

# SERMONS

ON OUR LORD AND HIS BLESSED  
MOTHER,

AND ON THE SAINTS.

PANEGYRICS AND MORAL DISCOURSES,

ADAPTED TO ALL THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS  
OF THE YEAR.

BY THE

REV. FATHER FRANCIS HUNOLT,

*Priest of the Society of Jesus, and Preacher in the Cathedral of Treves.*

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TRANSLATED BY THE

TORONT.

REV. J. ALLEN, D.D.

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✠ P. STROBINO,

*Bishop of Pompeiopolis and Vicar-Apostolic of the  
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# CONTENTS.

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SERMON	PAGE
XXXVIII. On the Holy Angels, - - - - -	7
ON THE HOLY PATRIARCHS.	
XXXIX. On St. John the Baptist, - - - - -	17
XL. On St. Joseph, the Patron of our Fatherland, -	30
XLI. On Joseph's Conformity with the Will of God, -	40
XLII. On St. Joseph as the Patron of the Dying, - -	51
ON THE HOLY APOSTLES.	
XLIII. On the Holy Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, - -	62
XLIV. On the Holy Apostle St. Andrew, - - - - -	76
XLV. On the Holy Apostle St. James, - - - - -	90
XLVI. On the Holy Apostle St. John, - - - - -	104
XLVII. On the Holy Apostle St. Thomas, - - - - -	117
XLVIII. On the Holy Apostles SS. Philip and James, - -	133
XLIX. On the Holy Apostle St. Bartholomew, - - -	151
L. On the Holy Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew, -	168
LI. On the Holy Apostles SS. Simon and Jude, - -	183
LII. On the Holy Apostle St. Matthias, - - - - -	200
ON THE HOLY MARTYRS.	
LIII. On Loving our Enemies after the Example of St. Stephen, - - - - -	220
LIV. On St. Lawrence, - - - - -	233
LV. On St. Sebastian, the Healer of all Diseases, - -	244
LVI. On St. Sebastian as a Protector against the Plague, -	254
LVII. On Zeal in the Sodality of St. Sebastian, - -	263
LVIII. On the Holy Pope and Martyr St. Clement, - -	272
LIX. On the Countless Holy Martyrs of Treves, - -	282

SERMON	PAGE
LX. On the Honor which the People of Treves Derive from their Holy Martyrs, - - - -	291
LXI. On the Lesson which the People of Treves should Learn from their Holy Martyrs, - -	300
ON THE HOLY CONFESSORS.	
LXII. On the Humble Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine,	312
LXIII. On the Great St. Augustine, - - -	320
LXIV. On St. Felix, Archbishop of Treves, - - -	330
LXV. On the Wonderful St. Bernard, - - -	337
LXVI. On St. Bernard as a Despiser of the World, - -	347
LXVII. On the Holy Confessor of Treves, St. Simeon, - -	356
ON THE HOLY VIRGINS AND WIDOWS.	
LXVIII. On St. Agnes as a Teacher of Wisdom, - -	367
LXIX. On St. Agnes as a Lamb among the Wolves, - -	376
LXX. On St. Agnes as a Valiant Woman, - - -	385
LXXI. On the Holy Empress Helen, a Mother of Christendom,	392
LXXII. On St. Helen, Finder of the Cross of Christ, - -	400
LXXIII. On St. Helen, who Exalted the Cross of Christ, - -	411
LXXIV. On all the Saints of God, - - - -	418

## THIRTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

### ON THE HOLY ANGELS.

#### Subject.

1. The holy angels are most perfectly united with the will of God. 2. We, too, should endeavor to be in full conformity with the divine will.—*Preached on the feast of the guardian angels and of St. Michael.*

#### Text.

*Angeli eorum in cœlis semper vident faciem Patris mei qui in cœlis est.*—Matt. xviii. 10.

“Their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

#### Introduction.

“Their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” These words signify something more than the glory of the holy angels, by which they behold God for eternity. When we say of a servant that he always keeps his eyes fixed on his master, we mean that he is always ready and willing to do and omit whatever he knows to be pleasing to his master. And this is what we must understand of the holy angels when we say that they always see the face of the Father in heaven. Yes, my dear brethren, there we have a perfect model of the conformity and likeness of our will to the will of God; as I now mean to show in this sermon, which shall be partly a panegyric and partly a moral discourse.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*The holy angels are always most perfectly united with the will of God. This I shall show in the first part. Let us, too, endeavor to be in conformity with the divine will on earth, just as the angels are in heaven. Such shall be the exhortation in the second part. The first part to the praise and honor of the holy angels; the second by way of a lesson to us, that we may imitate their example.*

Help us hereto, O holy angels, and thou, Mary, Queen of angels!

The angels  
always do  
what God  
wills and as  
He wills.

As I have often told you already, the likeness of our will to the divine will consists partly in doing or avoiding what God wills, when God wills, how God wills, and because God wills us to do or avoid it, and partly in being quite satisfied and content with whatever arrangement God has made with regard to us and to all creatures, in great things or small, in high things or lowly, in agreeable or disagreeable things. My dear brethren, we find a perfect example of this twofold conformity in the holy angels in heaven. With regard to the first, the Prophet David, wishing to give the angels a name descriptive of their office, calls them servants and attendants of God, who have nothing else to do but to fulfil His holy will. For he sings to them: "Bless the Lord, all ye His angels; you that are mighty in strength, and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts; you ministers of His that do His will."<sup>1</sup>

And with  
the greatest  
speed and  
readiness.

And how quickly, readily, joyfully, and perfectly they do that holy will! St. John in the Apocalypse says of the cherubim, who appeared to him under the guise of mysterious living things, that they were "full of eyes before and behind;" and they had "each of them six wings; and round about and within they are full of eyes;"<sup>2</sup> namely, that they might always see and attend to every sign of their Creator in order to be ready to obey it at once. They were equipped with wings, and indeed angels are always painted thus, to show the readiness and speed with which they carry out the divine command. St. Thomas of Aquin speaks of two kinds of angels: the one he calls *assistantes*, or attendants, the other *ministrantes*, or servants; after the manner of a royal court, in which there are some ministers who never leave the royal presence, and others who have to go here and there to fulfil the king's behests. The former stand before the great God, waiting for His commands with all possible reverence and awe; the others fly to execute the orders given them by God.

Shown from  
Scripture.

Thus, as we read in Holy Writ, an angel goes to stand sentinel at the entrance of paradise to guard it, until he should be recalled by the Almighty from his post. "He placed before

<sup>1</sup> Benedicite Domino, omnes angeli ejus: potentes virtute, facientes verbum illius, ad audiendam vocem sermonum ejus. Benedicite Domino, omnes virtutes ejus: ministri ejus, qui facitis voluntatem ejus.—Ps. ciii. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Plena oculis ante et retro. Singula eorum habebant alas senas; et in circuitu et intus plena sunt oculis.—Apoc. iv. 6, 8.

the paradise of pleasure cherubim and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”<sup>1</sup> Another angel goes to the desert to bring back Agar to her master Abraham. A third flies to prevent Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac. Two angels hasten to save Lot from the danger of destruction in the city of Sodom. Many others help the Israelites to find their way through the desert to the promised land. An angel receives the command to encourage Gideon against the Madianites; another to free king Ezechias from the hostile power of the Assyrians; another to protect the purity of Judith in the camp of Holofernes; another to defend Daniel in the lions’ den from the fury of those savage animals; another to save the lives of the three youths in the fiery furnace; another to accompany the younger Tobias on his journey; another to free St. Peter from prison; others to carry the body of the virgin and martyr Catharine to the top of Mount Sinai; and so on. All of them went off at once at the first sign made by God to fulfil the order given; and their chief joy and glory consists in being able to do what they understand their Creator wishes of them.

And not only are they thus eager to fulfil the commands given them immediately by God, but they also show the same readiness and willingness in executing what other angels tell them, or what they otherwise know to be pleasing to God. For according to the teaching of theologians, all the angels in heaven are not equal in dignity and excellence; one choir is subordinate to the other. Not all receive commands immediately from God, for the inferior is ruled by the superior; just as in a royal court the will of the king is made known by one courtier to another, and by the latter to a third, and so on. Nevertheless an angel executes the command received from another angel with an obedience just as ready and humble as if the command came direct from the Creator Himself, without the least feeling of envy or jealousy at the superior excellence of the other; for every one is quite content with the place and post assigned to him, and they have greater joy in doing the will of God, however and whenever it is made known to them, than they have in their own dignity and glory. “Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts; you ministers of His that do His will.” Thus is the Lord blessed by His servants,

They are just as ready to do the will of God when they learn it from other angels.

<sup>1</sup> Collocavit ante paradisum voluptatis cherubim, et flammeum gladium atque versatilem ad custodiendam viam ligni vitæ.—Gen. iii. 24.

who do and omit nothing except what, when, how, and because God wishes them to do or omit it.

They are content with all that God decrees for them.

With regard to the second part of conformity with the will of God, even the chief princes of the angels are so resigned to the divine will, and so content with all that God arranges for them, that if they could perceive but the least sign of His wishing them to become gardeners here on earth and pluck up weeds, or to till the fields like a peasant, with great labor and trouble (in former times an angel really performed this office for the holy peasant St. Isidor, and guided the oxen in the plough for him while he heard Mass), or to undertake any other task, no matter how lowly, they would esteem it as the greatest honor, and make for themselves a heaven of happiness out of it, as long as only the good will and pleasure of God is fully accomplished in and by them.

This is shown by the angels who guard us poor mortals.

If you wish to test the truth of this, then think of the holy guardian angels, and of the office to which they allow themselves to be appointed. O my God! I am often struck with wonderment to think that such excellent beings as even the lowest of the angels are, that such great, beautiful, and mighty princes of heaven, many of whom in the beginning were, before they reached the place of their eternal happiness, ashamed to attend on God when He should become man, and were therefore cast out of heaven into hell as rebels—my God, I think, how is it possible for these blessed courtiers of the Almighty to deign to defend and guard such mean creatures as we are! But what do I say! exclaims St. Bernard; to defend and guard? Rather to wait upon and attend us poor mortals. They are not ashamed in their own exalted persons to take that lowly office on themselves for years and years, from the first moment of life to the moment of death, and to stand day and night, in all places, at all times, by the side of a poor mortal, even of the meanest of men, of a poor beggar or swine-herd!

Nay, they attend on even the worst sinners.

And what is still more astonishing, they perform this service even for the most wicked, even for infidels, heathens, Jews, Turks, and idolaters, whose mouths are filled with blasphemies against the true God. That service they perform even for wizards and witches who adore the devil! And although the angels experience the greatest disgust at those who are in mortal sin, and enemies of God, yet with the utmost patience they stand at their side day and night, to protect and guard them as children



entrusted to their care; they wait on them, so to speak, as servants wait on their masters in all their affairs; and the same service shall be rendered by an angel even to anti-Christ, who shall be as an incarnate demon in his rebellion against God. All this they do simply because such is the will of God; and he who is deputed to guard a poor beggar or lowly peasant boy is as well content with his office as if he had the care of the greatest monarch of earth. He who has to protect the wizard or sorcerer is just as satisfied as if he had to attend on the greatest saint and servant of God; simply because such is the will of God, who has so ordained and given to each one his peculiar office.

Nay, the holy angels are so united with the divine will that if they were free to do anything contrary to it they would prefer to be cast away forever among the demons than to commit the least venial sin by which they might displease God. And if it were pleasing to God to annihilate them, or, without any fault on their side, to hurl them into hell forever, provided they might continue to love Him there, they would all without exception be ready for their fate, that they might thus accomplish and fulfil the will of God. From this it follows that they desire nothing so much in us, their charges, as a conformity of our will with the divine will, and there is nothing they labor so hard to bring about with their inspirations and suggestions as the practice of this virtue in us, which is the compendium of all virtue.

My dear brethren, we must acknowledge that we owe a debt of the greatest gratitude, honor, and love to our holy guardian angels for the unceasing and countless benefits we have received and hope to receive from them every moment of our lives; and he would indeed be more stupid than a dumb beast, more thankless than a dog, who would refuse to acknowledge this obligation. Now they who do acknowledge it often ask themselves, with the younger Tobias, who had received so many favors from his faithful companion, the angel Raphael, on his journey, "What wages shall we give him? or what can be worthy of his benefits?"<sup>1</sup> See this, Christians. Do you wish to know how we can and ought to reward our holy angels for their services to us? No more grateful offering can we make them than to follow their example by being fully united with the will of God, by always endeavoring to do and omit what, when, how, and because God wills us to do or omit; and at the same time to be always ready in all circum-

They are ready to be annihilated. if such were the will of God.

The best way, then, to show our gratitude to them is to imitate their conformity with the will of God.

<sup>1</sup> *Quam mercedem dabimus ei? aut quid dignum poterit esse beneficiis ejus?—Tob. xii. 2.*

stances to submit to the divine ordinances and arrangements, and to say candidly: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; as the angels, O Lord! do Thy will in heaven, so may men also do it on earth. Let this be our resolution, our promise, and let us fulfil it by way of honoring and thanking our holy guardian angels: as I shall further explain in the

### Second Part.

Conformity  
with the  
will of God  
is indeed  
more dif-  
ficult for us  
than for  
the angels.

Yes, one might say, the angels can do all this easily enough; it is not a difficult matter for them to be perfectly united with the will of God. Oh, what a difference and great inequality there is between those happy spirits in heaven, in the abode of joys and delights, and us poor mortals who have still to live in this vale of tears and sorrows! To the angels in heaven everything happens according to their will and pleasure, and there is nothing that can cause them grief; but to us, on the other hand, who are still far from our fatherland, everything goes contrary; wherever we turn we find trials and annoyances; seldom do we meet with any one who has all he wishes; countless are the things that displease us daily. In heaven it is a pleasant and an easy thing to be satisfied with the will of God, and be always content with it, for there is no contradiction there, nor can there be any; while here on earth one trial comes after another, one cross after another, one difficulty after another. Therefore, just as the satiated who have eaten and drunk enough dance and sing differently from the hungry and thirsty, so we cannot say and pray as the angels do: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Take us up to them, O God, and we will do as they do, and with all our hearts we will be satisfied with Thy arrangements; but to do that now is a difficult and troublesome thing! All this is quite true, my dear brethren; we do indeed find a greater difficulty in fulfilling and accomplishing the will of God than the angels; but why? Because we do not yet wish from our hearts all that God wishes, but would rather have things according to our own will. If we only had this one virtue of conformity and union with the will of God, then would almost every difficulty be removed; for even crosses and trials would be pleasing to us, because they are pleasing to God, and because, as long as we are sojourning on this earth, God has ordained them for us.

But it is  
also more

In one way, although it is much more difficult for us in many things to be as satisfied with the divine will as the angels are,



yet we may still say that we are better off than they. How is that? Because the angels, with all their most perfect conformity, cannot merit anything to add to their glory in heaven; but we who are still on the way thither can and must daily merit a happiness like theirs by resigning our will to the will of God. If it were not possible for us on earth to attain to this virtue like the angels, God would not have required it of us, and to no purpose should Our Lord have told us to pray: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; that is, may Thy holy will, O God, be done by us as the angels do it in heaven! May Thy will be done by us and by all our actions to Thy honor and glory, just as the angels in heaven do many things for Thy honor and glory! May Thy will be done in us, body and soul, according to Thy pleasure, however and whenever Thou pleasest, just as the angels allow themselves in all things to be guided and directed by that will! Now, since it seems often hard and almost impossible to our weak nature and our sensuality to do this, therefore Christ has exhorted us to pray daily to our heavenly Father for grace to make it easy, at least to our reasoning will; and, as St. Cyprian justly says, we should pray: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; not that God may do what He wishes to do, or ordain for us what He wishes to ordain, for that He will do without asking us, whether we like it or not, but we should pray that we may do what God wills, that we may be always satisfied with what the will of God ordains for us.

The holy martyrs and primitive Christians were weak mortals as we are; they were as sensitive to the trials and difficulties of life as we are; they found temptations as hard to overcome as we find them; and yet with God's help they attained a high degree of conformity with the divine will; their only cry in all attacks of adversity was: Lord, Thy will be done! I will select only one example from all. In the days of the Emperor Diocletian, Epictetus, a priest, and Astion, his companion, were thrown into prison by the tyrant. Dear Astion, said Epictetus, let us be of good heart; it is the will of God! If the judge causes us to be brought before him to-morrow, and asks us our names, who are our parents, and where we come from, our only answer must be: We are Christians. And if it is the will of God for us to be tortured and mangled, our only words during our sufferings must be: May the will of God be always done in us! And when they were brought before the judge the next day, their only words were: We are Christians; may the will of God be done in us! whercat

meritorious  
and is possible for us  
to practise.

And it is practised by pious Christians  
Shown by an example

the judge was so incensed that he caused them to be cruelly beaten, but the martyrs only raised their eyes to heaven, saying: Jesus Christ, Thy will be done in us! The judge, inflamed with anger, caused them to be stretched on the rack and torn with hooks; but all he could get them to say was: Tyrant, know that we are Christians; we are Christians; may the will of God be done in us! Then their flesh was burned with torches, their wounds rubbed with vinegar and salt, and after many other tortures they were condemned to die by the sword; but in all their sufferings the only words, almost, they were heard to utter were: We are Christians; may the will of God be done in us! Saying these words they gave up the ghost. Vigilantius, a heathen, who witnessed their martyrdom, thought there must be some special virtue hidden in those words, to banish all sense of pain, so that their tortures caused them no suffering; therefore in all adverse circumstances he repeated those words: We are Christians; may the will of God be done in us! And for three whole days did that blind heathen keep on repeating them; when, wonderful to relate, the mercy of God could no longer withhold from him a special grace. Vigilantius was suddenly enlightened; he was converted to the Christian faith, and ran into the public street, crying out before all the people: I am a Christian; do you hear me, tyrant? May the will of God be done in me! He then caused his whole household to be baptized with himself, and was thrown into prison with the martyrs.

Exhortation  
to imitate  
them and  
the angels.

