

Almighty God Loves Little Children

by Rev. John Furniss, C.S.S.R.

Permissu Superiorum

New York: P.J. Kenedy, Excelsior Catholic Publishing House, 5 Barclay Street, 1882.

Approbation

"I have carefully read over this Little Volume for Children and have found nothing whatsoever in it contrary to the doctrine of Holy Faith; but, on the contrary, a great deal to charm, instruct and edify our youthful classes, for whose benefit it has been written."

William Meagher, Vicar General, Dublin, December 14, 1855.

ALMIGHTY GOD LOVES LITTLE CHILDREN

1. God loves little children so much that he wanted to be like them, so he became a little child in the arms of Mary his mother. Jesus used to lay his hands on children and bless them. "They brought infants to Jesus that he might touch them." *Luke xviii*. He was very angry with those who would not suffer little children to come to him, and with those who scandalize them. Jesus says, "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea." *Matt. xviii*.

2. When the blessed Lucy of Narni was a very little child, her mother gave her a Rosary beads, with an image of the infant Jesus. She made an altar in her room, and put the infant on it. She loved to be in her room along with the image of the little infant. When she got into any trouble, she would go to her altar, and cry there, and sometimes the image of the infant Jesus, by a miracle would lift up its little hand, and wipe away her tears. One day her mother took her to the chapel, and she saw there a fine large image of a lady, with an infant in her arms, made of stone. When her mother saw her looking at this image, she said: "Lucy, that beautiful lady is the blessed Virgin Mary, and the infant is the little Jesus, her son. If you like, you may come here sometimes and say your Rosary before the blessed Virgin Mary." Lucy was delighted, and whenever she could

get away from home, she came with her beads, and said the Rosary. One day she thought that she would like very much to hold the infant in her arms, like she held her baby brother sometimes, so she spoke to the image and said: "Mary, my dear mother, I want very much to hold the infant Jesus in my arms." When she had said this prayer, the image of Mary stooped down, and put the infant really into her arms; but she found that instead of a baby made of stone, it was a living baby -- the real child Jesus. Full of joy, she got up off her knees, and went home as fast as she could with the infant Jesus in her arms. She went into the room where her altar was, and for three days and nights she held the infant in her arms, without eating or sleeping. At the end of the three days she fell asleep and when she awoke, the infant Jesus was gone away. She cried bitterly when she found that the infant was gone, so her mother took her to the church, where they found the little child of stone in the arms of Mary again, although for three days it had not been seen there.

3. Do not wonder that Jesus gave himself to the little Lucy, for he loves to hear children speak to him in prayer, because out of the mouths of infants comes forth perfect praise of God. *Psalm viii*. The prayer of a little child goes up to heaven quicker than the prayer of anybody else. There was a town called Bethulia. One time a great many thousand soldiers came round this town. They wanted to get into the inside of it to kill the people and destroy the town. But there was something stronger than the soldiers, and see what it was! The little children were made to come into the chapel, and kneel down to the ground, and to pray to Almighty God to save the town. The prayers of the little children went up to Heaven, those cruel soldiers were obliged to go away, and many of them were killed. *Judith iv. 8*.

4. Heaven is for children only, if they are good, or those who become like little children, simple meek and humble. One day Jesus took a little child by the hand, and showed it to all the people, and told them that they could not go into Heaven unless they became like that little child, that is, simple, meek, and humble. Children were the first martyrs of Jesus Christ. Before anybody else had died for Jesus -- Even before St. Stephen, who is called the first martyr, had been stoned -- a great many babies were killed in Bethlehem for the faith of Jesus Christ, and they are called the Holy Innocents, and the blood of those dear babies told the world that the infant Jesus was the Son of God. A little while before Jesus died, the children were crying out his praises in the Temple of Jerusalem.

