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The Glory of the virgins  
and Religious.

[The Happiness of Heaven — F. J. Boudreaux](#)

Here are two other bright throngs that present themselves. They are the holy Virgins and the Religious. Let us first contemplate the bright glory of the virgins. I quote again from the Apocalypse: "And I heard a great voice from heaven. . . . And the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers, harping upon their harps. And they sang as it were a new canticle before the throne. . . . And no man could say that canticle but those hundred and forty-four thousand. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."\*

\* Apoc. xiv.

These evidently form a distinct class in heaven. It is composed of both men and women who never married, nor lost their virtue by actual sin. I speak here of such as these, and not of any others. Hence, we must exclude from this class all little children, who died before they could be responsible for their deeds; for, though they all died virgins, their virginity, which was a gift of nature, does not deserve a "crown of justice." Wherefore, in this place we shall consider the excellent glory of those only, who, having grown to the age of discretion, led a life of purity, and died virgins. Evidently these alone have purchased the glory promised to virgins. Many of them led holy lives while living in the world -- either with or without vow; while the great majority were so enraptured with the beauty and purity of Jesus, that they cheerfully gave up all the lawful pleasures of the world, and consecrated themselves to Him by the vows of

poverty, chastity, and obedience. In this life of suffering and self-denial they persevered unto the end.

Their day of trial and suffering is now over, and they are rewarded with exceeding glory. Clad in their white robes, which denote the spotless purity of their lives, they enjoy a peculiar and intimate union with Jesus, their beloved Spouse. While on earth, they would have no other spouse but Him. They consecrated themselves to Him, and he accepted the noble sacrifice. By His grace he sanctified and beautified them, and made them worthy of the special glory they now enjoy. How beautiful they are! How glorious! They are the lilies of heaven. In the words of the Holy Ghost, we may exclaim: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself: and it triumpheth forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts."\*

\* Wis. iv.

Yet, while it is true that those who die virgins are rewarded with a peculiar glory, we must not forget that virginity alone can neither deserve the high honors of heaven, nor even save any one, unless it is accompanied by the virtues which befit a spouse of Christ. There are many foolish virgins, who are not even admitted to the wedding -- feast, because they are not adorned with charity, and other virtues which belong to their state.

We must ever remember that the crown worn by the virgins in heaven is only an accidental glory; for if it were essential, no one except virgins could be happy there. Virginity is, therefore, far from being the greatest of virtues, or the most necessary to reach the high honors of heaven. For, to use the strong language of the Apostle, if you could speak with the tongues of angels and men; and if you knew all mysteries, and had all knowledge; and if you had faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not charity -- even though you be a virgin -- you are become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Neither will your virginity, nor all other gifts, profit you anything without charity.

See, therefore, that you endeavor to clothe your soul with those virtues which befit a spouse of Jesus Christ. Love God above all things. Be extremely charitable to all. Be humble, modest, reserved. Lead a life of mortification, silence, and prayer. For unless you lead such a life as your vocation requires, you expose yourself to hear the terrible words spoken to the foolish virgins. When they came to the wedding, they stood at the

door, and said, "Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answering, said: Amen, I say to you, I know you not."\*

\* Matt. xxv.11.

But if you do lead the charitable life of a true spouse of Christ, you shall undoubtedly reach a high degree of glory in heaven; and, besides, you will wear the virgins' crown, and enjoy the special intimate union with Jesus which is promised to all those who, despising the short-lived pleasures of this world, have consecrated themselves to His divine service.

Let us now spend a few moments in contemplating the high glory of the religious. This class is composed exclusively of men and women who, while on earth, consecrated themselves to God by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Many of them -- perhaps the great majority are virgins, while other are not. For many of them, like a St. Francis Borgia, were widowers; and others, like a St. Frances of Rome, were widows. Others again, there are, who, when young and foolish, committed sin, by which they may have ceased to be virgins, but who nevertheless received a most marked vocation to the religious life. All these, as well as virgins, enjoy a peculiar glory in heaven, which is due to them as a "crown of justice," on account of the great sacrifices they made to God by the vows of religion.