My dear brethren, we, too, are Christians, are we not? Let us, then, in all occurrences think and say, and show by our actions that we mean it: May the will of God be done in us! We are fellow-servants and brethren of the angels, as the angel in the Apocalypse said to St. John, who was about to adore him: "See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren."<sup>1</sup> Let us, too, think and say in all circumstances: May the will of God be done by us and in us on earth as it is done by and in the angels in heaven! And no matter how hard and difficult and bitter it may appear to me, nevertheless may the will of God be done in me! This cross weighs heavily on me; this insult seems intolerable; this sickness and pain are grievously tormenting; secret poverty and want oppress me; this death causes me bitter sorrow; yet I am a Christian, a fellow-servant of the angels; may the will of God be done in me, too! And may the will of God be

<sup>1</sup> Vide ne feceris; conservus tuus sum, et fratrum tuorum.—Apoc. xix. 10.

done by me, also, in all my thoughts, words, and actions, with an upright, pure intention, as it is done by the angels in heaven; with a fervent love of God, as it is done by the angels in heaven; with as much readiness and cheerfulness as it is done by the angels in heaven; so that I may always be able to say what that courtier said to his sovereign, when the latter told him he must accompany him on his journey to-morrow; no, your majesty, answered the courtier, it is not a case of *must* with me, for I shall do it with the utmost willingness, because it is pleasing to my master. May the will of God be done in and by me with as much perfection as it is done by the angels in heaven, that is, without my making the least exception, and with as much perseverance as it is done by the angels in heaven, that is, without my ever being wearied by the length of time, or by the greatness of the difficulties that may present themselves; may the will of God be done for ten, twenty, thirty, a hundred years, for all eternity!

That, my dear brethren, is the real way to say the Our Father. These are the wings by which we may soar to the highest knowledge of the divine will; this is the best way of always keeping in the presence of God, as that great servant of God, Father Gregory Lopez of our Society, was taught by God Himself; who said to him that he should often repeat in thought the words: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; amen. These words he impressed deeply on his heart, and constantly repeated for three years in succession; so that at last he could not forget them, and, as it were, with every breath he drew he used to say: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; amen. He himself acknowledges that if he was ever careless or slothful in saying these words he was usually assailed by violent temptations of the devil; so that these sweet words served him as a teacher and defender against the enemies of his soul; therefore he tried to persuade of their value all with whom he came into contact.

Heavenly spirits, and you, especially, holy guardian angels, to whom, after God, we must acknowledge that we often owe our lives, our bodies and souls, since we cannot show our esteem and love for you better than by imitating as diligently as possible that virtue of conformity to the will of God which is so remarkable in you, we are determined in future to be most fervent in practising that virtue; and do you pray for us to God in heaven, that He may draw our rebellious wills to His, so that, like you, we may

By this we shall attain perfection.

Resolution to practise this virtue.

always be and remain united with the divine will in all things; that we may give to God whatever we know to be pleasing to Him; that we may avoid and readily cast from us all that we know to be displeasing to Him, and that in every circumstance we may be content and satisfied with the arrangements of His Providence. For my part I beg this of thee, my holy guardian angel! Touch my heart unceasingly with thy inspirations; give me no rest until I do the will of God in all things, and thus imitate thee constantly! May the will of God be done in and by me for all eternity! Amen.

*See several sermons on the holy angels in the first, fourth, and seventh volumes.*

# ON THE HOLY PATRIARCHS.

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## THIRTY-NINTH SERMON.

### ON ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

#### Subject.

St. John was a penitent, and therefore a wonderful man.—  
*Preached on the feast of St. John Baptist.*

#### Text.

*Et posuerunt omnes qui audierant, in corde suo, dicentes: Quis putas, puer iste erit?—Luke i. 66.*

“And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: What an one, think ye, shall this child be?”

#### Introduction.

All that happened before, during, and after the birth of St. John the Baptist was most wonderful. St. Thomas of Villanova gives us a pithy description of those wonders: “An angel brings the message,” he says; “his father becomes dumb, a barren woman conceives, the virgin greets, the boy leaps for joy, the mother prophesies, the name is given from heaven, it is known to the mother by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it is written down by the father, the string of his tongue is loosed, and from being a dumb man the father becomes a prophet: what a number of miracles happened at his birth!”<sup>1</sup> With reason were all who heard of them astonished, so that they asked each other: “What an one, think ye, shall this child be?” If, my dear brethren, I had been present, and had foreseen the life of St. John, I should have answered: This child will prove the greatest miracle

<sup>1</sup> Angelus nunciat, pater obmutescit, sterilis concipit, Virgo salutatur, puer exultat, mater prophetatur, nomen de celo mittitur, a matre per Spiritum agnoscitur, a patre conscribitur, vinculum lingue solvitur, ex muto propheta pater efficitur: quanta in ejus ortu miracula facta sunt!



of all. And I should have been right; for we must consider St. John as a living miracle when we look at his penitential life: as I shall now show.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. John was a penitent, and therefore a most wonderful man. Such is the whole subject of this panegyric. Sinners! ye just! ye innocent! whoever you may be, you, too, must do penance; such shall be the conclusion by way of a moral lesson.*

That all may profit by it, grant us Thy grace, Almighty God, through the intercession of Thy Mother Mary, of Thy holy precursor St. John, and of our guardian angels.

Many saints  
have done  
severe pen-  
ance.

If I read the Lives of the Saints I find many examples of servants of God who led such penitential lives and were so hard on themselves that I have reason to shake with fear, and to say to myself: Alas, how little I have done for heaven! I think of the saintly David, and the words resound in my ears that he sighed forth to God: "I am ready for scourges, and my sorrow is continually before me."<sup>1</sup> The tears he shed during the night in his constant vigils were enough to bedew his couch: "Every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears."<sup>2</sup> His fasting and mortification were so severe that he ate ashes instead of bread, and tears of repentance were his drink: "I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping."<sup>3</sup> Then I remember the holy apostle St. Peter, whose cheeks were furrowed and ploughed up by the tears of bitter sorrow he was constantly shedding; St. Paul, that chosen vessel of election, who in the midst of his trials and sufferings chastised his wearied body most mercilessly: "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection,"<sup>4</sup> as he says of himself. Then I behold St. Mary Magdalene, who separated herself from the society of men, and lacerated her body with scourges even to blood. If I enter in spirit into the deserts and wildernesses, I find hearts broken with continual contrition and sorrow; bodies blanched and wasted by uninterrupted vigils, hunger, and thirst, more dead than alive, clad with hair-shirts furnished with sharp iron nails, scourged with thongs armed with spurs and knives, and other terrible implements of

<sup>1</sup> Ego in flagellis paratus sum, et dolor meus in conspectu meo semper.—Ps. xxxvii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum: lachrymis meis stratum meum rigabo.—Ibid. vi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Cinerem tanquam panem manducabam, et potum meum cum fletu miscebam.—Ibid. ci. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Castigo corpus meum, et in servitutum redigo.—I. Cor. ix. 27.

penance with which those repentant souls chastised the flesh. Amongst others, I seem to behold a St. Victorinus placing his hand like a wedge between the parts of a cleft tree, and there holding it until it was crushed, to his great pain and torture; Jacobonus, who buried himself alive in the grave of a dead person, and there, amid the fearful stench of corrupting flesh, passed his life in shedding tears of contrition; Guarinus, who crawled out of his solitude to Rome on his hands and feet, like a dumb beast, returned in the same manner, and continued in that posture for the remainder of his life, until, covered altogether, like a beast, with hair, he was captured by hunters. I pass over others.

What think you of this, my dear brethren? Are you not horrified at the penitential lives of such holy people? Truly, you have reason for wondering; yet I cannot help thinking that they are no great miracles of penitence after all. Why not? Read the account of their previous lives, and you will agree with me. All these penitents, although they then served God truly, had been great sinners and had grievously offended God. David had been an adulterer and murderer; Peter had denied Christ; Paul had been a persecutor of the Christians; Magdalene had been a notorious sinner in the city: "A woman that was in the city, a sinner."<sup>1</sup> Victorinus had committed impure actions with the hand that he crushed in the cloven tree; Jacobonus had been guilty of carnal lust with the person in whose grave he had lain; Guarinus also had misused the body that he allowed to grow into the semblance of a wild beast for brutish lusts. What wonder, then, that all these, after they had entered into themselves and become converted to God, inflicted such severe penances on themselves.

It would have been more astonishing if they had done no penance at all, for to what purpose are austerities, if sinners are not in want of them? What is a sinner? asks Tertullian. He is a man, is the answer, who after having committed sin lives still on earth to do penance, that is, to suffer, to deny himself, to mortify his senses and sensuality, to chastise and crucify his body. And this is only right and just. For could the great God expect any less from a mean creature by whom His infinite majesty has been wantonly insulted, vilely treated and offended, than that the creature should humble himself and punish himself by works of penance, in order to make some reparation to the divine

This is not to be wondered at, for they were once great sinners.

And penance is proper for sinners.

<sup>1</sup> Muller quæ erat in civitate peccatrix.—Luke vii. 37.

justice, and in some manner to restore the divine honor lessened by sin? Is it too much for a man to rob himself of some lawful comfort, after having wantonly stretched forth his hand to unlawful actions? Is the untamed flesh less deserving of punishment after it has enjoyed the forbidden pleasure, and thus merited the pains of hell? No! One who has been a sinner must either punish himself by penance or expect chastisement from the justice of God.

St John was a miracle, because he practised the most severe penance.

Show me, my dear brethren, a man who is quite innocent and has never done any wrong, and yet submits to severe penances of his own free will, and of him will I say: truly he is a great miracle of penance! And behold, of all mere holy men, the only miracle of the kind is St. John the Baptist. Consider his mode of life; could it well have been more severe? St. Matthew describes it in the following words: "And the same John had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey."<sup>1</sup> His garment was a kind of mantle made of the hard and bristly hairs of the camel, a sort of penitential garment that rather tormented his body than covered it. His meat was locusts; what food for a human being! Other solitaries, although they fasted strictly, had at least bread or cooked vegetables to eat. Who ever heard of any one eating locusts, a vermin found in the desert? So that he must have suffered continual hunger and thirst. And such, indeed, was the case; for with him fasting and eating must have been the same thing. Therefore with reason did Christ, the eternal Truth, say of him: "John came, neither eating nor drinking."<sup>2</sup> Of which passage St. Bernard says: "According to the Apostle, if we have food and clothing we should be content; this was the perfection of the apostles, but it was not enough for John;"<sup>3</sup> it seemed too small for him. "For he came, neither eating nor drinking, nor wearing clothing; for as locusts are not proper food, unless, perhaps, for some unreasoning animals, so neither is camel's hair a proper kind of clothing for a man."<sup>4</sup> And we may well add to this: he lived without food, without drink, with-

<sup>1</sup> Ipse autem Joannes habebat vestimentum de pilis camelorum, et zonam pelliceam circa lumbos suos; esca autem ejus erat locustæ et mel sylvestre.—Matt. iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Venit enim Joannes, neque manducans, neque bibens.—Ibid. xi. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Habentes victum et vestitum, ait Apostolus, his contenti simus; apostolica perfectio ista est; sed Joannes etiam hanc contempsit.—S. Bern. Serm. 66 Nat. Joan. Bapt.

<sup>4</sup> Venit enim non manducans, neque bibens, plane nec vestiens; sicut enim non est locusta cibis, nisi forte irrationabilium animalium; sic nec pili camelorum hominum est invernium.



out clothing, without a bed; for as locusts are not food, nor camel's hair clothing, neither are the caves in the desert a fit resting-place for a man. Thus by a miracle he lived in an almost uninterrupted fasting and watching. Has any one ever heard of any other saint who did the like?

And when did he begin that penitential life? how long did it last? Other hermits, in order to do penance, went into the desert in their old age, or at least in their manhood, while they still had the strength necessary for that severe mode of life. But when did John commence? "In thy tender years," sings the Church to him in the office of to-day, "flying the turmoil of men, thou didst seek the caves of the desert."<sup>1</sup> "As soon as he had passed the years of infancy," says Denis the Carthusian, "he hastened to the desert;"<sup>2</sup> there, creeping into the caverns of the earth as a companion of the wild beasts, he began his life of penance. "He began," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "where any perfect man would wish to leave off. O wonderful child! O hermit, miraculous even in the sight of all the angels!"<sup>3</sup> How could it have been possible for a child of such tender years to practise those austerities if the Almighty God had not worked in and with him in a miraculous manner? And so it is, continues St. Thomas: "Human frailty would not have been capable of such perfection at that age, especially if God had not been pleased to show in John to all ages a miracle of holiness."<sup>4</sup> How long did John endure this severe life? "The child grew, and was strengthened in spirit," says St. Luke, "and was in the deserts," mark this well, my dear brethren, "until the day of his manifestation to Israel;"<sup>5</sup> that is, until he announced Christ as the true Lamb of God, and pointed Him out to the people. So that John lived alone in the desert from his childhood until his thirtieth year, for that was the age of Our Lord when He began to preach publicly, and it was then that St. John pointed Him out to the world. Even when John was preaching

And that, too, from childhood to the end of his life.

<sup>1</sup> *Antra deserti teneris sub annis, civium turmas fugiens petisti.*

<sup>2</sup> *Mox ut infantie annos egressus es, properavit ad eremum.*—Dion. Cart. Serm. 5. de Nat. Joan.

<sup>3</sup> *Suam inde inchoans vitam, ubi perfectus quisque desinere solet. O puerum mirabilem! O eremitam ipsis etiam angelis cunctis stupendum!*—S. Thom. de Villanova, Conc. 1. de Nat. Joan.

<sup>4</sup> *Neque enim tantæ perfectionis capax erat humana fragilitas, ea maxime ætate, nisi Deus cunctis sæculis sanctitatis miraculum in Joanne pro libitu facere decrevisset.*—Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *Puer autem crescebat et confortabatur spiritu, et erat in desertis usque in diem ostentationis suæ ad Israel.*—Luke i. 80.

penance, he did not leave the desert, for the people came in crowds to hear him, to see the wonderful man, and to be baptized by him, as St. Mark testifies: "John was in the desert, baptizing, and preaching the baptism of penance. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem, and were baptized by him in the river of Jordan."<sup>1</sup> Here I remark, with St. Thomas already quoted, another instance of self-denial and mortification in John, that is indeed admirable, besides his other austerities. What was that? John had never seen Jesus for thirty years, although he was so nearly related to Him, and was appointed His precursor. What think you of this, my dear brethren? Have you any doubt that he felt a most ardent desire to see and be in the society of the Saviour of the world? Why, then, did he not leave his solitude now and then, and visit Christ in Nazareth, to make His acquaintance, to receive consolation from Him, and to enjoy the presence of His holy Mother? No, that much comfort was denied him. "I knew Him not," he said afterwards.<sup>2</sup> What a wonderful thing! "Although," says St. Thomas, "he knew that Christ was dwelling among men, he deprived himself of the presence and acquaintance of Christ, and remained in the desert; which was to him a most bitter martyrdom, and worse than all the rigors of his life."<sup>3</sup> "Oh, how he desired to see Christ, to speak to Him, to enjoy and delight in His presence and conversation, for he knew Our Lord to be God in human shape!"<sup>4</sup> And yet he constantly, through a spirit of mortification and penance, resisted this vehement desire of his, although he might easily have gratified it. Thus, my dear brethren, the whole life of John, from his childhood upwards, was nothing else but a constant and uninterrupted penance, until he exchanged the desert for a prison, in which, at last, for the cause of truth, he ended his penance by martyrdom when his head was cut off.

Although  
he was  
quite inno-  
cent.

But, great Saint, how am I to understand all this? Let me ask thee, with St. Thomas: "What was the reason of such severe pen-

<sup>1</sup> Fuit Joannes in deserto baptizans et prædicans baptismum poenitentiae. Et egrediebatur ad eum omnis Judææ regio, et Jerosolymitæ universi, et baptizabantur ab illo in Jordanis flumine.—Mark i. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ego nesciebam eum.—John i. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Cum sciret Christum inter homines habitare, privavit se consortio Christi et familiaritate, et mansit in deserto; quod fuit illi magnum martyrium, acerbius omni illo rigore poenitentiae.

<sup>4</sup> O quomodo sillebat videre Christum, alloqui, gaudere et frui ejus præsentia et colloquio, quem sciebat esse Deum in carne!

ance?"<sup>1</sup> what crime hadst thou committed? If any one had seen thee in the rough garment of camel's hair, living in the dens of wild beasts, would he not have thought that thou wert the greatest sinner in the world, and obliged to condemn thyself to that mode of life to do penance for thy sins? Tell me, then, what crime thou didst commit? It is the infallible truth, my dear brethren, that John did not even bring into the world the stain of original sin in which all men are born, but that he was cleansed from it in his mother's womb: "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb."<sup>2</sup> "Behold," says St. Chrysostom, "how John went to heaven before he touched the earth; and how he received the divine Spirit before receiving that of man, and the graces of heaven before the limbs of his body."<sup>3</sup> "And," adds the Saint, "he began to live for God before living for himself."<sup>4</sup> What but a holy life could follow such a holy beginning? And it is also a certain truth, confirmed by the Fathers, that during the whole course of his life John never committed any sin against God, neither mortal sin deserving of hell nor the least venial sin, and that he lived more like an angel in the flesh than a mortal man: "For this is he of whom it is written: Behold I send My angel before Thy face."<sup>5</sup> Whereupon de Lyra says: "I send My angel: because he led an angelic life."<sup>6</sup> "His life was not human, but angelic," says St. Thomas; "he was indeed a man like us; but he seems to me to have had nothing of a man but the color and form; all his thoughts, wishes, desires, and actions were angelic;"<sup>7</sup> that is, pure, as if he were an angel. Nay, as far as a spotless life is concerned, St. Bernard places him among the seraphim: "He obtained such a high place in the angelic choirs that he is among the highest of the seraphim."<sup>8</sup> See how great was

<sup>1</sup> Ad quid poenitentiae tantus rigor?—S. Thom. de Villanova, Conc. 3. de Nat. Joan.

<sup>2</sup> Spiritu Sancto adhuc ex utero matris suae.—Luke i. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Videtis quemadmodum Joannes ante pervenit ad cœlum, quam tangeret terram; ante accepit divinum spiritum, quam haberet humanum; ante suscepit divina munera, quam corporis membra.—S. Chrys. in Cat. D. Thom.