5. God loves to speak to children, he has often spoken words to children which he would not speak to anybody else.

There was a very old priest, and a good child, who lived with the priest. Almighty God wanted to say something to the priest, but he liked better to say it to do the child, and let the child tell the priest. So one night when the child

was asleep, God called the child by his name, Samuel. The child awoke, and heard somebody calling his name, but he did not know that it was God who called him. He thought in himself, perhaps it is the priest who calls me. He got up directly and went to the priest, and said: "Please your reverence, I heard somebody calling my name, and I thought perhaps it was your reverence who called me." Then the priest said: "No, my child, I did not call you; go back again and sleep." So the obedient child went back to sleep. But after a little while the child heard the same voice calling him again and again. Each time he went to the priest, and at last the priest said, "Perhaps, my child, it is the voice of God which calls you, so, if you hear it again, say: 'Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth.'" Then God spoke to the child, and commanded him to tell the priest what he had heard. So God loves to speak to good children; and as God spoke to the child Samuel, he will speak to you also, my child, if you will only let him. You will not hear his voice with your ears, as the child Samuel did, but you will hear it in your heart.

6. There was a great town called Milan; the bishop of this town became sick and died. As soon as the bishop was buried, all the people met together, and began to quarrel and dispute among themselves who should be the next bishop. Among the crowd were some little children, and all at once one of those children cried out: "Ambrose, bishop." As soon as the people heard the little child say those words, they felt in their hearts that these words of the child came from God, and so they all began to cry out along with the little child: "Ambrose, bishop." Ambrose was made bishop, and he became one of the greatest bishops of the Church. Thus you see that when God wishes to do some great and wonderful thing, he sometimes makes use of a poor, weak little child to do it, because everybody sees that a weak little child could not do any great thing of itself, but that it is the almighty power of God in the child which does it. Besides, when the great, wise people see that God chooses a little child rather than themselves, they learn to be humble, "The foolish things of this world hath God chosen to confound the wise." *1 Cor. i.*

7. About one hundred years since there was living in Rome a poor beggar. His clothes were rags, his dinner an old dry crust. He had made himself poor for the love of Jesus. He was a very holy man, and when he died, his death was precious in the sight of God. He died the death of a saint. Scarcely anybody knew that he was a saint, for when he was alive he had concealed all his good works as much as he could. But when people try to make themselves little in the eyes of others, God tries to make them great, for "he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." *Matt. xxiii.* So God wished that the hidden sanctity of this good man should be known by all the world. If it had pleased God, he might have employed the bishops of his Church to make known his sanctity; but it pleased him rather that the tongues of little children should make it known to the world. The morning after he died some children happened to come to the street where he had lived, and all at once they began to cry out:

"The saint is dead, the saint is dead." These children scarcely knew why they were crying out these words, but it was God who put this cry into their hearts. The cry of these little children went from street to street, from town to town; and so by the tongues of little children the world knew that there was another saint in Heaven. The name of this blessed man was Benedict Joseph Labre.

8. A few years since a wonderful thing happened in France. Many people in that country used to blaspheme the holy name of God; and they did not keep the Sunday holy. One day the dear blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady, the Mother of Jesus Christ, was seen on the hills of that country. The light of Heaven shone around her. She came, with tears in her eyes, to tell the people that if they did not repent of their sins, the hand of her son Jesus would strike them; and to whom, do you think, the blessed Virgin Mary spoke? "Perhaps to some great, some wise, some learned man." No. God wished rather that she should speak to children. So she spoke the message of the Almighty to two little children of the country, and she bade them take the message to the people. How true, then, are the words of the Holy Scripture: "Though hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." *Matt. xi*. The place where the blessed Virgin spoke to these children is called La Salette.

