

A christian Rule of life under THE GUIDANCE OF GOOD ST. ANNE



HE third Christian rule of life treats of the necessity of purifying our hearts from all affection to venial sin.

It is not enough to avoid mortal sin, we must also purify our hearts from the least stains of venial sins that may defile them. St. James says that « in many things we all offend. » (Jas. 3-2) Indeed, few days and few hours pass in which we are not guilty of some fault in thought, word, or deed. We are like leaky ships, says St. Augustine ; the salt water is ever getting in through the cracks and joinings of the timbers ; and, as on a ship, the pumps must be used to draw up the bilge water that collects in the well, so must we continually pump out the salt water of our daily and homely faults by prayer, and acts of contrition, and acts of charity to others. This comparison of the Saint may serve very well to illustrate the difference between mortal and venial sin. If a ship takes fire, or goes on a rock, or bursts asunder, the ship is lost ; so is a soul when it is guilty of mortal sin. But, if a ship lets in some water to the hold ; it may sail heavily, and, if the water should be allowed to accumulate, the ship will be in great danger of perishing in the first storm. So venial sins retard the progress of the soul, and when they become very frequent and habitual they expose the soul to great danger. He who makes light of venial sins will probably yield in time of temptation even to mortal sin, and so make shipwreck of his salvation.

We should then do our utmost to avoid deliberate venial sins, and actually know that *venial sin is a real offence against God, and wounds the love we owe Him.*

It is unworthy of a Christian soul to think that venial sin is but a trifle, and it is a sort of scandal to say so ; because however slight it may be, it certainly displeases God. It would require an infinite number of hearts to love God as we ought to ; and by our venial sins we despise His love.