<sup>4</sup> Ante cepit vivere Deo, quam sibi.

<sup>5</sup> Hic est enim de quo scriptum est: Ecce ego mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam.—Matt. xi. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Mitto angelum meum; quia vitam duxit angelicam.

<sup>7</sup> Vita ejus non erat humana, sed angelica; erat quidem homo sicut et nos; sed mihi videbatur nihil hominis nisi effigiem et colorem habere; totum quod cogitabat, quod volebat, quod desiderabat, quod agebat, totum erat angelicum.—S. Thom. de Villanova, Conc. 1. de Nat. Joan.

<sup>8</sup> Sic novem angelorum ordinibus insertus est, ut etiam ad Seraphim apicem transferatur.—S. Bern. de priv. S. Joan.

his innocence, how wonderful his holiness and unspotted sanctity!

And had  
never done  
the least  
thing to be  
repented of.

But again I must ask: Why such excessive rigor of penance? Is it right for an innocent man, who has never done any wrong, to be punished and chastised? I know well that some of the saints led innocent and holy lives, and yet did severe penance; but they had now and then committed venial sins, or at all events found something in their lives which they thought merited chastisement. Thus if I were to ask the innocent and holy Bernard: What crime hast thou committed to make thee take the scourge in thy hands, and, besides thy strict and constant fasting, so unmercifully chastise thyself, weak and sickly as thou art, that thou walkest about like a living corpse or a skeleton? he would point to some fault of his early youth, and say that he had once happened to cast a rather incautious glance at a person of the opposite sex, although he at once turned his eyes away. See, he would say; have I not done wrong? do I not deserve punishment? If I ask a St. Francis Xavier why he tied rough hair ropes so tightly round his feet and limbs that they grew into the flesh, and caused him excruciating agony, he would answer that this chastisement was meet for him, in order to atone for the vanity he felt formerly when in the world in dancing. If I ask the angelic youth St. Aloysius why he slept at night on a hard board, weighed his midday meal with an ounce weight, and scourged himself till the blood come forth in torrents, he would tell me about what he thought to be his sins; how when a child he spoke an improper word heard from a soldier, a word of which he did not know the meaning; and how, on another occasion, during his childhood, he once took a cartridge out of a soldier's bandolier. Mark, my dear brethren, these had at least the appearance of sin to atone for and do penance for. But John cannot point to a single fault that deserved penance, for in his whole life he had done nothing wrong, committed no sinful act, spoke and thought nothing that was not holy. Why, then, such severe and constant penance?

He was  
even con-  
firmed in  
grace.

But, on second thoughts, perhaps he was afraid of falling into sin if he had not chastised the flesh and kept it in restraint? Ah, it was this fear that drove other innocent servants of God to practise severe penances, and to arm themselves with constant mortification. They knew well that their weakness and frailty amid so many dangers and occasions of sin were in need of being strengthened by mortification; they experienced the power that



our corrupt inclinations and the desires of the flesh have, even against our reasoning will, so that they are always inclining, and, as it were, violently drawing us to evil; and if we do not bravely resist them and chasten the wanton flesh we cannot long keep from sin; they knew the many attacks, allurements, temptations that have to be sustained from men and demons, and which cannot be overcome unless we do violence to ourselves. Therefore the hermits withdrew into the deserts, that they might not run any danger of losing their souls in the society of men; therefore St. Jerome beat with a stone his emaciated breast; therefore St. Bernard plunged into a frozen pond; therefore St. Benedict rolled about in the sharp thorns; and all this they did to tame the obstinacy of their flesh, and drive away the temptations that plagued them. Therefore Edmund, Aloysius, Stanislaus, and other innocent youths girded themselves with hair ropes and iron spikes, that they might keep free from sin and retain their innocence. But this could not have been the object of St. John in doing such severe penance. Why so? According to the teaching of the holy Fathers, he was confirmed in grace even in his mother's womb, and, as it were, assured that he would never fall into any sin; the fulness of grace was in him; "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost," as the angel said of him. Mark the words: he shall be filled. Namely, grace was given him in such abundant measure that his parents received of it. "Into those who had given him the substance of flesh," says the Abbot Guaricus, "he infused the superabundance of his spirit and of grace."<sup>1</sup> Clearer still are the words of St. Emissenus: "It is a great thing to be illumined by the Holy Ghost, but a greater still to be filled with Him."<sup>2</sup> For just as a vessel when quite full cannot contain any more, "so in him no spot of worldly imperfection could find place, for the fulness of holiness reigned in him."<sup>3</sup> St. Chrysologus calls John all holiness, for he says of his parents: "In them was prepared the source whence all holiness was to be born."<sup>4</sup> Finally St. Thomas gives him this eulogy: "John was made by God a prodigy of sanctity, a

<sup>1</sup> In eos qui in se transfuderant carnis substantiam, spiritus sui et gratiæ superabundantiam fundebat.—Guar. Abb. Serm. de Nat. Joan.

<sup>2</sup> Magnum est Spiritu Sancto illustrari; sed multo est magis repleri.—Emiss. Hom. 1. de Nat. Joan.

<sup>3</sup> Ita in eum nihil sæcularis maculæ introire jam poterat, in quo sanctificationis plenitudo regnabat.—Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> In illis parabatur unde tota sanctitas nasceretur.—S. Chrysol. Serm. 89.

miracle of all perfection, an admirable spectacle of all virtue to all ages." <sup>1</sup> So that he could hardly be distinguished from the Holy of holies, Christ, Our Lord, the Son of God; many, on account of the wonderful sanctity of his life, looked on him as the Messiah and Redeemer of the world, although they had never seen him work a miracle; and they would have remained in their error, had not John himself undeceived them. "And as the people was of opinion," says St. Luke, "and all were thinking in their hearts of John, that perhaps he might be the Christ, John answered . . . there shall come one mightier than I." <sup>2</sup> Nay, after Our Lord had worked many wonders, the like of which they had never seen John do, they yet looked on him as Christ, and took Our Lord for John. When Christ asked His disciples: "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>3</sup> they answered: "Some, John the Baptist." <sup>4</sup> But why have recourse to so many proofs, when the words of the infallible Truth Himself are more than enough to convince us? After Christ had called him an angel and more than a prophet, He adds: "Amen, I say to you; there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist." <sup>5</sup> From which St. Augustine draws this conclusion: "Whoever is greater than John the Baptist is not only man, but God also." <sup>6</sup> Hence I am driven to the conclusion that John, although he had the freedom to commit sin, yet, humanly and morally speaking, could never have offended God, and therefore in this respect he was not at all in need of such severe penances.

Neither had he seen the example of the living Saviour.

What, then, was the reason of such austerity of life? There is another reason, my dear brethren, which has driven even the most innocent and holy to the practice of penance, and which should drive them to it, namely, the example of the suffering and dying Son of God. What! thought those servants of God, are the watchings, fasting, and chastising of the body which Christ willingly bore for my sake too much for me to undertake for the sake of a God crowned with thorns? for the sake of a God beaten over His whole body with ropes, rods, and scourges? for a God

<sup>1</sup> Sanctitatis prodigium et totius perfectionis monstrum, et admirandum sæculis virtutum omnium spectaculum Joannes a Deo factus est.—S. Thom. Conc. 1. de Nat. Joan.

<sup>2</sup> Existimante autem populo, et cogitantibus omnibus in cordibus suis de Joanne, ne forte ipse esset Christus; respondit Joannes . . . veniet autem fortior me.—Luke iii. 15, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Quem dicunt homines esse Fillum hominis?—Matt. xvi. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Alii Joannem Baptistam.—Ibid. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Amen dico vobis, non surrexit inter natos mulierum major Joanne Baptista.—Matt. xi. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Quisquis Joanne major est, non tantum homo, sed Deus est.—S. Aug. in Ps. 29.

whose hands and feet were pierced with cruel nails? for a God whose bitter hunger and thirst were satiated with gall and vinegar? for a God who died in the greatest agony, hanging on a disgraceful gibbet? for a God who, innocence itself, bore all this for our sake? What! exclaims the holy penitent St. Bernard: "It is a shame for a member living under a thorn-crowned Head to be delicate."<sup>1</sup> Christ, our Lord and Model, suffered even to the death of the cross; therefore we, too, must suffer with Him. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me."<sup>2</sup> If we wish to be in the number of the elect we must be like our crucified Lord, according to the express words of St. Paul: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."<sup>3</sup> So that the saints argued rightly in favor of their austerities. Hence I no longer wonder so much why John led such a hard life, although he was quite innocent, pure as an angel, had never committed the least fault, and being confirmed in grace, was not in the slightest danger of sinning, and, after Christ and His virginal Mother, was the greatest of all the saints. For he did not wish to be a delicate member under a thorn-crowned Head. But what am I saying? Am I wrong again? For John had not seen anything of the kind in Our Lord, my dear brethren, since he was beheaded in prison before Our Lord began His passion, and died while He was still accompanied by crowds of people, who followed Him everywhere, wondering at His miracles; so that John had not in Him then an example of suffering. Nevertheless from his childhood upwards he led that strict and penitential life!

Now, all I can think or say is this; there you have the truth of my proposition fully proved: the penitent John is the greatest miracle! And let me repeat with St. Thomas: John was made by God a prodigy of sanctity, a miracle of all perfection, and an admirable spectacle of all virtue to all ages. If any one asks me, then, why, according to the gospel, John worked no miracle, I shall answer in the words of the same St. Thomas: "He was not in need of miracles, for everything in him, if you rightly consider it, was a miracle;"<sup>4</sup> and his penance alone was the greatest miracle of all!

Hence John  
is the  
greatest  
miracle.

<sup>1</sup> Pudeat sub spinoso capite membrum esse delicatum.

<sup>2</sup> Qui non accipit crucem suam et sequitur me, non est me dignus.—Matt. x. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Quos præscivit, et prædestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.—Rom. viii. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Sed ne signis quidem indiguit: quidquid in eo erat, si recte inspicis, signum erat.

Exhortation  
to penance  
to those  
who have  
sinned.

Christians, what are our thoughts on this? We wonder at the innocence and the great austerity of the life of St. John. And is that all? Is that to be the only fruit of the panegyric you have just heard? Oh, if so I had better have kept silent, and you would then perhaps have gone away just as well off. No; we must bring home something better. Let us, then, briefly enter into ourselves and see what manner of life we have been leading hitherto. Are we all so innocent, I will not say as St. John, but so that we can say with truth that we have never offended God by mortal sin, and can we venture to boast as Job did: "My heart doth not reprehend me in all my life"?<sup>1</sup> Can we say that with truth? Alas, must we not most of us confess with the penitent David: "To Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee"?<sup>2</sup> Alas, what a heap of sins we shall find in our consciences that we have committed from youth upwards in thought, word, and deed! But where is our penance? We have disclosed our sins in confession, and performed the penance enjoined by our confessor; and thus we imagine we have fully atoned to God. We sleep just as peacefully as before; we laugh and amuse ourselves as unrestrainedly as before; we eat and drink to satiety as before; we enjoy ourselves as if we had never done any wrong. Fasting, mortification, wearing penitential garments and chastening the flesh we leave to religious in their convents; those things are not for us. Truly, that is a fine way of doing penance! A fine way of atoning for the pains of hell that we have merited so often! Do we think we shall thus find the road to heaven, which penitent and innocent servants of God had to work so hard for? No, no, that will not do! He who has sinned must do penance and often deprive himself even of lawful pleasures and delights, and withdraw those things from the flesh even against his natural inclination, since he has enjoyed forbidden pleasures against the will of God. Wanton eyes, curious ears, talkative, uncharitable tongue, unchaste, unjust hands, impure, vindictive hearts, dissolute, dissipated flesh, what else have you been but arms of malice to make war with on the most high God? So St. Paul calls them when he says: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin." What is then more just than to take up arms against those that have made war on God? And so it is. "Present yourselves

<sup>1</sup> Neque enim reprehendit me cor meum in omni vita mea.—Job xxvii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci.—Ps. l. 6.



to God," continues the Apostle, "as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of justice unto God,"<sup>1</sup> that wage war on themselves. In a word, he who has ever sinned grievously is in need of penance.

And if we have never sinned? if we are innocent? Ah, would I might say that of myself! But supposing we are all in our first innocence, and have never committed mortal sin; yet we may sin, and oh, how easy it is for us to sin! We all have natural inclinations and desires, no matter how good we may be, which we inherit from our forefather Adam, and which will never be completely extirpated. How are we to restrain and keep them in check, unless we often do violence to ourselves, and call in the aid of frequent mortification and self-denial? We know by experience that he who wishes to keep free from sin must carefully avoid the occasions and dangers that lead to it; for as the Holy Ghost says by the Wise Ecclesiasticus: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it."<sup>2</sup> Now the wanton flesh and our outward senses are the most frequent and dangerous occasions of sin to us: that is to say, when we think we may look at, hear, say, taste, and feel all we wish; and mortification and self-denial are the means of cutting off those occasions and dangers. In a word, a delicate, comfortable life, in which one seeks to gratify all his senses, cannot long continue without sin. A soft and luxurious life cannot lead to heaven, of which Christ has said: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."<sup>3</sup> A soft, easy life is not at all in harmony with the life of our suffering and crucified Lord and with the lives of His saints. And them we must necessarily follow, and with them take up our cross daily, if we hope with them to enter into glory. Therefore, even if we are the most innocent, we must still do penance.

To the innocent, to preserve their virtue by penance, and imitate Christ and His saints.

But, my God, why do I talk so much about innocence, which I have long ago and so often lost? I am ashamed, O Lord, to appear before Thee, for Thou hast seen all that I have done. I am sorry from my heart that in spite of all my wickedness I have hitherto lived such an easy life, and so studiously sought my comfort and gratified my senses, as if I had been almost

Resolution to do penance.

<sup>1</sup> Neque exhibeatis membra vestra arma iniquitatis peccato: exhibete vos Deo tanquam ex mortuis viventes, et membra vestra arma justitiæ Deo.—Rom. vi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Qui amat periculum in illo peribit.—Eccles. iii. 27.

<sup>3</sup> A diebus Joannis Baptistæ usque nunc regnum cælorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud.—Matt. xi. 12.

guiltless! I have not been able to bear the least bodily pain nor the least mental trouble without murmuring; I have always granted every freedom to eyes, ears, and the other senses, as if I had never done anything to repent of. Ah, how long is this life to last? I now acknowledge that I must do penance. Yes, O Lord! I will not refuse it. Even if I had never offended Thee, and, alas! my sins are only too grievous and numerous (pardon, O Lord, my presumption!), nay, if I were, like Thy holy precursor St. John, confirmed in grace and assured that I could never commit a sin, yet I should be ashamed to wish to live in comfort and without penance when I adore a God who suffered and died on a cross. I should be ashamed to wish to enter so easily into the heaven which Thy servants have bought so dearly! Therefore I will do penance by patiently bearing all the insults and injuries offered me by men, and by receiving from Thy hand with resignation all the trials and afflictions Thou mayest send me. Moreover I will do penance by constantly overcoming myself, by mortifying my inordinate passions and inclinations, and by frequently chastising my flesh and its senses; so that I may atone for my past sins, be saved from committing sin again, become in some measure like to my crucified Redeemer, and imitate Thy saints, at least at a distance, that I may one day enjoy with them in the kingdom of heaven the consolation Thou hast promised to the penitent. Amen.

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*FORTIETH SERMON.*

**ON ST. JOSEPH, THE PATRON OF OUR FATHERLAND.**

Subject.

The archdiocese of Treves could not have chosen, after the Blessed Virgin, a better patron and protector than St. Joseph.—*Preached on the feast of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

Text.

*Ecce, constitui te super universam terram Ægypti.*—Gen. xli. 41.

“Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt.”

Introduction.

Behold, I have placed you as overseer over my house, as viceroy in my kingdom. So said King Pharaoh to Joseph, the son of Jacob, who having spent many years in the country unknown, was at last brought out of prison. Pharaoh caused him to ascend his chariot with great pomp and show, with a herald crying out before him: "The crier proclaiming that all should bow their knee before him, and that they should know he was made governor over the whole land of Egypt."<sup>1</sup> There was no one at court, no one in the city or the whole land, who did not show Joseph the greatest reverence; and as he was borne along in the royal chariot all praised him with shouts and cries of joy as the saviour of their country, according to the name given him by Pharaoh: "And he turned his name, and called him in the Egyptian tongue the saviour of the world."<sup>2</sup> There, my dear brethren, we have a figure of our great St. Joseph, in whose honor we are now assembled here; and at the same time a figure of the triumph with which God in these days of ours leads him through the world, after he had been many years unknown and hidden, as it were, in the Church of Christ; for now God has caused him to be praised and extolled with public and special devotions by all the people in most Christian countries and kingdoms. "Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land," said Ferdinand, the third Roman emperor of the name, when with unusual solemnity he appointed St. Joseph as the protector of the whole kingdom of Bohemia, and to that end instituted the celebrated and now universally known confraternity. "Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land," said also Leopold the First, when he appointed St. Joseph as the protector of the whole house of Austria, and the ruler of his kingdom and country, begging at the same time all the other electors and princes of the Roman empire to choose the same saint as their patron, especially in Germany, and to show him special honor. And most of those princes followed his example. "Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land," said also one of the first of the archbishops of Treves, Charles Gaspar von der Layen of glorious memory, when he dedicated himself and his whole diocese to St. Joseph and chose him as the father of his country. And what is the mean-

<sup>1</sup> *Clamante ræcone, ut omnes coram eo genu flecterent, et præpositum esse scirent universæ terræ Ægypti.*—Gen. xli. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Veritique nomen ejus, et vocavit eum lingua Ægyptiaca salvatorem mundi.*—Ibid. 45.

ing of this feast, celebrated from his time to ours every year with extraordinary pomp? Why do all the people of Treves assemble here in their different classes and guilds? Is it not to hail with a unanimous shout of joy St. Joseph as the patron and protector of the whole diocese? And there is good reason for the holy custom, my dear brethren, as I shall now prove.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*Archdiocese of Treves! after the Blessed Virgin herself, thou couldst not have chosen a better patron and protector than St. Joseph; such is the whole subject of this panegyric, and its object is to increase love and devotion to this saint in the minds of all.*

This grace, St. Joseph (it is a matter that concerns thy honor!), we beg of thee to obtain for us through Jesus and Mary by the hands of the holy angels.

