) so the great apostle and doctor of the Gentiles assures us, that whoever at this divine banquet eateth or drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord. 1 Cor. xi. 27.

It is not however meant that such persons are not at all to approach to this heavenly feast. No the commandment of the church obliges all at this time to keep the pasch; and he, who neglects to hear the Church, is, as our Lord declares, to be looked upon as a heathen & a publican. that is, as one incapable of inheriting eternal life. Almighty God in the old law commanded those who neglected to eat the pasch, as well as those who presumed to eat it, without having duly purified themselves and purged out the old leaven, to be exterminated from among his people. Numb. ix. 13. In like manner shall they, who neglect to receive the body of our Lord at this time; as well as they who receive it unworthily, be exterminated from among the people of God. Here then we have a twofold obligation; an obligation of eating the pasch, which necessarily includes in it the obligation of disposing ourselves for eating it worthily. *Wherefore, says St. Paul, let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice: for he who eateth or drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.*

Were we only properly convinced of the greatness of the evil of sin, and of its dreadful consequences for time and eternity, we should not need long exhortations to induce us to get rid of it as soon as possible. We would think ourselves happy indeed to have it still in our power to atone for it; nor would we rest satisfied till such time as we had every reason to believe that we were perfectly reconciled with our offended but merciful God. It is with the view of producing this salutary effect on the minds of those among us, who may be conscious to themselves that they are still in the state of sin; as well as of guarding those, who at this holy time have had the happiness of recovering their innocence, from relapsing into sin any more, that I propose at present to your serious consideration, the greatness of the evil of sin. The contemplation of this hideous monster in all its deformity, must be a strong inducement for us to withdraw ourselves out of its reach, nor ever more to expose ourselves

to become its prey? The great reason why the generality of mankind make so light of sin, is because they never think how great an evil it is in itself, and how dreadfully fatal in its consequences. This is the cause why iniquity so much abounds, and why so great a proportion of the human race are daily perishing without resource. *With desolation is the whole earth laid desolate, says the prophet, because there is no one who thinketh in his heart.* Jerem. xi.

Let us then at present consider with the utmost attention this sovereign evil sin, that we at least may not be of the number of those who perish for want of reflection. Let us consider in the first place how great an evil sin is in itself; and how highly injurious to the Majesty of God. And in the second place how great an evil it is in its consequences, and how destructive of the welfare and happiness of the creatures. The enormity of sin in itself, and its essential opposition to God, the enormity of sin in its consequences, and its essential opposition to the welfare and happiness of the creatures; this shall be the subject of my discourse to you at present.

1. Sin is not only the greatest of all evils; the sovereign evil; but properly speaking it is the only evil. For all other evils, such as poverty, sickness afflictions and sufferings of every kind, if we make but that use of them which God intends we should, are so far from being real evils, that they are to us the occasion of obtaining the greatest good, the enjoyment of himself and a happy eternity. For if the industrious poor consider those as their benefactors who furnish them with employment, and afford them [the means of earning] with the sweat of their brow a mean and scanty subsistence; how much more ought the christian to thank himself indebted to God for having put it in his power, by such easy means as the short labours and sufferings of this life to secure to himself the kingdom of heaven. These temporal sufferings are not then real, but reputed evils. nay, they are rather favours and real goods, bestowed upon us by the kind hand of Providence; since they are to us productive of so much good. For as the work of the master, however hard and tedious, is a real good to the servant, because it procures him a hire proportioned to his toil and labour; so the evils of this life, sin alone excepted, are a real good to the Christian, because, according to St. Paul, the present tribulation, which is momentary and short, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. 2. Cor. iv. 17.

Whereas sin is an essential evil, and the only