9. God often makes children little apostles for the conversion of others. A person in Paris gave the following account of his conversion: "I had been brought up," he said, "in ignorance of the truth, with no respect for religion, and hating the Catholic Church. I had a little child, which was wild, passionate, and stupid. I was cross and severe to this child. Sometimes my wife used to say to me: 'Wait a little, the child will be better when it makes its first communion.' I did not believe it. however, the child began to go to Catechism, and from that time it became obedient, respectful, and affectionate. I thought I would go myself to hear the instructions on the Catechism, which had made such a wonderful change in the child. I went, and I heard truths which I had never heard before. My feelings towards the child changed. It was not so much love as respect I began to feel for the child. I was inferior to it, it was better and wiser than I was. The week for the first communion was come: there were but five or six days remaining. One morning the child returned from Mass, and came into the room where I was alone. 'Father,' said the child, 'the day of my first communion is coming, and I cannot go to the altar without asking your blessing and forgiveness for all the faults I have committed and the pain I have often given you. Think well of my faults, and scold me for them all, that I may commit them no more.' 'My child,' I answered, 'a father forgives every thing.' The child looked at me with tears in its eyes and threw its arms around my neck. 'Father,' said the child again, 'I have something else to ask you.' I knew well, my conscience told me, what the child was going to ask. I was afraid, and said, 'go away now, you can ask me to-morrow.' The poor child did not know what to say, so it left me, and went sorrowfully into its own little room, where it had an altar with an image of the Blessed Virgin upon it. I felt sorry for what I

had said; so I got up, and walked softly on the tips of my feet to the room door of my child. The door was a little open; I looked at the child, it was on its knees before the Blessed Virgin, praying with all its heart for its father. Truly, at the moment, I knew what one must feel at the sight of an angel. I went back to my room, and leaned my head on my hands, I was ready to cry. I heard a slight sound, and raised my eyes -- my child was standing before me, on its face there was fear, with firmness and love. 'Father,' said the child, 'I cannot put off till tomorrow what I have to ask you -- I ask you, on the day of my first Communion, to come to the holy Communion along with mamma and me.' I burst into tears, and threw my arms round the child's neck, and said, 'Yes, my child, yes this very day you shall take me by the hand and lead me to your confessor, and say, 'Here is Father.'" So this child converted its father. Little child, if you have parents who do not lead a good life, God looks to you for their conversion. But what can you do? The good example of a child speaks to the heart of a parent. Then there is prayer -- will God turn a deaf ear to the prayer of a child, praying for the conversion of its father or mother? No; the Hail Mary, which you say every day for their conversion, the prayer you say for them each time you hear Mass, the holy Communion you offer for them, the sighs of your heart, all rise up before God, and are not forgotten by him; and the day will come when God will send down from Heaven the grace of conversion into the heart of your parents.

10. Then, my child, give your first years, your early years, to Almighty God. All first things and early things, are beautiful before God and men. The first rays of the sun, when it rises over the mountain tops -- the first white lily which is seen in early spring, when the snows are melting away -- the beautiful colors of the rosebud when it first opens -- but, above all, the early years of childhood -- please God. The infancy of Jesus is the glory and delight of the Christian Church. Mary, the mother of Jesus, consecrated her first years to God. Many hundreds and thousands of children there have been in this world who gave the years of their childhood to Almighty God. Many children there have been, who, pleasing God in their childhood, were taken out of the world into Heaven, because God foresaw that if they had lived to be older, perhaps malice would creep into their hearts, and they would not love him any more. Then, my child, "remember the Creator in the days of thy youth." *Eccles. xii.* Give the years of your childhood to God, who loves the years of childhood more than he loves any other years, and who gives joy to those who love him when they are little. *Ps. xlii. 4.* Be not wicked in your childhood: if you are wicked when you are young, you will be wicked when you grow old: for it is a proverb: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it" -- *Prov. xxii. :* and then "his bones will sleep with him in the dust." *Job xx.* These years are passing away; hasten, then, and offer them to God -- say: "My God, I give you the years of my childhood. May they be as the years of the childhood of Jesus!"

Then my dear child, Almighty God is your Creator, and why did he create you? A bird is made to fly, a fish to swim, what are you made for yourself? -- This question will be answered in the second book.

KEEP THE RULE OF LIFE

I. *In the morning before you get up*, make the sign of the cross and say: *Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul*. For this you get 100 days' indulgence. Get up at a fixed time, remembering that God sees you.