In olden times Joseph was honored for his wisdom, dignity, and power.

He who is about to choose a patron and protector must look out for one who is able to fulfil all the duties of that office; one who by his high dignity can secure the respect and esteem of the people; one who by his power and influence can protect the land from all dangers. These were the qualities that made Joseph so respected and beloved in all Egypt, for the people had heard of the wonderful wisdom with which he had interpreted most difficult and mysterious dreams. "Seeing God hath showed thee all that thou hast said," said Pharaoh to him, "can I find one wiser, and one like unto thee?"<sup>1</sup> They noticed his diligence and fatherly care, for he caused the abundant crops to be gathered here and there into barns to provide for the coming scarcity. They saw him seated on the throne and giving commands as a second king; they knew that everything was subject to his power, that without his consent not a hand or foot might move in the whole land, and that all favors were to flow from him, as the king said: "Without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."<sup>2</sup> Therefore he attracted to himself even people from far distant lands, who all did homage to him as their common father: "Our life is in thy hand," said

<sup>1</sup> Quia ostendit tibi Deus omnia quæ locutus es, numquid sapientiore et consimilem tui invenire potero?—Gen. xli. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Absque tuo imperio non movebit quisquam manum aut pedem in omni terra Ægypti.—Ibid. 44.



they to him; "only let my lord look favorably upon us, and we will gladly serve the king."<sup>1</sup>

My dear brethren, let the Egyptians congratulate themselves on their Joseph; what he did for them, after all, was to take their goods in pawn during the famine and make slaves of them. We have a much better, higher, and mightier patron in our St. Joseph. A better: and here for brevity's sake I appeal to the testimony of the God of infinite wisdom, who cannot err in His choice, and who, as the Apostle says, appoints capable men for every office and position: "Who hath made us fit ministers."<sup>2</sup> What wisdom and capability must He not have found in St. Joseph! God had to provide for the welfare of a family on earth which was of the utmost importance to Him, which He preferred to all the kingdoms and empires of the world, and from which the salvation of the world was to come. Mary, the Mother of God, the spouse of the Holy Ghost, must have a companion and protector to guard her virginal purity, to live with her outwardly as her husband, and thus keep for a time from public knowledge the Incarnation of the Son of God, whose father he was supposed to be; an opinion that even the devils entertained for a long time, as we learn from the testimony of SS. Ambrose, Basil, Leo, Bernard, Jerome, Damascene, and others. Jesus Christ, the eternal God, required a tutor when He became man in time to bring Him up from His childhood, to feed and clothe Him, to protect Him from dangers; and this tutor's instructions, commands, and advice God was to obey as a most obedient child. Where was a man to be found to whom such an office could be entrusted? If faith did not teach us that he was a man, we should have more reason for asking: Where was a God to be found to rule over a God? "Who was that faithful, that prudent man?" asks Nicephorus, in wonder; "no other man but Joseph was found suited to the office."<sup>3</sup>

The wisdom of St. Joseph is evident from the high position in which God placed him.

Abraham, Moses, David, Isaias, Elias, Daniel—what great men they were! The world still wonders at their very names; but not one of them was chosen by the Almighty as the father of His household; "no other man but Joseph was found suited to the office." Other duties were entrusted to them which were of far less importance, although they seemed weightier in the eyes

One that was not entrusted to any of the patriarchs.

<sup>1</sup> *Salus nostra in manu tua est; respiciat nos tantum dominus noster, et læti serviemus regi.*—Gen. xlvii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Qui idoneos nos fecit ministros.*—II. Cor. iii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Quis fidelis ille, quis prudens ille? Non alius præ Joseph ipso visus est idoneus.*

of the world. "I have made thee a father of many nations," said the Lord to Abraham, "and kings shall come out of thee."<sup>1</sup> "Behold, I have appointed thee the God of Pharaoh,"<sup>2</sup> said the Lord to Moses. He made Isaias a preacher to the kings, princes, and tyrants of the world; Elias a conqueror of the false prophets; Daniel the master of King Nabuchodonosor. But of none of them could the words be said: "He made him master of His house;"<sup>3</sup> "no one but Joseph was found worthy of that office." That God who by His infinite wisdom rules heaven and earth, before whom the principalities tremble, and every knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth must bow: "Under whom they stoop that bear up the world;"<sup>4</sup> that God, I say, as if He were not capable of ruling Himself, gives Himself over to the government and care of Joseph: "He was subject to them."<sup>5</sup> Joseph (who can understand it?) by his teaching and instruction had to help the incarnate God to stand, speak, and work; Joseph by his labor, diligence, care, and protection had to see that God was not in need of begging His bread, that God had food and clothing, that God was not slain by Herod. Boast, ye monarchs and potentates of earth, of the vast dominion and the numerous peoples that are subject to your sway; our patron St. Joseph had but two under his authority; but one of them was God and the other the Mother of God. "Consider," says St. Bernard, "what sort of a man St. Joseph was, and how great his dignity; the Lord appointed him as the comforter of His Mother, as the foster-father of His human nature, and finally as the only most faithful helper of the divine council on earth;"<sup>6</sup> that is, the divine council for the redemption of the human race. Now if while still on earth St. Joseph was entrusted with the care and government of the greatest and noblest family in the world, how prudently have we not acted in giving ourselves over to his care and protection, now that he reigns in glory in heaven?

His great  
dignity ap-  
pears from  
the fact

And what rank and title does he enjoy there? What gained for Joseph in Egypt so much influence and esteem among the people was the title of Father of Pharaoh, that the king himself

<sup>1</sup> *Patrem multarum gentium constitui te, et regesque ex te egredientur.*—Gen. xvii. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecce constitui te Deum Pharaonis.*—Ex. vii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Constituit eum dominum domus suæ.*—Ps. civ. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Sub quo curvantur qui portant orbem.*—Job ix. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Et erat subditus illis.*—Luke ii. 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Conjice quis et qualis homo fuerit ille Joseph; quem constituit Dominus suæ matris solatium, suæ carnis nutritium, solum denique in terris magni concilii adiutorem fidelissimum.*

conferred on him, as he himself said to his brothers: "By the will of God was I sent hither, who hath made me, as it were, a father to Pharaoh."<sup>1</sup> Most ancient and royal race from which our saint descended, nearest blood-relationship with the humanity of Christ! I do not need ye to bring forward the dignity and high position of St. Joseph. Only one thought I will borrow from St. Basil, as he was breaking out into the praises of Mary, and was about to describe her excellence: "Do you wish," he says, "to weave a crown worthy of that great virgin? You may do so in a few words: Mary, of whom was born Jesus."<sup>2</sup> In the same way I may sum up all the praise due to Joseph in the words: Joseph, the father of Jesus, the Son of God. Such is the title given him by Mary, his spouse: "Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."<sup>3</sup> And all men at the time looked on him in the same light: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"<sup>4</sup> Such, too, is the name given him in the gospel of St. Luke: "And His father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him."<sup>5</sup> Christ Himself confirmed this by His childlike obedience and reverence towards him. Joseph was the father of Jesus, not indeed according to nature, but an adopted father, as Augustine says; he was His father by marriage, as Rupert says; he was His father by superiority, as Suarez says; he was His father by law, as Gerson says; he was His father by dignity, as Cajetan says; he was His father by the power which the eternal Father gave him over His Son, as Bernard says. So that as the heavenly Father sent down from heaven the joyful words: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"<sup>6</sup> so Joseph in his workshop and elsewhere might have well boasted, and to the greatest comfort of his heart have thought in the same words: "This is my beloved Son." Oh, how happy I am! This is my beloved Son! What think you of this, holy angels? Behold, all men! This is my Son! He is your King, but my Son! He calls me by the name of father, and I call Him my most beloved Child! What can be imagined or said to redound more to Joseph's honor and dignity?

that he had  
God as his  
son.

<sup>1</sup> Dei voluntate huc missus sum, qui fecit me quasi patrem Pharaonis.—Gen. xlv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Vis coronam tanta virgine dignam texere? Contexes paucis his verbis: Maria, de qua natus est Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> Ecce pater tuus et ego dolentes quærebamus te.—Luke ii. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Nonne hic est fabri filius?—Matt. xlii. 55.

<sup>5</sup> Erat pater ejus et mater mirantes super his quæ dicebantur de illo.—Luke ii. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacui.—Matt. xvii. 5.

Hence, after Mary, he surpasses almost all the other saints in excellence.

Great and holy patron, as long as we compare thee to men and angels we fail in our object, and do not give thee the praise due to thy merit; for there still remains something which elevates thee far above all comparison, namely, the title of Father of Jesus Christ. From this alone St. Bernard, St. Bernardine, St. Isidor, Gerson, and Suarez conclude that Joseph must far excel all the other saints, the Mother of God excepted, in holiness, dignity, and glory. "I do not think I am speaking rashly," says the great theologian Francis Suarez, "when I say that it is a pious and probable opinion that St. Joseph excels all the others in grace and beatitude."<sup>1</sup> But I will leave this question untouched, and not try to rob any of the saints of the glory, holiness, and happiness due to them in my efforts to sound the praises of St. Joseph. All I say is this: As far as the title and honor of being the father of Jesus Christ is concerned, Joseph has not his equal. In this sense St. Bernard says, without the least hesitation: "No one born on this earth, except Joseph, can call himself the father of the Son of God. In this dignity he is without a rival."<sup>2</sup> During the wars of the Spaniards against the Moors, Vasco Fernandez ventured very far into one of the enemy's cities which he was besieging, and in memory of his heroism he caused the inscription to be written on a house: Thus far did Vasco Fernandez come. Another Spaniard saw this, and not wishing to be outdone, went still farther into the town, and wrote on a house: Thus far Vasco Fernandez did not come. Great and holy servants of God! far, very far did you advance in merit, in holiness, in honor and dignity; precursor of Christ, vicar of Christ, apostles of Christ, ye martyrs of Christ, ye friends, brothers, and children of Christ! so far have ye come; but, not to take away anything from your glory, you must confess that you have not gone so far as to be called father of the eternal Son of God; that is a dignity none of you attained; it is an honor that belongs to Joseph alone. Archdiocese of Treves, such is the patron thou hast chosen; couldst thou have made a better choice?

Therefore he has great power with God to pro-

From what we have seen we may without further argument infer the great power and efficacy of the prayers of Joseph with the Almighty in favor of his children, if they only appeal to him

<sup>1</sup> Non existimo temerarium, sed plium potius et vero simile, si quis opinetur sanctum Josephum reliquos omnes in gratia et beatitudine antecellere.—Suarez, 3. p. t. 2. d. 8. sect. 1. and 2.

<sup>2</sup> Nemo natus est in terra, sicut Joseph, qui pater Filii Dei dictus est. Sublimitas sine socio.



in their necessities with confidence. For if the proverb be true: <sup>fect his clients.</sup> The prayer of a friend is a command,<sup>1</sup> so that a discreet man sometimes hesitates to ask his friend for a favor which the latter cannot confer without trouble, although he is sure it would not be denied him, how powerful, then, will not be the prayers of a father to a son who can give everything without difficulty or trouble? If other friends of God are so powerful in obtaining graces for us by appealing to what they did in God's service, as we know by experience; if, as St. Chrysostom says, even the blood of the poor whom we feed by our alms cries unceasingly to heaven to obtain blessings and graces for us from God; what may not be effected by the far more intimate and perfect service which Joseph rendered the Son of God? And how much more efficacious will be the voice of the blood of Jesus Christ, which was nourished by the toil and labor of Joseph?

Let other friends of God say in their prayers: Lord, Thou wert hungry, and we fed Thee; Thou wert thirsty, and we gave Thee to drink; Thou wert naked, and we clothed Thee; Thou wert sick, and we visited Thee; Thou wert a stranger, and we received Thee into our houses; truly they can say that; yet it still remains true that all this was done only for the servants of Christ, Our Lord considering as done to Himself the least benefit conferred on the most lowly of them. But Joseph can say with truth that he did all this to Our Lord in His own person. Remember, O beloved Son, how, when Thou wert a weak little infant, I brought Thee to Egypt and back again; how often, when Thou wert hungry on the road, and I had not a bit of bread for Thee, I ran into the woods to seek some fruit to refresh Thee, how often, when Thou wert thirsty, I ran to get a refreshing drink for Thee from some brook! Often, when Thou wert tired, I took Thee in my arms and carried Thee. Often we were overtaken by night in the open country, and I took off my garments to make a shelter for Thee. With the labor of my hands I supported Thee and Thy Mother for many years in our house at Nazareth. Look now on my children, who have committed themselves to my protection, assured that I can do everything with Thee; they are now calling on me, expecting me to help them in their necessities. There are poor, hungry people who sit at home, hearing their little ones cry out for bread; there is a sick man suffering grievous pain, who desires relief; here

Greater than all the other saints, Mary alone excepted.

<sup>1</sup> Amicus qui rogat, jubet.

are orphans deprived of father and mother, who cry out for help; there an unhappy wife is plunged in grief through the conduct of a jealous, dissipated, or passionate husband; another appeals to me on account of her disobedient children; there a poor widow, harassed by debt, cries out for assistance; and others who are tried in various ways wish at least to obtain from me the grace of patience; others again look for help and strength against the violence of temptations and in the dangers that affect their souls; others wish to have light and understanding to manage well the affairs of state. Most beloved Son, they are my children; canst Thou refuse me what I ask for them?

And he can  
protect us  
in all our  
needs.

My dear Christians, I ask you again, if the friends of God on earth are heard on account of the services they render to Christ in the persons of the poor, can the prayer of the foster-father of Christ be in vain? No! Willingly, O angelic Doctor, do I agree with thy teaching! Some saints, he says, receive from God the grace of being able to help in special necessities, "but to St. Joseph is granted the power of rendering aid in every business and necessity, and to defend and succor all who with devotion and confidence appeal to him."<sup>1</sup> I agree with thee, too, Isidor: "Amongst the patrons whom mortals have at the throne of God, I think that St. Joseph is the most powerful after the Blessed Virgin."<sup>2</sup> I believe firmly, holy mother Teresa, that in all thy necessities thou didst have recourse to this great intercessor St. Joseph, and that thou didst never ask anything from him which thou didst not obtain. Oh, if thou gavest us only the half of thy devotion to and confidence in this holy foster-father of Christ, we should have to make the same confession, and a happy experience would teach us to congratulate ourselves on having such a patron for our city and land!

We are fortunate, then,  
in publicly  
honoring  
St. Joseph  
as our patron.

Ah, I cannot help thinking sometimes, how is it that such a powerful patron and intercessor, such a great saint, remained so long unknown and hidden in the Christian Church; that for so many hundred years no church was erected nor devotion established in his honor? Martyrs, confessors, virgins by the thousand, whose lives have been less holy, have immediately after their happy deaths begun to shine like stars in the firmament; God has made them known to the world by countless miracles, and

<sup>1</sup> At sanctissimo Josepho in omni necessitate et negotio concessum est opitulari, et omnes ad se ple confugientes defendere et fovere.

<sup>2</sup> Inter patronos mortalium apud Deum, arbitror sanctum Josephum post beatissimam Virginem efficaciorum esse.

signified His wish that they should be appealed to as intercessors; but of Joseph nothing, so to speak, was publicly known. Why is that? Segneri gives the correct answer to this question: The sanctity and dignity of Joseph, says he, were so great above those of other saints that it was not meet to publish them too openly in Christendom for some time. But why? Could he not, then, have been more honored? No; for in the first ages of Christianity there were different heresies, the head of which was Cerinthus, who, wishing to lessen the dignity of Christ, taught that He, like other men, was conceived by an earthly father, and that St. Joseph was really His father according to nature. This heresy would certainly have gained more ground if public honor, such as is due to that great Saint, were everywhere shown him. Therefore the Church, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, prudently refrained for a long time from showing him any public signs of veneration; and God did not wish to bring before the world this, His most beloved foster-father, until those later years, when calamities and trials render his help and intercession more necessary, and thus cause his praises and glories to be all the more fervently published the longer they remained hidden in the Church in former times. Blessed, then, be the memories of those princes, kings, and emperors—Ferdinand, Leopold, Charles Gaspar, and their illustrious descendants—who helped to carry out this design of the Almighty! How happy we are, my dear brethren, in being reserved for these times, in which we can boast of the help and protection of this Saint in our necessities!

And still happier should we be if our devotion, confidence, and love for him increased more and more. So shall it be, most holy Joseph! We wish and desire to remain under thy protection and patronage, under which the archdiocese of Treves placed itself; and as this land in general chose thee, so do we now in particular each and every one of us choose thee, with renewed desires and the assurance of our fidelity, as our patron and father. In future not a week in the year shall pass in which we shall not set apart a day in thy honor, nor a day in which we shall not perform some special act of devotion to thee. All we ask of thee, since thou canst do everything with thy divine Son and thy virginal Spouse, is that we may be faithful to thee in confidence, true love, and devotion till the day of our death; and then we may comfort ourselves with the assurance that thou wilt protect our fatherland and our city with paternal care from all

Recommendation to him, and resolve to honor him constantly.

dangers, hear our prayers in our necessities, and, above all, in the hour of death, in our last agony, by thy help take our souls to thyself and thy Son in heaven. Amen.

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FORTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON JOSEPH'S CONFORMITY WITH THE WILL OF GOD.

Subject.

Joseph was always satisfied with the Lord and with His will: 1. In his life; 2. In his death.—*Preached on the feast of St. Joseph.*

Text.

*Joseph autem vir ejus, cum esset justus.*—Matt. i. 19.  
“Joseph, her husband, being a just man.”

Introduction.

A just man is one who stands well with God in his conscience, and is always in conformity with God and His will. For if I wish to know whether a line is straight or not, all I have to do is to take the rule and lay it along the line; if the latter deflects from the rule in one way or the other it is not a straight line. A just man can always live satisfied with and rejoicing in the Lord, and he can die satisfied with and rejoicing in the Lord, as I have shown on a former occasion. My dear brethren, you have a perfect model of this conformity in him whom this day calls on us to honor, and whom our archdiocese has chosen as its special patron, the great St. Joseph.