By the vow of poverty, they not only stripped themselves of all their possessions -- they, moreover, gave up the natural right which all men have to possess property. By the vow of chastity, they gave up the natural right which all men have to enjoy the lawful pleasures of the body. By the vow of obedience, they not only relinquished forever the right to dispose of themselves, but they also placed themselves in the hands of their superiors, to be ruled and governed by them as if they were little children. Thus, by one single act, religious persons abandon all that is dearest to the heart of man according to nature; for they not only give up all their possessions -- the world, with its honors and pleasures -- they not only sacrifice their liberty -- they also abandon father and mother, brother and sister, friends and relatives. In a word, they cut themselves away from the world, and all that makes life bright and desirable, according to nature. And what is more, they embrace a life of continual mortification and self-denial.

It is true, the grace of God, which enables men and women to make such sacrifices, makes the life of religious tolerable; but this does not prevent it from being a life of a continual and painful struggle against the inclinations and cravings of nature. From all

this, it follows that religious, as such, whether virgins or not, enjoy an exceeding glory in heaven on account of the sublime sacrifice of themselves they have made to God by the three vows of religion. This is what our Blessed Lord promises, when he says: "And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting."

In speaking of the three vows, theologians compare them to martyrdom. They maintain that, as a man who lays down his life for the faith enters heaven immediately, without any detention in purgatory, so also does a religious who dies immediately after taking his vows. Whatever temporal punishment was due to him on account of His sins, is entirely cancelled by that one act. And the reason they give is, that the act of sacrificing one's self to God by the vows of religion is, like martyrdom, one of the noblest and most heroic acts that man can perform.

If then, virgins, as such, are rewarded with a peculiar glory in heaven, what shall we say of the glory and splendor which surrounds religious? For virgins make only one great sacrifice, by the practice of perfect chastity, while religious, who make the same sacrifice, add to this two others, namely, poverty and obedience. And experience teaches that these two additional vows are, for most persons, far more difficult, because they involve far more suffering and self-denial than the mere practice of chastity. From all this it follows, that virgins who are religious, enjoy a far higher degree of glory in heaven than those who are not religious. It follows, also, that religious, as such, whether virgins or not, enjoy an exceeding glory in heaven, in virtue of the great sacrifices they have made for God by the three vows of religion. Like Jesus, they were poor, chaste, and obedient unto death; and like Him also, they are exalted to the high honors of heaven.

But, although it is true that religious, as such, enjoy a high glory in heaven, it must not be inferred that they all enjoy the same degree of glory. There is, perhaps, not a class in heaven in which the degrees of glory are so various. Some of them died only a few days after taking their vows; others, on the day itself; while others lived half a century, and more, in the practice of the most heroic virtue. Some were called by the grace of God after a life of worldliness and sin; while others had already reached a high degree of sanctity when they offered their sacrifice to God. Others again, after their consecration to God, were extremely faithful to grace, and gave all the energies of their nature to the acquirement of greater perfection; while others were sadly wanting in generosity to God, and aimed at only an inferior degree of holiness. Again, some had

few or no temptations from the day upon which they took their vows; while for others that act seemed to be a declaration of war, for they began to be assailed by every manner of temptation to violate their vows and go back into the world. But, aided by the all-powerful grace of God, they resisted manfully, and fought the good fight unto the end.

These, and a thousand other differences, give rise to various degrees of glory among the religious, who, having finished their course, have received the crown of life. They who, like a St. Aloysius, a St. Stanislaus, a St. Theresa, and many others, practised every virtue in a heroic degree, are among the brightest and the highest in glory; while they who led less perfect lives are far inferior. Nevertheless, all, without exception, enjoy a peculiar glory, which is due to them as a "crown of justice" for the great sacrifice they made to God by the three vows of religion.

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