II. *Morning Prayers*. When you are dressed, kneel down and say:

1. *The prayers*, Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed, or I believe.

(A Meditation)

2. *The Morning Offering*. (Say to yourself, "What shall I have to do from now till the evening?" Think for a moment what, and you will do each action well -- prayers, meals, school-duties, work, conversations, etc.) Then say, "*O my God, I believe that you are present and I offer to you the thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings of this day, with those of Jesus Christ.*"

3. *Examination about the sins of the day*. (Say to yourself, "What is the greatest sin I commit, or what do I commit oftenest?" Think for a moment what sin it is, and how you will avoid it), then say, "*O my God, keep me to-day from that sin. Amen.*"

III. *Meal Prayers*. Before and after meals, make the sign of the cross, and say grace.

IV. *Night Prayers*. 1. Say Our Father, Hail Mary, I believe. 2. Examine your conscience for a moment. (Say, "Did I miss my prayers or commit any sin to-day?" Think for a moment what sin), then say, "*O God, be merciful to me a sinner.*"

V. *When in bed*, put your arms in the form of a cross, and say, *Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul*.

VI. *Daily Virtues*. 1. *Give every thing you do to Jesus*. If you pray, eat, sleep, dress yourself, talk, sing, walk, sit down, take a message, light a candle, go to school, read, write, sew, work, in every action, little or great, say, at the beginning, or middle, or end of it, *My Jesus, I do this for the love of you*, or, *All for you my Jesus*. 2. If any thing happens to you which you do not like, say, *My God, may your holy will be done*. 3. Be kind to everybody. 4. Forgive those who offend you, and speak kindly to them. 5. Love, respect and obey your parents and masters.

VII. *Good practices.* Every day hear mass, visit the blessed sacrament, and some image or picture of the blessed Virgin, say the Rosary, at least one decade, read some good book, say the Angelus, morning, noon, and night, be in some pious confraternity, make a retreat every year, read their rule of life every Sunday.

VIII. *Temptation.* 1. If a temptation comes, turn away from it and say, *Jesus and Mary, help me*, or say the *Hail Mary* till it goes away. 2. Put a bad thought out of your heart quickly as you would shake a burning spark off your hand. 3. Keep your eyes, ears, tongue, and hands from what is bad. 4. Keep away from bad company, public houses, and whiskey-shops, bad dancing and singing houses, gambling-houses, theatres, bad wakes, bad books, novels, and romances.

IX. *Sins to avoid.* Missing your prayers, going to fortune-tellers, cursing, bad oaths, losing Mass on Sunday by your own neglect, bad conduct to parents, etc. hatred, drunkenness, immodest thoughts, words, actions, stealing, speaking ill of others, breaking the abstinence or fast, neglecting your Easter duties.

X. *Sins committed.* "He that loveth sin, hateth his own soul." *Ps. x. 1.* If you commit a mortal sin, make an *act of contrition* directly (see No. XIII.), and go to *confession* as soon as you can. 2. For a venial sin, *strike your breast and be sorry.*

XI. *The Sacraments.* Go to confession and holy communion at Easter, and at least *once every month.* Do not wilfully conceal a sin in confession.

XII. *Prayer* before and after holy communion, also for a spiritual communion at holy Mass, and for a visit to the blessed sacrament. *O Jesus, God the Son made man, I believe that thou art present in the blessed sacrament. I adore thee, I love thee. Sweet Jesus, come into my poor soul, and give me thy flesh to eat, and thy blood to drink. Amen. Blessed be Jesus in the most holy sacrament of the altar.*

XIII. *Death.* Live every day as if you were to die that day. When you are dying, be sure to make an act of contrition, say, *O my God, I am very sorry for having sinned against thee, because thou art so good, and I will not sin again.* An act of contrition will save your soul if there is no priest to hear your confession when dying.

PRAISED BE JESUS AND MARY.

www.saintsbooks.net