Plan of Discourse.

*Joseph was always satisfied with the Lord and with His will; there you have the whole subject of this sermon. Joseph was satisfied with the Lord during his life: the first point. Joseph was satisfied with the Lord in his death: the second point. Let us, too, thus live and die satisfied with the Lord: such shall be the moral lesson.*

Obtain for us the grace to act up to it, O holy St. Joseph, through Jesus and Mary, by the hands of the holy angels!

it is a great  
virtue to be

To be resigned to the will of God, to be joyful and contented in the Lord, to be ready and willing to submit to all His decrees

when things are going according to our wishes, is indeed the praiseworthy virtue of the just man, and one that God Himself approved of in His servant Job, when the latter was still prosperous and had not yet tasted the bitterness of affliction. But, after all, it is not such a very wonderful matter to be always satisfied with one who has never contradicted us, but always looked on us with favor, greeted us with a smiling countenance, and endowed us with a bounteous hand. Moreover, it is one thing to offer one's self to bear a heavy burden which is not to be imposed for a considerable time, and another to feel the weight of it on one's shoulders, and yet bear it readily; in the one case the burden is felt only in the imagination and in the promptitude of the will; in the latter it actually weighs one down and makes itself felt in reality. What beautiful resolutions we sometimes make during prayer in time of spiritual consolation! Then, with the zealous Peter, we would wish to go to death for Christ; but when there is question of really suffering, of bearing some little cross or stroke of adversity for God's sake, what sour faces we make! Then it costs us trouble enough to follow Christ at a distance, with downcast hearts and sad demeanor, like Peter.

always re-  
signed to  
the will of  
God in ad-  
versity.

Perhaps, then, you wonder, my dear brethren, that I try to find out something in praise of St. Joseph from the fact that he acted as a great hero in being always satisfied and contented with the will of God. Why should he not have been? If ever a man in the world had cause for leading a joyous and contented life, it was Joseph. For what greater good fortune could he have expected than to be the foster-father and to be called the father of Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal God? Than to have as his spouse that most blessed virgin whom the princes of heaven honor with the utmost reverence as their queen? The mere recollection of the name of Jesus fills St. Bernard with overwhelming joy: "Jesus, sweet to the memory, and giving true joy to the heart; but sweeter than honey and all sweetness is His sweet presence."<sup>1</sup> What must then have been the joy of Joseph in always being in the presence of Jesus and Mary, holding to the one the relations of a father to his child, and to the other those of a most chaste spouse with his virginal bride? Wherever he turned his eyes, he saw one or other of them; if he sat at table, his companions were Jesus and Mary; if he was employed in his

St. Joseph  
had indeed,  
during his  
life, the  
happiness of  
the society  
of Jesus  
and Mary.

<sup>1</sup> *Jesu dulcis memoria, dāne vera cordis gaudia; sed super mel et omnia ejus dulcis præsentiā.*



workshop, the divine Child was with him as his apprentice. Oh, who can imagine the consolation that filled the heart of Joseph with two such amiable companions! "Heaven," says Gerson, "envied such inhabitants to the earth."<sup>1</sup> And therefore Joseph had good reason to be satisfied with the Lord.

Yet he had also trials to bear: his lowly condition.

I acknowledge it, my dear brethren, but the same God who is wont to mingle joy and sorrow for His devout servants on earth did not wish to spare the foster-father of His Son, but gave him frequent opportunities of proving his virtue. I will say nothing now of the poor condition, lowly in the eyes of the world, in which Joseph lived, for before and after the birth of Christ he had to earn his bread by his labor, although he was descended from royal blood, and had as his ancestors great and mighty monarchs whom God Himself had placed on the throne. And it is no small matter for a man who has come down in the world to be satisfied with the divine will. There is nothing more humiliating to one of rich and noble descent than to be forced to live in poverty and lowliness; and I take as witnesses to the truth of this all who have had experience of it. And yet Joseph was contented and happy in his poverty, because such was the will of God, even before he had the happiness of seeing the Saviour. He was satisfied as long as he could by his toil support himself, and afterwards that God to whose service he had dedicated his whole life.

Trials before and in the birth of Christ.

Was it not a hard trial for him, as the gospel of to-day tells us, fluctuating as he was between hope and fear, love and grief, to be compelled to think it necessary for him to put away Mary, his most beloved spouse? And yet, as St. Jerome, quoted by Cornelius à Lapide, says, he did not even entertain a wrong suspicion of the Blessed Virgin, but left the mystery which he could not understand, and himself, as well, in the hands of Providence, without a murmur, until the angel appeared to him and explained all. Was it not a hard and bitter thing for him, when the Blessed Virgin was about to bring forth the Saviour, to arrive at Bethlehem in the depth of winter, and find all the inns of the place closed against him, so that he was obliged to find shelter in an abandoned stable, exposed to wind and weather, where there was neither chair nor bed, fire nor hearth, food nor comfort of any kind? Truly, the greater his love for the Blessed Virgin, the more intense his desire to behold the Son of God, the more violent and bitter must also have been his grief and anguish at seeing

<sup>1</sup> *Invidebat terris tales habitatores cœlum.*

the poverty and destitution to which they were abandoned. But such was the will of God, and therefore Joseph was quite satisfied.

Was it not a hard and bitter thing, and therefore one that could not be accomplished without an heroic resignation on his part to the divine will, to have to fly into Egypt with Mary and her Child at the command of the angel? "Arise," said the angel to him, "and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee"?<sup>1</sup> Truly, the command was a hard one! Let us consider the circumstances of it briefly.

Especially  
in the flight  
into Egypt

Arise, and fly; such was the order. When? at what time? In the middle of the night, for the angel appeared to him during his sleep, and that, too, in the depth of winter. Fly; with whom? With the Child and His Mother. Fly; whither? Into the unknown, wild, and far-off land of Egypt. Fly; how long were they to remain there? "Be there until I shall tell thee." And why? "For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."<sup>2</sup> And behold, Joseph starts off at once, without asking any questions, and without a moment's hesitation: "Who arose, and took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt."<sup>3</sup> Had he not good reason for objecting, and saying to the angel, as St. Chrysostom remarks: But why should I fly? Why should I go into that terrible land? "from my own country, into exile; from my friends, among strangers; from the chosen people of God, to idolaters; from the holy temple in Jerusalem, to the shrines of idols in Egypt?"<sup>4</sup> where there is no one who knows us? no one whom we know? Who will provide us with the means of livelihood? Where shall we find a house to shelter us? Is there no nook or corner in Judea where the Child may be hidden with His own friends? Why should we have to go into such a remote, heathen land? And if we must go, at least let us wait till to-morrow, and have the daylight for our journey! Why should I depart in the dark night? The Child is young and small, the Mother weak and tender; I do not know the way; I have not a farthing of money for food; let us at all events make the preparations necessary for such a long and toilsome road. No! Joseph was ready at the least sign

<sup>1</sup> Surge, et accipe puerum et matrem ejus, et fuge in Ægyptum, et esto ibi usque dum dicam tibi.—Matt. ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Futurum est enim ut Herodes quærat puerum ad perdendum eum.—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Qui consurgens, accepit puerum et matrem ejus nocte, et secessit in Ægyptum.—Ibid. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ex patria in exilium, a meis ad extraneos, ad sacrilegos a sanctis, a templo Dei sancto quod est in Jerusalem, ad fana dæmonum, quæ sunt in Ægypto?—S. Chrys. Hom. 8. in Matt.

that God gave him by the angel: "Who arose and took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt;" in the dark night, without provisions, ignorant of the way, and yet without any anxiety as to what should happen to him. He placed all his care in the hands of that God who had commanded him to set out. But, continues St. Chrysostom, if he refrained from asking questions about his own comforts, he might at least have made some pretext of considering the honor of the Saviour, and said: "Thou, O dear angel, hast said that this Child will save His people; and now He cannot save Himself from danger, but we are obliged to take to flight?"<sup>1</sup> What will the shepherds think who came here to adore Him? What will all think who have heard that He is the Saviour of the world? Is that the great Son of God? they will say; and must He now meanly seek safety in flight, because He is unable to protect Himself from the attacks of a mortal man otherwise? Cannot He who called the three kings from the East to adore Him and do homage to Him as God—cannot He win the heart of Herod, or, if the latter is quite hardened in his rage and presumption, at least avoid his attacks in some other manner than by taking flight so hastily? All that hear of it shall think themselves deceived, and be ashamed of having believed the Child to be the Messias. And if He must fly, why not allow us to go into the East, to those three kings, who will receive us with due honor, and before all their people acknowledge and adore the Child as God? But Joseph said nothing of the kind; it was enough for him to know the will of God. "He who has learned perfect obedience," says St. Gregory, "does not know how to criticise or ask questions;"<sup>2</sup> he resigns himself completely to the will of God. It is not for him to ask: Why is this, or that? Why should I do so? Why at such an inconvenient time? It was a question of the kind that the hellish serpent suggested to the woman: "And he said to the woman: Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?"<sup>3</sup> Far be such questioning from the obedient Joseph! far, therefore, from the just Joseph! Arise, and fly, said the angel. And he got up at once and fled; it was all one to him how he should find the way, how

<sup>1</sup> Tu, chare angele, paulo ante dicebas: quia puer hic salvabit populum suum; et nunc seipsum quidem non potest de periculis liberare, sed fuga nobis necessaria est?

<sup>2</sup> Nescit scrutari, et interrogare, quisquis perfecte didicit obedire.

<sup>3</sup> Qui dixit ad mulierem: cur præcepit vobis Deus ut non comederetis de omni ligno paradisi?—Gen. iii. 1.

he should fare, how live in Egypt, how long he was to remain there; all this he left to the will and providence of God, who commanded him to set out; and with that will he was satisfied.

Nay, I may say that while he was in the cottage at Nazareth, after his return from Egypt, although he had the great comfort of living in the Holy Family, yet Joseph was never without secret sorrow and interior trials; for without doubt Our Lord, who foretold His passion and death to His disciples, must also have spoken of them to His mother and foster-father. How that revelation must have pained the heart of Joseph I leave you to judge, fathers and mothers, who know what it is to have even a suspicion of misfortune or calamity to your children. What bitter grief it must have caused him to see Jesus standing at his side, working and helping him at his trade, and to think, at the same time: Those hands shall one day be pierced with the nails; this foster-son of mine shall be fastened to the cross, and held up to the scorn and mockery of the world! Meanwhile he was satisfied with it all, since such was the will of the heavenly Father.

In the daily society of Christ: in all of which he was completely resigned to the will of God.

O holy St. Joseph, what a beautiful example thou hast left to posterity! But how it puts to shame my inordinate anxiety, trouble, disquiet, fear, impatience, chagrin, and annoyance when any contradiction happens to me! How it puts to shame my little confidence in the providence of God when any evil threatens; my dissatisfaction with the divine will when the evil actually happens! Ah, imprint deeply on my heart and the hearts of all present this day the words: Such is the will of God; so that we may never forget them, and may find encouragement and contentment in them in all the accidents of life. Truly, my dear brethren, that is the foundation of all contentment in a man as long as he lives on this earth; to know, namely, that everything, sin alone excepted, that happens in this world is according to the decree of the almighty God. "Whatever happens against your will," says St. Augustine, "you must know does not happen unless according to the will of God, the providence of God, the command of God, the laws of God;"<sup>1</sup> and indeed it is for your greater good. Hence when you sometimes think with disgust and discontent: That man is rich, and lives in abundance, while I am poor, and have to suffer hunger and thirst;

Like him, we should be always satisfied.

<sup>1</sup> Quidquid accidit contra voluntatem tuam noveris id non accidere nisi ex voluntate Dei, de providentia Dei, de nutu Dei, de legibus Dei.—S. Aug. in Ps. cxlviii.



remember, at the same time, to your consolation and comfort: such is the will of God. That man is in a high position, and I am but as the dust under his feet: such is the will of God; that man is strong and healthy, while I am always sickly and delicate: such is the will of God; everything that man puts his hand to thrives, while I am always unlucky: such is the will of God; the one child is deformed, the best son lies dangerously ill, the father, the mother, the husband, the wife is dead; that misfortune has happened me, that lawsuit is lost, and so on: such is the will of God. God wishes things to be so, and that, too, for my greater good; then I can and must be satisfied, and, with St. Joseph, say with a joyful and contented spirit what I daily ask and pray for to my heavenly Father: Thy will be done! Not as I will, but as Thou wilt. Do with me and all mine as seems good to Thee! In this, as I have often told you, consists real piety and true perfection and holiness; namely, to do, omit, suffer, what, when, how, and because God wills, be it in little and mean or in great and wonderful and astonishing things. In this consists a man's true happiness, the greatest he can enjoy on earth; namely, to resign himself fully to God's providence, and be always satisfied with the divine will and decree. In this sense the words of the Wise Man are beyond a doubt: "Whatsoever shall befall the just man it shall not make him sad."<sup>1</sup> Whereupon Salvianus says: Nothing makes the just man sad; for if he is humbled, it is according to his desire, since it is the will of God; if he is poor, he wishes to be so, because it is pleasing to God; and as he wills all that God wills, he always has what he wants, and how he wants it, during his life. Even death itself does not frighten the just man; he is ready to die, if such is the will of God. And with regard to this latter point, again you have a perfect model in St. Joseph. For he was satisfied with the Lord, not only during his life, but also in his death, which he accepted willingly and readily, at the command of God, as we shall briefly see in the

### Second Part.

The death of Joseph was hard, because it separated him from

Whenever the question is asked: Who had the most joyful and happy death, our thoughts usually revert to St. Joseph; for although the Holy Scriptures say nothing express on the matter, the general opinion of the holy Fathers and other authors is that he died before Our Lord, and in the presence of Jesus and Mary.

<sup>1</sup> Non contristabit iustum quidquid ei acciderit.—Prov. xii. 21.



Here again it might seem as if he had not much to boast of in being willing to accept death under such circumstances, and in being content to die. Oh, our hearts begin to bound with joy and desire at the bare thought of it! Ah, we say, who would not die sweetly and peaceably with Jesus on one side and Mary on the other to close his eyes! But, my dear brethren, from that very circumstance I conclude that the death of Joseph must have been very hard and bitter, only that he was so just and knew so well how to be resigned to the will of God. For in the first place, how is it that even a good and holy man has sometimes a great horror of death when he thinks of it being close at hand? From what else can that come, but from the natural and inborn desire that all men feel to be and to remain with those whom they love, who love them, and from whom they know that death is about to separate them violently? “Doth bitter death separate in this manner?”<sup>1</sup> I think most people with that king of the Amalecites. What is harder and more bitter than for a father to leave his wife and dear children by a premature death, without the hope of ever seeing them again in this life? Indeed, the relations of the dying man are often kept away from his death-bed, lest they should add by their presence to his pains. Now, was there ever a spouse dearer to her husband than Mary to St. Joseph? Had ever father a more loving child than Jesus was to him, in whose presence he found his daily consolation, as we have seen already? And now death had come to separate him from this most agreeable and loved company! Was he not sorely troubled when, as St. Luke describes, he lost the Child Jesus, who had remained behind in the temple for three days? How he grieved at having to be without Him even for that short time! And the Mother of God gave expression to the sorrow that he concealed in his heart: “Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.”<sup>2</sup> What, then, must have been his feelings when he saw that he was about to die, and that he would never again on earth lay eyes on those whom he loved so dearly?

Again, if ever he had reason for wishing for a longer life he had it then. It is chiefly anxiety for their children that makes parents desirous of living longer, and therefore you often hear them sighing: Oh, how will my poor children fare when I am gone!

his beloved family.

On account of a just desire for a longer life

<sup>1</sup> *Secine separat amara mors?*—I. Kings xv. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Fill, quid fecisti nobis sic? ecce pater tuus et ego dolentes quærebamus te.*—Luke ii. 48.

If I only saw my son, my daughter settled I should die contented! And do we think that Joseph had lost all natural affections and inclinations? Must he not have felt a wish to know how things would go with Christ, the Son of God? to see and, to his great delight, hear his supposed Son publicly preaching the gospel, healing the sick, raising the dead, and performing all sorts of wonders, and how, after His death, He would draw the whole world to adore Him? But that consolation was denied him; he had to die.

On account  
of *COL 2* to  
*III 30.*

And, most bitter of all, to what place had he to go after death? O just and holy men, do not complain of death; be neither troubled nor afflicted at the idea of leaving and being parted from your dear ones, for you are going to a far better place, into heaven, where countless friends of God, along with all the angels, await you, in whose society you will rejoice forever! And, as I have said on a former occasion, this is a consideration that makes a pious man on his death-bed feel comfortable and happy at the thought of leaving the world; for he says to himself: What I leave here is very little, and for that I shall be placed over many things, and enter into the joy of my Lord. Hence I am not surprised that so many saints longed eagerly for death, and prepared for it as for a joyous wedding feast. "I am straitened," says the Apostle, I suffer violence, "having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ."<sup>1</sup> I believe thee, holy Apostle; thou hast good reason for thy desire! Why? He answers: "For we know if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven;" thither all my desires tend; "for in this also we groan, desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation that is from heaven."<sup>2</sup> The same sure hope inspired others with such joy that they could not hide it at the approach of death, but were forced to show it openly, and with joyful accents to sing: *Te Deum laudamus!* Others, with Simeon, cried out: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord! according to Thy word, in peace;"<sup>3</sup> others, with David: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coarctor; desiderium habens dissolvi et esse cum Christo.—Philipp. i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Scimus enim quoniam si terrestris domus nostra hujus habitationis dissolvatur, quod ædificationem ex Deo habemus, domum non manufactam, æternam in cœlis. Nam et in hoc ingemiscimus, habitationem nostram, quæ de cœlo est, superindui cupientes.—II. Cor. 7. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace.—Luke ii. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus.—Ps. cxxi. 1.

