

Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

Fourth Article: Merit.

11. Merit is the fruit of grace, in this sense, that grace renders us capable of producing works that are meritorious in the sight of God. Man, when in the state of grace, according to the words of Our Lord, is like a branch of the vine-tree united to the vine itself. This branch bears abundant fruit, because it draws its life-giving sap, which is the principle of its productiveness, from the parent stem. Grace is this spiritual sap, the principle of merit.

12. (1) What is meant by merit? (2) What is the object of merit? (3) What conditions are required for gaining merit?

(1) What we here mean by a meritorious work is a good work done by the help of grace, with reference to God, and worthy in His eyes of an eternal reward.

There is a distinction to be made between the merit of right, *de condigno*, and the merit of fitness, *de congruo*. The former signifies a strict right to reward; the latter, a certain suitableness worthy of consideration, but not a claim of strict justice. It might be designated merit of mercy, because it is founded chiefly on the mercy of God.

We distinguish also the merit of the just man, who is in the state of grace, and that of the sinner, who is in the state of mortal sin. The former can merit in strict justice, as a servant working for his master merits; the latter can only merit as being a suitable object for the exercise of God's mercy, in the same way as a poor man humbly begging alms may deserve to receive them.

(2) The just man, by his works, merits an increase of sanctifying grace, and at the same time an increase of glory for eternity. These two rewards are linked together: every degree of grace in this life has a corresponding degree of glory for the next.

The sinner, by his prayers, penances, and good works, can merit the grace to break away from sin and return to God by a sincere conversion.

All can merit from the divine mercy actual grace, and all the helps necessary to avoid sin, to advance in good, and to persevere to the blessed consummation of a happy death.

Besides merit, properly so called, of which we have spoken, there are satisfaction and impetration, which often accompany merit or the meritorious value in the one work. Satisfaction is a penal work, which God accepts in place of heavier penalties due to sin. Impetration is the constraining power of prayer before God; a most mighty power, because of the promise of Jesus Christ, saying to all, "Ask, and you shall receive."

(3) For all merit there must be the help of actual grace; but this condition, which depends on God, is never wanting. For this reason we only speak here of the conditions on the part of man.

Now, (1) for the merit of fitness, it is sufficient to do any good work with an intention of faith—that is, with reference to God and our own salvation.

(2) For merit, properly so called, or the merit of right—that is to say, in order to merit an increase of grace and of eternal glory—we must be in the state of grace, and offer our good works to God with a holy intention.

A work so offered, be it only a draught of water given to a poor man, is accepted by God as if bestowed on Himself, and receives a divine reward.

The greatness of merit depends (1) on the person or on the dignity and holiness of him who acts. Thus the merit of Jesus Christ is infinite, because the dignity of His person is infinite. The merit of the just man is beyond comparison greater than that of the sinner, because he is adorned with sanctifying grace, which gives him the dignity of the child and friend of God.

(2) It depends on the excellence or the difficulty of the work. Thus a large alms is more meritorious than a small one given by the same person; but the widow's mite is of more value in the sight of our Lord than gold offered by the rich. So, again, an act of charity is more meritorious than an act of faith or hope.

(3) It depends on the perfection, the purity of intention, the fervor, and above all, on the charity of the person

who acts. Fervor and charity give such a value to good works that they change them, as it were, into gold and precious stones for the kingdom of heaven.

The time destined for merit is the present life, during which the sinner can merit his salvation, and the just man can grow in merit, rising higher and higher in holiness and glory, according to that saying of our Saviour, "Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven."

Home of Compassion, Wellington

(From our own correspondent.)

The committee who are voluntarily raising funds for the Home of Compassion at Island Bay are working enthusiastically to make the appeal a success. Over £90 was added to the fund the other week, £32 being realised by a jumble sale in Tory Street and nearly £60 by Mrs. Dan Burke at an evening given at her home in Brooklyn.

The annual gift tea, held at the Home of Compassion, took place on Thursday, the 17th inst., and there was a very large attendance, the day proving unexpectedly fine and pleasant. General regret was expressed that Mother Aubert was not well enough to receive the guests herself, but the Sisters made ample amends in their attention to all present, and everywhere wishes were expressed for Mother Aubert's speedy return to health. The home was entirely thrown open, and the visitors were shown over it by the Sisters and friends. The nursery, as usual, was a source of the greatest interest. There are now 26 babies there, of whom there are two pairs of twins, all girls. The tiny cots, and baths and cupboards were inspected, and appealed to the hearts of all mothers. The new women's ward upstairs was also visited, and much interest shown in it, as this is the first time it has been thrown open to the public. This new ward has been formed by enclosing the large open space near the incurable girls' ward. This has been nearly all glassed in, and made into a bright, sunny sitting-room for the women incurables, who were moved here from Buckle Street. Their night ward is beside it, and beyond is the girls' ward. There are 50 women in this ward now, so that the task of attending to these unfortunates is no light one, and is cheerfully performed by the Sisters, who are giving their lives to such work. At the other end of the corridor a similar space has also been enclosed and made into a boys' dormitory. The home now domiciles 120 people, including the incurables and the children, and the numbers of the latter have increased of late years, so the work has become much more extensive, and the expenses of the home greatly increased. It is to pay for these additions that the appeal for funds now before the public is being made.

After inspecting the rooms, the visitors repaired to the dining-room, where afternoon tea was served, daintily set out at small tables, each decorated with flowers. The Sisters served tea, with the help of friends of the home. Delightful selections were played by Cimino's band, stationed in the hall, and the gifts, of which there were many, both in money and kind, were received in a room near the entrance.

Mother Mary Aubert and the Sisters of the home are very grateful to all those who brought gifts and who assisted them during the afternoon.

Lord! let me know Thee, and let me know myself.—St. Augustine.

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