“Come, my soul, my sister, my spouse,”<sup>1</sup> said St. Jerome, speaking to death. Our St. Aloysius began, with smiling face, to sing on his death-bed: “We go with joy! we go with joy!”<sup>2</sup> Whither? asked a Father who was standing by. “To heaven! to heaven!”<sup>3</sup> But where had Joseph to go after death? To heaven? No, indeed! The door was still shut fast, nor was it opened until Christ entered, after death, in triumph with His saints. Where had Joseph to go meanwhile? To a gloomy hole in the earth, to the limbo of the fathers, where those poor souls had to wait for their redemption, for they could not come to that God whom they knew to be their only Good, and whom they desired to see; not otherwise than a son, who, on his return from a long journey, stands on one side of a river, looking with many a sigh at his father's house, longing to enter it after twenty years' absence, but cannot do so because he has not a boat to carry him over. Hear the heartrending sighs with which those poor souls in the days of old implored the obdurate heaven and earth as well: “Oh, that thou wouldst rend the heavens!”<sup>4</sup> Ah, that they would send down the Saviour! “Let the earth be opened and bud forth a saviour.”<sup>5</sup> Now think of this, my dear brethren, and see whether it would not have pleased him better to have remained longer on earth, and to have enjoyed the heaven he found in the society of Jesus and Mary!

O dear Lord! is it thus Thou allowest Thy dear foster-father to leave Thee, and to go “into the region of the shadow of death”?<sup>6</sup> King Ezechias, when his death was foretold to him, begged of Thy Father for a respite in the following mournful prayer: “I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before Thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight.”<sup>7</sup> And Thy Father heard him, and prolonged his life for fifteen years, as Isaias tells us. And couldst not Thou, divine Son, have obtained a similar favor for Thy foster-father, and kept him in life until he might have entered heaven gloriously with Thee? Hast Thou not

Yet he did not wish to live longer, but in this, too, was fully resigned to the will of God.

<sup>1</sup> Veni, anima mea, soror mea, sponsa!

<sup>2</sup> Lætantes imus! lætantes imus!

<sup>3</sup> Ad cælum! ad cælum!

<sup>4</sup> Utinam dirumperes cœlos.—Is. lxiv. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Aperiatur terra, et germinet salvatorem.—Ibid. xlv. 8.

<sup>6</sup> In regionem umbræ mortis.—Ibid. ix. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Obsecro Domine, memento quæso, quomodo ambulaverim coram te in veritate, et in corde perfecto, et quod bonum est in oculis tuis fecerim.—Ibid. xxxviii. 3.

said: "All things are delivered to Me by My Father"?<sup>1</sup> Didst Thou not restore to the widow of Naim her dead son, and raise from the grave Lazarus, who was already beginning to decay? And when Thy friends remembered the premature death of Joseph, could they not with reason have said of Thee, as the Jews did: "Could not He that opened the eyes of the man born blind have caused that this man should not die?"<sup>2</sup> Might they not have wondered why Thou who didst raise the dead to life couldst not prolong Joseph's life, for a time at least? Was the prayer of Thy foster-father, then, of less efficacy with Thee than that of King Ezechias? I beseech Thee, O Son! he might have said with much more reason than Ezechias, remember how I have walked before Thee; remember the fatherly care I bestowed on Thee from Thy childhood! Remember how often I have carried Thee in my arms! Remember how I saved Thee from the fury of Herod, and how for Thy sake I had to undertake long journeys here and there, and to fly with Thee into Egypt! Remember how I labored in the sweat of my brow to find food for Thee! So might Joseph have prayed, and he would assuredly have been heard; but the thought of such a prayer never even entered his mind. For he had learned from the divine Son, who was always subject to him, to resign himself cheerfully even to such a death, since it was the will of God. He who during his life set out for the wild land of Egypt in the middle of the night, without any provision for the journey, at the first word of the angel, and without a word of opposition, now, with the same readiness, not hesitating a moment, sets out on his journey to limbo. This one thought was enough for him: such is the will of God.

Exhortation and resolution, after his example, to resign ourselves to the will of God.

My dear brethren, it is time for me to conclude. There you have a perfect model of resignation to the divine will, as I promised to give it you. St. Joseph was satisfied with the Lord's will during his life, satisfied with it in his death, hard though it was for him. And learn this, too: the best means of ensuring a happy death is to offer one's self to the Lord to die how, when, and where it may be pleasing to Him. Hear St. Augustine: "There are some who say that they do not wish to die that they may become more perfect, whereas their perfection consists in

<sup>1</sup> *Omnia mihi tradita sunt a Patre meo.*—Luke x. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Non poterat hic, qui aperuit oculos caeci nati, facere ut hic non moreretur?*—John xi. 37.

their being willing to die.”<sup>1</sup> And what he means by this is: He who desires to become perfect must prepare to live so that he may be willing to die at any hour or moment when the Creator gives the sign; for we cannot offer to God a more agreeable sacrifice than to give Him, according to His will, that which we hold most dear of all things, namely, our life. Therefore I conclude with St. John Chrysostom: “Let us offer to God as a gift what we are obliged to offer Him as a debt.”<sup>2</sup> Let us live piously, holily, and according to the will of God, and then nothing will prevent us from being willing to die according to the will of God! Obtain for us this willingness and readiness, O holy St. Joseph! And if fear or anguish should trouble us on our death-beds, do thou assist us with those whose hands closed thy eyes in death, that is, with Jesus and Mary; and then, after thy example, we, too, shall die contented. Amen.

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FORTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON ST. JOSEPH AS THE PATRON OF THE DYING.

Subject.

St. Joseph is a comforter and helper in the extreme necessity of approaching death; therefore he should be constantly invoked by us all, and with the most tender devotion and reverence.—  
*Preached on the feast of St. Joseph.*

Text.

*Cumque appropinquare cerneret diem mortis suæ, vocavit filium suum Joseph.*—Gen. xlvii. 29.

“And when he saw that the day of his death drew nigh, he called his son Joseph.”

Introduction.

The sole earthly comfort of the aged Jacob was his son Joseph; and when the old patriarch heard that his dear child was still alive, “he awaked, as it were, out of a deep sleep. . . and he said: It is enough for me if Joseph, my son, be yet living.”<sup>3</sup> And when he had seen him in Egypt, and embraced him, it seemed

<sup>1</sup> Sunt aliqui qui dicunt, ideo se nolle mori, ut proficiant; cum tamen profectus eorum in hoc ipso situs sit, quod mori velint.

<sup>2</sup> Offeramus Dei pro munere, quod pro debito tenemur reddere.

<sup>3</sup> Quasi de gravi somno evigilans . . . et ait: Sufficit mihi si adhuc Joseph filius meus vivit.—Gen. xlv. 26, 28.



as if he had lived long enough and had nothing more left to wish for on earth: "Now shall I die with joy," he exclaimed, "because I have seen thy face."<sup>1</sup> And when he knew the day of his death to be at hand, he called his son Joseph, as if he had no other sons. To him alone he commended himself and the care of his other children; in his arms he wished to die, and his eyes were to be closed by Joseph, as the Lord had promised him: "Joseph also shall put his hands upon thy eyes."<sup>2</sup> My dear brethren, all know well that the Joseph of those days was a figure and symbol of our holy St. Joseph, the foster-father of Christ and the spouse of the Blessed Virgin. O archdiocese of Treves, how well thou hast done in choosing as thy patron this great Saint! Great reason hast thou on this day to congratulate thyself, as thou art doing, by holding this joyful feast in his honor, for Our Lord could not have given thee a mightier or better defender, after His blessed Mother, nor couldst thou have chosen a better consoler in all thy necessities. Happy country, if thou only remainest constant in thy love and confidence to him, and in thy efforts to honor him! More than happy all who in trials and difficulties, and especially at the approach of death, call on St. Joseph and receive from him the great grace of having him to assist at their death and close their eyes! For after Jesus and Mary, there is no one who can better help and console in that dangerous time than he. If I succeed in proving this latter point, I hope and desire with all my heart to awaken in you and me a more firm confidence in, and a zealous, constant devotion and love for this holy patron.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Joseph is a comforter and protector in the extreme necessity of approaching death; therefore he should be invoked by all with the greatest and most tender devotion and reverence. Such is the whole subject of this sermon.*

Most holy St. Joseph, obtain for us that childlike trust and constant reliance on thee from and by those whom thou hast in thy power, that is, from Jesus, thy Child, and Mary, thy spouse! Help us herein, ye holy angels!

It is rare to find a friend

There are many kinds of helpers and friends in this world as long as we live together; most people experience their services

<sup>1</sup> Jam lætus moriar, quia vidi faciem tuam.—Gen. xlv. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph quoque ponet manus suas super oculos tuos.—Ibid. 4.

when they least need them; few can profit by them when really in want. "There is a friend for his own occasion," says the Wise Man, "and he will not abide in the day of thy trouble."<sup>1</sup> As long as things go well, and people may hope for something from you, you need not seek long for friends; they will come in troops of their own accord; but if the wheel of fortune takes a turn, if the time of want comes on, "he will not abide;" there are few who will stand by you; the most of them will turn their backs on you, and say to themselves: I must look after myself. Then, too, others are afraid of showing their friendship or relationship, lest they might be asked to help, to give proof of their good will, and to assist in the time of need. Then you see that you have built on sand, that the professions of good will were only empty words, mere lip-service, and you learn the truth of the proverb: A friend in need is a friend indeed.

and helper  
in need.

And granted that there are some whose feelings are upright in this respect, and who, like true friends, stand by you in your necessities, where in the whole world can you find any one to help in your most extreme necessity, when you are most in want of help, that is, in the last moments of your life? There is no one in the world who can comfort us then, no matter how near he may be to us, or how great his love for us. In that hour of death, when help and consolation are so badly needed, no comfort, nor assistance, nor counsel can be expected from any one. We may call as much as we please, but in vain; no one can aid, no one can assuage our pain; in the hour of death all friendship is severed, all love is at an end. The dying man alone knows how he feels at heart; he must leave all and depart alone; he must set out on the unknown way to "the house of his eternity."<sup>2</sup>

No one can  
show his  
friendship  
in death,

O necessity above all necessities! "Death is the most terrible of all terrible things!"<sup>3</sup> such is the lament of all philosophers, heathen and Christian. Terrible on account of the past, terrible in the present, terrible on account of the future, terrible in all its circumstances, each one of which is enough to make a cold sweat come over the dying man, and to cause his hair to stand on end! To die is to be separated at once and forever from the world and everything in it; never more to see the light of day; O sad necessity! To die is to be torn away violently from parents,

Although it  
is the great-  
est of all  
needs, in  
which we  
most re-  
quire help.

<sup>1</sup> Est enim amicus secundum tempus suum, et non permanebit in die necessitatis.—Ecclesi. vi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> In domum æternitatis suæ.—Ibid. xii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Terribilium omnium terribilissimum mors!

children, friends, acquaintances, and from all we love best; O bitter necessity! To die is to be robbed of house and home, money and wealth, service and occupation, joy and pleasure; for none of all those things may be taken on the road to eternity; O hard necessity! To die is to depart in the greatest agony of body, in desolation of soul, in the darkness of the glassy eyes, in the dumbness of the tongue, in the loss of the use of all the senses; O painful necessity! To die is to arrive at that time when all our sins, even those we now know little of as to their gravity and number, so that we hold them as grains of mustard-seed, as weak threads—that time when even they will lie like a millstone on our breasts, drawing us down into the abyss; O dolorous necessity! To die is to arrive at that time when the words will be said: “Time shall be no longer.”<sup>1</sup> No more time to atone for past faults, to do penance for sin, to advance the affair of our salvation; O necessity full of anguish! To die is to come to that time when the devil will put forth his utmost strength, summon all his rage and hatred, call together all the forces of hell to bring the poor soul to despair in the last moment, that he may drag it down with him into eternal flames. “The devil is come down, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time;”<sup>2</sup> O dangerous necessity! To die is to travel and not know where to go; O terrible necessity! To die is to go to judgment, in which one is to be pronounced blessed forever or to be lost eternally; O fearful necessity!

In vain  
should we  
then call  
upon our  
friends.

Wo to me if at that time I have no friend whom I can call on for help! Would you then wish to appeal to those who so carefully follow the world and its vanities? whose thoughts and cares from morning till night are directed solely to temporal gain, profit, and wealth? Try if they can give you any assistance in that hour. Death may not be turned aside by money; the Author of life may not be bribed; in that hour rich and poor are on an equality. Wo to you if you have no other consolation to hope for! Call, in your need, on those whose favor you now rely on so confidently, in whose service you now wear out body and soul, for whose sake you now risk soul and conscience; see whether death will have any respect for them. Wo to you if you have no other help to expect! Call, in your need, on that person to

<sup>1</sup> Tempus non erit amplius.—Apoc. x. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Descendit diabolus, habens iram magnam, sciens quod modicum tempus habet.—Ibid. xii. 12.

whom you now give your heart and affections, whose love you consider the greatest good; explain the condition in which you are, and see if help may be looked for from that quarter. Wo to you if you have no other to call upon! Call, in your need, on your parents, your children, your husband, your wife, for whose sake you have borne so much care, labor, and toil, that things might be well with them. Wo to you if you have no one else to appeal to! They will stand around your death-bed, they will shed tears, they will mourn; but to save you from your extremity, go with you into eternity, speak to your Judge for you—that they will not, cannot; that cannot be done by any one on earth.

My dear brethren, why have I spoken of those matters to-day so much in detail? That you may know how highly we are to honor, how diligently to invoke, how earnestly to reverence and love him who can then help and assist us; for we must judge of the value of the help given from the greatness of the need and from the scarcity of help to be hoped for; that will show us the value and advantage of the friend. A helper of that kind, after his virginal spouse, is in a special sense St. Joseph; and if I were assured of his favor and good will, and knew that I could with childlike confidence call on him in my last moments, then, although the hour of death is full of anxiety and terrible anguish and fear, yet would I cry out, with Jacob, cheerfully and joyfully: “Now shall I die with joy, because I have seen thy face.”

St. Joseph is a true friend and protector in the hour of death.

For if it is true that all creatures are subject to Joseph, and must obey the least sign given by him, as the celebrated Gerson asserts, who spared no pains to spread the honor of Joseph throughout the world, and who in the Council of Constance worked hard to have his birthday celebrated in the Church: “It is no wonder,” says he, “that Christ wished all creatures to obey Joseph, since Christ Himself obeyed him;”<sup>1</sup> then in that hour the power of the devil must yield to the power of the protection of Joseph, so that the evil one cannot vex or disturb me. If it is true, as the angelic Doctor St. Thomas of Aquin expressly says, that “it is granted to Joseph to help in all necessities”<sup>2</sup>—and that opinion is confirmed by St. Teresa, so enlightened in all divine things, who says: I know by experience that this glorious Saint helps in all necessities; a confidence that impelled the

Shown from the testimonies of the saints.

<sup>1</sup> Non mirum si Christus voluit ut omnes creature obedirent Josepho, cum et ipse se obediens ei exstiterit.

<sup>2</sup> Sanctissimo Josepho in omni necessitate concessum est opitulari.

Catholic Church, and especially this archdiocese of Treves, to choose St. Joseph as patron—then there is no doubt that the extreme necessity of death is not excepted; for to what purpose should he help us during life if he left us at the hour on which our salvation depends? What good is it to me to have safely sailed the high seas if I am wrecked in port? No; let other saints have from God the power of helping in special cases during life; the Almighty has set no bounds to the power of Joseph in this respect: “It is granted to Joseph to help in all necessities,” without exception, and therefore much more in the hour of death.

From the power of St. Joseph's intercession with Christ.

This power is founded on the two titles of honor that are peculiar to him alone among all the angels and saints; for on the one hand he is the foster-father of his Creator, and on the other the spouse of the Queen of heaven, Mary, by whose hands, as St. Bernard says, God dispenses all His graces. Who could imagine that such a child can deny anything to the request of such a father, or that such a spouse could refuse to grant the prayer of her bridegroom? Yet why do I speak of prayers? They might indeed be necessary to other saints, but not to St. Joseph; he, says Gerson, need not ask anything of Christ; he has but to command and give orders.<sup>1</sup> It is true that other saints confer countless benefits on us by the help of God, but it is by their prayers and entreaties, as servants are wont to entreat their masters, and God Himself addresses them in those terms: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”<sup>2</sup> Or else they speak as courtiers to their sovereign, as David calls the angels: “You ministers of His that do His will.”<sup>3</sup> Or, at the very farthest, as one friend would speak to another, as Christ called His apostles: “I have called you friends.”<sup>4</sup> Joseph, on the other hand, speaks to Him as a father to his son; he need not ask anything of Christ; he has but to command and give orders; he can do what he wishes without entreaty; his authority, his will is enough. Therefore beyond all doubt so powerful a saint can help if he will, even in the extreme necessity of death, more than the other saints; and if I make sure of his friendship by devotion and love to him, what comfort and help may I not expect from him in

<sup>1</sup> Non impetrat, sed imperat; non orat, sed ordinat.

<sup>2</sup> Euge, serve bone et fidelis.—Matt. xxv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ministri ejus qui factis voluntatem ejus.—Ps. cii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Vos autem dixi amicos.—John xv. 15.



that hour, in which, if he abandoned me, he would see his child go down to eternal death?

We find a figure of the departing soul in the Israelites when they were leaving Egypt and had come to the Red Sea. Poor people, what were your feelings on the occasion? "They feared exceedingly," says the Scripture, "and cried to the Lord;"<sup>1</sup> everywhere were heard groanings and lamentations, as if fear and anguish possessed them all. For before them they saw nothing but the sea, that threatened to swallow them up in its waves; if they looked behind they saw Pharaoh and his hosts coming after them, full of rage and fury. And what happened to them? Moses held his rod over the sea, and made a dry path for them to cross over without danger. Why did God work this prodigy by the hand of Moses, since on other occasions it was Aaron who performed miracles by the same rod? In the preceding chapter we read: "Moses took Joseph's bones with him, because he had adjured the children of Israel, saying: God shall visit you; carry out my bones from hence with you."<sup>2</sup> As if, according to some interpreters, the memory of such a great benefit should be coupled with the memory of Joseph, their first benefactor. Be that as it may, we have far more reason for taking this incident as a figure of the power of the intercession of our St. Joseph. My dear brethren, the time shall come when we shall have to travel out of this world into an unknown land, and to arrive at that shore where we shall have nothing before us but the boundless ocean of eternity, and behind us the rage of pursuing demons; before us the fathomless sea of the judgments of God: "Thy judgments are a great deep,"<sup>3</sup> as the Prophet David says; behind us the yelling and gnawing of a disturbed conscience. Oh, what terrible danger we shall then be in! What anguish and dread shall overwhelm us! But even then no true child of Joseph's need be alarmed; his help and assistance shall be far more powerful to bring the departing soul in safety from the world than the dead bones of Joseph of old were to save his people. Ask who was he of whom the Wise Man says that he sat as the husband of the valiant woman among the judges and senators of the land: "Her husband is honorable in the gates, when he sitteth

Explained  
from the fig-  
ures of holy  
Scripture.

<sup>1</sup> *Timuerunt valde, clamaveruntque ad Dominum.—Exod. xiv. 10.*

<sup>2</sup> *Tulit quoque Moyses ossa Joseph secum; eo quod adjurasset filios Israel, dicens: visita-  
bit vos Deus, efferte ossa mea hinc vobiscum.—Ibid. xlii. 19.*

<sup>3</sup> *Judicia tua abyssus multa.—Ps. xxxv. 7.*

among the senators of the land" ?<sup>1</sup> "He was Joseph," answers St. Bonaventure, "who was given as spouse to Mary;"<sup>2</sup> he sits at the gate of eternity, that he may bring his devout clients safely into the city of glory. Again, why did Our Lord wish to suffer the bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemani? Because, says St. Gregory, He wished to represent the terrible anguish we shall feel in the judgment that awaits us at the hour of death."<sup>3</sup> Why did this happen in the garden, and not elsewhere? The great St. Jerome, the Venerable Bede, Suarez, and others believe that the grave of St. Joseph was in the Garden of Olives, and therefore that Our Lord went there according to His wont to pray,<sup>4</sup> as we read in the *Elucidarium Virginis*. Mark, my dear brethren, how when the Lord wishes to represent to us the agony of death He goes to the garden, to the grave of St. Joseph, to let us see that the heavy burden of this last hour will become light for us under the patronage of St. Joseph, and that we should have frequent recourse in our prayers and devotions to this Saint if we wish to enjoy his help and protection at the hour of death.

Confirmed  
by the gen-  
eral opinion  
of the faith-  
ful.

If this interpretation should seem far-fetched and doubtful to some, then I appeal to the general and devout sense of all Christians in the Catholic Church; for when there is question of what sort of a patron any saint is, if the Scripture says nothing of the matter, almost the only means of finding out the truth is to refer to the general sense of the faithful, since God never inspires us with confidence in any saint without having appointed him as our helper in certain things. Look, then, at the statues erected here and there to St. Joseph; generally you will find on them the inscription: "The patron of the dying;"<sup>5</sup> listen to the young people singing hymns in the church; whenever mention is made of St. Joseph you will hear something like the following: O dear St. Joseph, when the fatal hour comes do thou be my patron, and pray for me to the Avenger and Judge;<sup>6</sup> or else: Do thou be the third, with Jesus and Mary, to assist me when my

<sup>1</sup> *Nobilis in portis vir ejus, quando sederit cum senatoribus terræ.*—Prov. xxxi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Hic fuit Joseph, qui datus est Mariæ in sponsum.*

<sup>3</sup> *Appropinquante morte, nostræ mentis in se certamen expressit.*—S. Greg. l. xxv. Moral. c. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Idcirco in horto Gethsemani orare solebat, quia avorum et patris Joseph cadavera includeret.*—*Elucid. Virg.* 2, part. n. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Patronus morientium.*

<sup>6</sup> *Dilecte mi Joseph, si fatalis instet hora, ad vindicem tum Judicem pro me patronus ora.*

last day has come, and death awaits me with its terrors.<sup>1</sup> And what else is the meaning of the custom of repeating the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in the ears of the dying but to encourage them and terrify the demons? Is it not a certain sign that this Saint is regarded as a special helper in the hour of death, being appointed to that office by God?

Oh, if we could look into the hearts and minds of the dying, By experi-  
ence. what consolation and cheerfulness we should find many a one to enjoy, who has been devout to St. Joseph, when he hears that sweet name! If we might call on the departed souls as witnesses, how many would come forward who have been helped by Joseph in their last necessity, and brought safely to the gate of heaven! I cannot refrain from mentioning what I know by personal experience of a certain dying person who was very devout to St. Joseph, and whose name is known to many of you from his learned works; this man, although he had served God in the religious state for many years, began to be exceedingly troubled when the end came near; he grew fearful, anxious, down-spirited, nor could any one succeed in encouraging him; the only answer he would make to them was: Alas! alas! O inscrutable judgment of God! O strict justice of God! how will it be with me when I have to appear before it? At last some one reminded him of St. Joseph, and told him to be of good heart, for the Saint whom he loved so tenderly during life would not abandon him in death. The bare mention of the name seemed to drive away all the clouds from the sick man's mind, and instead of moaning he began to laugh and weep for joy. Shortly before his death he asked some of us who were standing by to sing quietly the hymn he was so accustomed to: Great Joseph, son of David, etc.,<sup>2</sup> from the beginning to the end, and meanwhile he gave every sign of the consolation he experienced by his cheerful countenance and sweet tears. This occurred a few years ago.

My dear brethren, Joseph is a friend, a helper, and a protector So that we  
all have  
good reason  
to honor St.  
Joseph. in the hour of death. I need add no more. And the conclusion we have to draw is evident; after the virgin Mother of God, there is no better helper to whom we can appeal; therefore we all have good reason to honor this patron whom we have chosen with all possible devotion, with childlike confidence and constant love, as long as we live. There is no better helper, for there is

<sup>1</sup> Eja Jesu et Mariæ te conjunge tertium, quando me suprema die mors citabit anxium.

<sup>2</sup> Magne Joseph, filii David.

no greater or more dangerous necessity than that of death, in which, if we are left helpless, it is all up with us forever, and there is no man on earth from whom help can be hoped for then. And we all have reason to seek a helper in this necessity, for it is one that will certainly befall us all, without exception; other calamities are not general; they occur here and there; but neither prayers nor entreaties can ward off the stroke of death; we must all die sooner or later.

Resolution  
to honor  
him better  
in future.

Ah, why have I not thought of this before? Why have I not run to thee, St. Joseph, for refuge long ago? Why have I not placed my confidence in thee? Why have I been so niggardly, slothful, tepid, and cold towards thee; for I have hardly thought of thee, or I have uttered thy name carelessly, without fervor or devotion, in prayers I happened to come across now and then which I said with distracting thoughts. It is true I have not honored thee as thou deservest! I have not loved thee as my own advantage and necessity required! From this moment I declare myself thy zealous servant; and I will renew, preserve, and increase in myself and those belonging to me, as far as I can, a great esteem and respect for thee by daily invoking thee, and by advising and helping others to do the same! Every week, as long I live, I shall fix on a day to be dedicated to thee by some special devotion; no business shall steal the time from me, so as to prevent me from attending public devotions in the church whenever they are held in thy honor. And now I will cry to thee as David did to God: "Depart not from me; for tribulation is very near; for there is none to help me."<sup>1</sup> The tribulation of death is coming nearer and nearer, and no one can aid me! "Be thou my helper; forsake me not."<sup>2</sup> Think of thy own time of need, when the angel said to thee: "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."<sup>3</sup> Ah, great Saint, I shall be in extreme distress one day! A terrible trial shall come upon me; "It will come to pass" that the hellish Herod will seek my soul, with all his hosts, and try to fill it with anguish and destroy it! Arise, then, and take it, thy child, under thy care, that it may not fall a prey to the hellish wolf! "Be thou my helper; forsake

<sup>1</sup> Ne discesseris a me: quoniam tribulatio proxima est: quoniam non est qui adjuvet.—Ps. xxi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Adjutor meus esto, ne derelinquas me.—Ibid. xxvi. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Surge et accipe puerum et matrem ejus, et fuge in Ægyptum. Futurum est enim ut Herodes quærat puerum ad perdendum eum.—Matt. ii. 13.

me not"! "It will come to pass" that my past sins will seek to drive me to despair; arise; be my helper; forsake me not! "It will come to pass" that my strength and vital powers will gradually leave me, that my dying tongue will not be able to call on thee, perhaps, that my glassy eyes will not be able to behold thy picture, that my dead ears will not be able to hear thy sweet name, that I will knock with fear and trembling at the gate of eternity, to appear before the judgment-seat of God; arise, then, and take thy child under thy care; remember the confidence I placed in thy intercession, the prayers I now send forth to thee, and mean to send forth till the end. Be my helper; forsake me not! And then I shall be able to say to myself with contented mind, or to think it, if unable to say it: "Now shall I die with joy," since Joseph is my helper and protector. Amen.



# ON THE HOLY APOSTLES.

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## FORTY-THIRD SERMON.

### ON THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL.

#### Subject.

1. The repentance of St. Peter puts many sinners to shame.
2. The zeal of St. Paul puts many just to shame.—*Preached on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul.*

#### Text.

*Egressus foras, flevit amare.*—Matt. xxvi. 75.

“And going forth, he wept bitterly.”

*Charitas Christi urget nos.*—II. Cor. v. 14.

“The charity of Christ presseth us.”

#### Introduction.

To-day I am obliged to use a twofold text, as it is my intention to sound the praises of the two greatest apostles in this sermon. The first text represents the bitter tears of repentance shed by St. Peter: “Going forth, he wept bitterly.” The other refers to St. Paul, whose love of God allowed him to enjoy neither rest nor ease. “The charity of Christ presseth us.” In both we find much worthy of imitation; the one being an example for sinners, the other for the just. In the first we see a wonderful spirit of repentance for past sins; in the other a wonderful zeal for the honor of Our Lord. This sermon shall be a panegyric of both those apostles, and at the same time show how their conduct puts many Christians to shame. Namely:

#### Plan of Discourse.

*The repentance of St. Peter puts many sinners to shame: the first part. The zeal of St. Paul puts many just to shame: the second part.*

Jesus Christ, whom with Thy apostles we all acknowledge to be the Son of the living God, look on me and all sinners with those eyes with which Thou didst look on Peter, so that, like him, we may weep bitterly for our sins; inflame our hearts with that fire which Thou didst kindle in St. Paul, that with him we may in future love Thee zealously above all things! This we humbly beg of Thee through Mary, the Queen of the apostles, and the intercession of our holy guardian angels. SS. Peter and Paul, lend me some of your zeal and spirit, that I may announce your praise to our own confusion and salutary amendment!

That unhappy night had arrived in which Christ was brought as a prisoner to the house of Caiphias; Peter alone of all the disciples, fearing for himself, yet ashamed also of having run away, and influenced, moreover, by his great love for his divine Master, followed Him at a distance and ventured into the court of the high-priest to see how things would go on. Ah, Peter! it had been better for thee to have remained with the others than to have followed thy divine Master as thou didst, and cause Him such pain. A servant-maid was the first occasion of his shameful fall. "The maid, therefore, that was portress saith to Peter: Art not thou also one of this Man's disciples?"<sup>1</sup> And Peter answered: "I know not what thou sayest."<sup>2</sup> He was again asked if he was not one of the disciples, and he replied with an oath that he knew not the Man.<sup>3</sup> A third time the same question was put to him: "Surely thou art one of them; for thou art also a Galilean. But he began to curse and to swear, saying: I know not this Man of whom you speak."<sup>4</sup> O Peter! here exclaims St. Augustine, where is now the courage with which thou didst dare the whole band of soldiers, and draw thy sword in defence of thy Master? Where are thy words: "I will lay down my life for Thee"?<sup>5</sup> Yet no fetters bind thee, nor art thou threatened with imprisonment and death. The voice of a poor servant was enough to fill thee with terror and utterly prostrate thee! Dost thou not know the Man? Hast thou not already acknowledged Him to be the Son of God? And dost thou now say: I know Him not? See, my dear brethren, how easy it is to

Peter denied Christ three times

<sup>1</sup> Dicit ergo Petro ancilla ostiaria: numquid et tu ex discipulis es hominis istius?—John xviii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Nescio quid dicis.—Matt. xxvi. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Et iterum negavit cum juramento; quia non novi hominem.

<sup>4</sup> Vere ex illis es, nam et Galilæus es. Ille autem cepit anathematizare et jurare, quia nescio hominem istum, quem dicitis.—Mark xiv. 70, 71.

<sup>5</sup> Animam meam pro te ponam.—John xiii. 37.

make a poor weak mortal forget himself and his God! There we have the sin of Peter; now let us see how he did penance.

But he bitterly repented it his whole life long.

Hardly had the crowing of the cock reminded him of his fault, and called to his heart, as the voice of God formerly did to Cain, "What hast thou done?"<sup>1</sup> when he began to shed bitter tears of sorrow: "And going forth, he wept bitterly,"<sup>2</sup> filled with contrition at the thought of having been so ungrateful to his best Friend, his dearest Master. Unhappy me! he must have sighed forth, how can I live any longer, since I have denied life Himself? How can the earth support me, since I have offended its Maker? O wicked mouth, how couldst thou have opened to dare to assert on oath that thou knowest not Him who did thee so much good? O accursed tongue, how couldst thou have so far perjured thyself as to deny Him, who a short time before had fed thee with His body and blood? O grief! O sorrow! Come, ye tears, and overwhelm me; I give myself up to ye completely! And, as the interpreters of the sacred Scriptures say, so great was Peter's sorrow that he hid away and spent in tears the whole time that elapsed until the resurrection of Christ. But this was not enough; he spent all the remainder of his life in constant penance for this one sin. St. Clement, his disciple, tells us that whenever he heard the cock crow, by day or night, he would prostrate himself on the ground and weep bitterly, so that his cheeks were furrowed by the unceasing flow of tears. His food, as St. Gregory Nazianzen says, consisted of nothing but bitter peas; his life was spent in unceasing toil, wandering throughout the world, suffering imprisonment and persecution, in satisfaction for his sin, until his martyrdom on the cross, on which he wished to be nailed with his head downwards, thinking himself unworthy to die like Christ, his divine Master. Just reason indeed, O penitent apostle! just reason hadst thou to bewail bitterly thy sin; but, alas, how the consideration of thy long and painful repentance fills me with consternation and fear!

Like Peter, we often deny God.

What sayest thou to this, my soul? Where are ye now, ye men who are fellow-sinners of mine? "Peter was allowed to deny, and to sin," says St. Chrysostom, "that he might give to all sinners the example of true penance."<sup>3</sup> I need not search long to find sins and sinners; there are only too many of them who

<sup>1</sup> Quid fecisti?—Gen. iv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Et egressus foras, flevit amare.—Matt. xxvi. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Permissus est Petrus negare et peccare, ut omnibus peccatoribus verum poenitentiae daret exemplum.

have imitated Peter in his untruthfulness and sin; but where are the tears? where the contrition and sorrow, after the example of Peter? We sin with Peter, not merely once, nor thrice, but almost every hour and moment; but we hardly weep with Peter even once. Is it not so, my dear brethren? What do we do when we sin. Hear what St. Augustine says: "We deny Christ as often as we commit sin."<sup>1</sup> For as the just confess Christ before the world by keeping the commandments, by doing good works and fulfilling the will of God, so sinners deny Christ by despising His commandments, disobeying His will, and dishonoring Him. "They profess that they know God," says the Apostle, "but in their works they deny Him."<sup>2</sup> Tell me, O sinner! you acknowledge God as your sovereign Lord, whom you are bound to obey in all things; you believe that in your heart, and say it with your mouth; but what do your actions say? If an object agreeable to the senses is proposed to you, and you accept it against the divine law, you say, by your actions, with Peter, I know Him not; I do not now acknowledge Christ as my Master: who has a right to command me? I will not do as He wishes, but as I myself choose. You acknowledge and believe that God is the sovereign Good, and is therefore worthy of all honor and infinite love; but when you love a creature against His law, what else do you do, but say with Peter: I know Him not; I do not acknowledge Him as my sovereign Good; I love something that seems to me better, more beautiful, more deserving of love? You acknowledge and believe that Jesus is your Redeemer and Saviour, who has suffered so much and died on the cross for you, and therefore deserves the most heartfelt gratitude from you; but what do you say by your actions, when you commit sin? I know not the Man; I do not now look on Him as my greatest friend and benefactor, for I do not hesitate to insult and offend Him. You acknowledge and believe that God is a strict judge, who knows how to punish wickedness with the greatest severity; but you go on heaping sin on sin with the utmost carelessness, as if there were neither heaven nor hell; what else does that mean but: I know Him not; I care not for His strictness and justice? You acknowledge and believe that wherever you are—walking, standing, lying down, by day or night—your God is always with you, looking at all your thoughts, words, and actions;

<sup>1</sup> Toties negamus, quoties peccamus.

<sup>2</sup> Confitentur se posse Deum, factis autem negant.—Tit. i. 16.

and yet you think and say and do things that you would shrink from doing before any decent man, nay, even before a vile beggar; what else is that but saying by your actions: I know Him not; I do not care for His presence; I will do what I please in spite of it? What do you believe of Him who is in the church, present in the Blessed Sacrament? Do you know who He is? Yes, your tonguesays, with Peter: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God! But what is the language of your actions? of your want of reverence, your dissolute laughter, your talking, staring about, indecent looks and gestures, and unbecoming salutations? Do these show that you believe in a God really present, that God before whom all in heaven, on earth, and under the earth must bend the knee in awe? By your actions you say: I know Him not; for you would show more respect to any decent man of the world. Thus many Christians profess with their lips that they know God, but in their works they deny Him.

Through  
human re-  
spect, too,  
like him.

And what was the occasion of the denial of Peter? His excessive fear of being apprehended and put to death; the company of the servants of the high-priest brought him to lying, perjury, false swearing, and cursing. O vain fear! O human respect! O wicked dread, I will not say of death, but of some trifling loss! of a slight punishment, of a hard word, an unkind look, the displeasure of one's master, or losing the favor of some mortal, what evil thou dost cause in the world nowadays! How many a one dost thou not bring so far that he thinks more of his parents, his children, his friends, than of his great and sovereign God, most worthy of all love? How often is not God offended and insulted for the sake of pleasing the former? How often is not good omitted and evil of all sorts committed through fear of displeasing one's fellow-man, of incurring the anger of a master, of troubling a beloved person? In a word, the fear of men or of temporal misfortune makes people sin recklessly; they prefer to have God as their enemy than to lose the friendship of men; as if God had done us no good, could do us no harm! "Who looked upon the Almighty as if He could do nothing;"<sup>1</sup> although, according to the words of Christ, He has in His hands a power not possessed by any man or potentate in the world; for He it is that "can destroy both soul and body into hell."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quasi nihil posset facere omnipotens, aestimabant eum.—Job xxii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam.—Matt. x. 28.



O treacherous company! O baleful occasion! were it not for you many thieves would not have denied justice, many of both sexes would not have denied purity, many would not have denied decency and honesty, and many hundred thousand sins would have been removed from the world! Poor weak mortal, why shouldst thou vaunt of the firmness of thy purpose, of thy good resolution? How little it takes to weaken thee, to upset thy reason and common sense, and turn thee from the path of recitude! For it is not necessary that one should threaten thee with the sword or the gallows; nor that the evil one should put forth all his power to tempt thee by offering thee all the goods of the world, as he did to Our Lord: "All these will I give Thee;"<sup>1</sup> the company of a single person, a vile servant, a mean portress, a poor mortal, a look, a caress can, and, if you are not careful, will bring you so far as to make you forget your God, sacrifice heaven, lose your soul, and become a wicked, unchaste, vindictive, perjured man. Would to God that experience had not taught us only too clearly the truth of this in the case of so many unhappy souls! Thus we sin with Peter; I acknowledge it, and the consciences of most men will upbraid them with this truth. And would that we had only sinned thrice, like Peter—nay, that we had not exceeded the hundreth or the thousandth time!

And in a similar occasion.

Meanwhile, what is the worst of all, where are our tears of repentance? where our sincere contrition and satisfaction? When Peter was reminded of his fall by the crowing of the cock he did not lose a moment, but at once left the company that had led him into sin, and went and did penance. How often does the cock crow for you, O sinner! for what else is the voice of conscience? what else the divine inspirations? what else the exhortations of preachers in the pulpit, which St. Gregory well likens to the crowing of the cock? What else do all these say, but: O sinner! arise; you have sinned enough; you have often enough denied your God! Leave that occasion, give back that unjustly acquired property, be reconciled with your enemy; go at once and do penance, otherwise you are lost forever! And what notice do you take of these exhortations? Let who will exhort and cry out to you, you remain seated in the house of Caiphaz, with the maid at the fire-place, in impurity, in your old inveterate bad habits, from day to day, from year to year. I will do penance, you say,

But we rarely bewail those sins, for we defer repentance.

<sup>1</sup> Hæc omnia tibi dabo.—Matt. iv. 9.

but not now. When, then? Oh, later on! Later on! Many a one has been brought to the fire of hell by those words. Later on! the seed and origin of all misfortune. Later on! how long is that for many souls, who keep putting off repentance from day to day, and at last find themselves at the gate of eternity, when repentance is of no avail!

Shown by a  
stumble.

“Man passeth as an image,”<sup>1</sup> says David; like a shadow or a picture. These words are understood by St. Basil of those sinners who always defer repentance, and never carry out their good resolutions. Look at the pictures in your room; here you see a man holding up his hand to strike his enemy; there kneels a St. Jerome about to beat his breast with a stone; there is a St. Francis with a discipline; a St. Augustine with a pen; come to-morrow, or in a year’s time, and you will find them all in the same posture, still about to do the same things; the man will still raise his hand to strike, Jerome raises his with the stone, Francis, with the discipline, Augustine, with the pen. How long have they been doing that? Twenty, thirty years, as long as the pictures are in existence; nor will they cease while a shred of the painting holds together; yet in all that time the sword never touched the enemy, the stone of Jerome never bruised his breast, nor the discipline of Francis his back, nor did the pen of Augustine touch the paper. And how could it be otherwise, for they are but lifeless pictures? “Man passeth as an image.” Many a sinner passes through life like the picture. How long now is it since you opened your mouth to say: I will go to confession; I will amend my life? How long since you raised your hand and thought to yourself: I will make restitution of that ill-gotten property? How long since you resolved to leave that house, that company? It is now a year, and may be many years, since you made up your mind to do those things, and they still remain undone; you are just as you were long ago; you are immovable, like the lifeless picture; your desires for better things were only empty and inefficacious; you did not repent in reality.

Seldom  
have we  
true contri-  
tion.

Bitterly and with many thousand tears did Peter bewail his threefold sin. How do we act? Ah, would that we had even one tear of sincere repentance for a hundred or a thousand sins when we enter the confessional! O confessions of Christians, how different ye are! They all cry: *Peccavi!* I have sinned! I have sinned! I am heartily sorry! But how many who come with

<sup>1</sup> In imagine pertransit homo.—Ps. xxxviii. 7.

that degree of contrition and repentance are rejected by God! If repentance consisted only in the words uttered by the mouth, in the ordinary prayers read out of the book, then I could find vast numbers of true penitents. But sorrow for sin does not consist in words, but in the heart; and as many penitents are not truly contrite of heart, it follows that their sorrow is not earnest, but only apparent, and of no value in the sight of God as far as forgiveness is concerned. Peter, after he had repented of his sin, never again during his life did anything to cause him to repent. But how do matters stand with us in this respect? When, as we imagine, one sin of ours is blotted out in confession we at once set about committing another; and we keep on alternating between confession and sin, sin and confession, thus progressing still farther on the downward path of wickedness, until at last the hour of death comes and we are not able to sin any more.

During his life Peter never ceased to deplore his fault, and to do penance for it; but you, O sinner! who have offended your God perhaps many hundred times, and denied Him, how long do you bewail and do penance for your crimes? I have confessed them, you say. And is that enough? Where is the satisfaction for the punishment you owe to God for your sins? I have performed the penance enjoined on me; my mind is at rest; I need not bother any further. Yet reflect a moment; if your confession is good, and the guilt of your sins remitted, what must you do to satisfy for all the punishment that still remains due to you? There is no other alternative; you must either punish yourself, or God will punish you, as St. Augustine says.<sup>1</sup> Consider whether the laws of decency and gratitude do not require you to try to atone, by leading a strict and holy life, for the insults you have offered the Almighty? And for what are you keeping your tears, if they are not to be shed for your past sins? If a temporal calamity overtakes you you are troubled and you weep. Ah, have you not caused yourself a calamity great enough when you sinned, and by sin lost God, your soul, heaven and all, and that, too, not once, but often? And is this less to be deplored than a temporal misfortune, which all your tears cannot avert, after all? Your wife, husband, child, friend dies; you weep; but what good does that do? Can your tears call the loved one back? You have suffered some loss in your property; you weep; does that make the loss good? You have

Our repentance lasts but a short time.

<sup>1</sup> Aut punis, aut punit.

many trials and crosses to bear; you sigh and moan; does that lessen what you have to suffer? See how uselessly we squander our tears on things of hardly any importance, which cannot be avoided or remedied by all our weeping. On the other hand, if by tears of true repentance we seek to regain the lost favor of the Almighty, to extinguish the fire of hell, to escape all other chastisements, and to make good all the harm and mischief done by sin, we shall certainly succeed; and yet to gain all this one tear seems too precious, an unnecessary, a superfluous trouble. "I have sinned," we exclaim, "and what harm hath befallen me?"<sup>1</sup> I have offended God grossly and grievously; but what of that? I have lost heaven; but what does that matter to me? I have incurred such heavy debts by my sins; but they do not trouble me; I will pay them all in eternity. I do not wish to speak of those sinners of whom the wise Solomon says: "Who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things;"<sup>2</sup> who, instead of bewailing their sins, like the penitent Peter, make a boast of them. How lucky I was the other day! says the unjust man; I made all that money. What a pleasant day I had! says the sensual man; I was completely drunk. What a gratification it was for me to be revenged on my enemy! says the vindictive man. What a fine opportunity I had of gratifying my passions! says the unchaste man. "They are glad when they have done evil." Oh, truly, their joy is a devilish one; they rejoice at what might with good reason make them shed tears of blood!

Prayer to  
St. Peter  
for true re-  
pentance.

O penance! what a glory and honor for thee, St. Peter! what a shame and terror for us sinners! O penitent, and therefore most glorious apostle, obtain from Our Lord for me and all sinners thy contrite heart, thy sorrowful soul, thy weeping eyes, that we who have offended our God not less, but even more than thou hast, may, like thee, at once do true and heartfelt penance, leave sin and its occasions forever, and never cease till death to bewail our sins, and to weep for the insults we have offered the Almighty, so that we may love Him constantly till the end! I go on to the other source of confusion for those of us who are just, namely, the great apostle of the nations, St. Paul.

<sup>1</sup> Peccavi, et quid mihi accidit triste?—Eccles. v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Qui lætantur cum malefecerint, et exultant in rebus pessimis.—Prov. ii. 14.

Second Part.

When I name St. Paul I speak of one whose like the world has seldom seen; he was a vessel filled with the love of God and of his neighbor; nay, as St. Chrysostom says, he was all pure charity: "As the iron," such are the words of Chrysostom, "when placed in the fire, becomes all fire, so Paul, inflamed with charity, became all charity."<sup>1</sup> O great St. Paul, to attempt to portray that charity I should have thy mind and tongue to give even a slight sketch of the height of divine love to which thou didst ascend! Do you wish, my dear brethren, to know something of the love St. Paul had? Read the epistles he has left us, in which you will find as many glowing arrows of love as there are words. "As often as I read St. Paul," exclaims St. Jerome, "I seem to hear not words, but claps of thunder;"<sup>2</sup> thunderbolts inflamed with the zealous love of God. But why do I refer to his words? Love does not consist in words, but is shown especially by actions. He might have said a hundred times with the lips, "the charity of Christ presseth us,"<sup>3</sup> and it would have mattered little if he had not shown his love in action; for, as St. Gregory says, "the proof of love is in the fulfilment of the work."<sup>4</sup> St. Chrysostom, otherwise so eloquent, acknowledges his utter incapacity for the task when he comes to speak of the charitable works of St. Paul. Where, he asks, is there a place in the world, a sea, a people that has not experienced his charity? "He went through all the regions of earth, as if he had been a spirit freed from the trammels of the flesh,"<sup>5</sup> in order to further the glory of God.

St. Paul showed his zealous charity by word and work.

If love is proved by many difficulties and trials, Paul might appeal to all the tribulations that could possibly assail him from heaven, earth, and even hell. Hear how he, as it were, defies them all: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? In all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth,

By bearing many trials for God's sake.

<sup>1</sup> Sicut ferrum missum in ignem, totus ignis efficitur; sic Paulus charitate succensus, totus factus est charitas.

<sup>2</sup> Quem quotiescumque lego, videor mihi non verba audire, sed tonitrua.

<sup>3</sup> Charitas Christi urget nos.—II. Cor. v. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Probatio dilectionis, exhibitio est operis.

<sup>5</sup> Mundi regiones omnes quasi libero a corpore animo, pervolavit.



nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, Our Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Where are ye, then, O miseries of this life? Hunger, thirst, poverty, persecution, martyrdom, torments, sickness, fire and sword, demons from hell, that have cowed so many thousands, and taken the heart from them; that have put to flight so many otherwise valiant heroes, and brought them to despair, terror, and apostasy; the bare imagination of which causes so many to shed tears, and makes them shudder with apprehension; where are ye? Have you lost your power? Is your strength gone? Come now and set on Paul, and show what you can do! And indeed these calamities did attack him, as he himself says: “Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted; we are reviled; we are persecuted; we are blasphemed; we are made as the refuse of this world, the off-scouring of all, even until now.”<sup>2</sup> “Our flesh had no rest, but we suffered all tribulation; combats without, fears within.”<sup>3</sup> “In many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labor and painfulness, in much watchings,” and so on. But what have you gained with all your raging and storming? You have not forced a tear from his eye, a sigh from his heart. Hear how little he thinks of you, how he laughs at you: “We glory also in tribulations.”<sup>4</sup> “I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.”<sup>5</sup> His love of Christ was so great, says St. Chrysos-

<sup>1</sup> Quis nos separabit a charitate Christi? Tribulatio? an angustia? an fames? an nuditas? an periculum? an persecutio? an gladius? In his omnibus superamus propter eum, qui dilexit nos. Certus sum enim quia neque mors, neque vita, neque angeli, neque principatus, neque virtutes, neque instantia, neque futura, neque fortitudo, neque altitudo, neque profundum, neque creatura alia poterit nos separare a charitate Dei, quæ est in Christo Jesu Domino nostra.—Rom. viii. 35, 37-39.

<sup>2</sup> Usque in hanc horam et esurimus, et sitimus, et nudi sumus, et colaphis cædimur; maledicimur, persecutionem patimur, blasphemamur, tanquam purgamenta hujus mundi facti sumus, omnium peripsema usque adhuc.—I. Cor. iv. 11-13.

<sup>3</sup> Nullam requiem habuit caro nostra, sed omnem tribulationem passi sumus: foris pugnae, intus timores.—II. Cor. vii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Sed et gloriamur in tribulationibus.—Rom. v. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Repletus sum consolatione, superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione nostra.—II. Cor. vii. 4.

tom, that he only made fun of difficulties, and looked on all tyrants as so many grasshoppers; bruises and buffetings he regarded no more than fly-blows; pain, suffering, and death seemed to him a desirable reward: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."<sup>1</sup> Come, then, O world, with thy caresses, by which thou dost take so many away from the love of God! Show to Paul all thou canst give him, take from him all thou mayest, and what does it all matter to him? Even as much as if thou hadst given to or taken from him a handful of filth: "I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things; and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ."<sup>2</sup>

O charity of the Apostle! O shame of modern Christians! Hear, my dear brethren, how he invites us to imitate him: "I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."<sup>3</sup> And again: "Be ye as I."<sup>4</sup> O great Saint, cease those exhortations, otherwise thou wilt reduce us to faintness and despair! Must we all be like thee? love like thee? bear trials and difficulties like thee? Ah, some art would be required for that! We are altogether too delicate for such a mode of life! If you invited us into the third heaven, there to behold the joys that no eye has seen, nor ear heard of, we might perhaps endeavor to follow thee at once; but we are not at all ready to take on our shoulders the crosses thou hadst to bear. Oh, how tepid the love of God in the hearts of us men nowadays! How far different we are from our forefathers! Nor am I speaking now of what the children of the world love against the law of God; I am speaking of just and pious souls, who think they are doing wonders for God's sake. The proof of love does not consist in words, in long prayers, but, as we have seen already, in the performance of works. Where are our works that resemble those of Paul? Alas, in vain do I seek for them! A hand lifted up to heaven, a penny given to a poor man, rising an hour earlier than usual in the morning, going a few steps distant to visit a church, hearing the word of God for an hour, giving a fast day or a day of devotion to God alone, bearing a word of insult or suffering a

We show  
the coldness  
of our love  
of God by  
our works.

<sup>1</sup> *Mihi vivere Christus est, et mori lucrum.*—Philipp. i. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Existimo omnia detrimentum esse propter eminentem scientiam Jesu Christi Domini mei; propter quem omnia detrimentum feci, et arbitror ut stercora, ut Christum lucrifaciam.*—Ibid. iii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Rogo ego vos, imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi.*—I. Cor. iv. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Estote sicut ego.*—Gal. iv. 12.

slight injury for God's sake—even that much seems a great deal to us.

By impa-  
tience in  
trials.

No creature could separate Paul from the love of God. Alas, any creature that attracts our attention brings our hearts and thoughts away with it! the smallest thing can make our charity cold and tepid, and even lead us into mortal, or at least deliberate venial sin. Which of us would dare to challenge all the trials of life as St. Paul did? Oh, no! keep off; we have too much of you as it is! Persecution, tyranny, imprisonment, stripes, stonings, sword and death, keep away from us! We do not desire you, as Paul did. Would that we could even bear our daily trials with more patience for God's sake! Every little annoyance makes us cross, every sickness makes us impatient, every insult arouses our anger, every loss troubles us, every misfortune disturbs our reason, poverty depresses, the death of a friend fills us with grief, every trial makes us desperate, so that we refuse to be comforted; in a word, all trials are hateful to us, and thus we show how cold is our love of God. The love of God made Paul forget himself, and speak of nothing, know nothing, think of nothing but Christ, his love; his mind was always with Christ in heaven, and he wore himself away in the service of God on earth: "Our conversation is in heaven."<sup>1</sup> "I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, our hearts are fixed to earth, our thoughts are for the greater part occupied with worldly things, and even in prayer we know nothing of Christ sometimes.

We have  
little love  
for our  
neighbor.

The love of God made Paul to suffer with those that were sick, to be in trouble with the afflicted, to be poor with the poor, to be, as it were, ignorant with the ignorant, to be all things to all men, to be the servant and slave of all. "Whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more. I became all things to all men, that I might save all."<sup>3</sup> Nay, so great was his love for God that he was willing to suffer the greatest evils, even for his worst enemies and persecutors, if he could only thereby convert and bring them to heaven: "I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren."<sup>4</sup> It was harder for his love, says St. Chrysostom, to see others lose their

<sup>1</sup> *Nostra conversatio in coelis est.*—Phillipp. iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Non judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos nisi Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum.*—I. Cor. ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Cum liber essem ex omnibus, omnium me servum feci, ut plures lucrificarem. Omnia omnia factus sum, ut omnes facerem salvos.*—Ibid. ix. 19, 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Optabam enim ego anathema esse a Christo pro fratribus meis.*—Rom. ix. 3.

souls than for himself to be damned, without any fault of his own, so eager was he that God might be blessed by many souls during eternity. How is it with our love of our neighbor in this respect? Those who are according to our own heart and inclination, who do us no harm, but always please us—these we love; these we willingly associate with and do good to. But there is no great skill required for that; heathens and Turks, nay, cats and dogs, can do as much. But where is our love for our enemies? Is there one towards whom we have a natural dislike, whose way of acting does not chime in with our humor, who has injured or spoken ill of us? Him we do not wish to see or hear; his society we avoid; with him we can have nothing to do; although the law of God commands us to love our worst enemy even as ourselves, and to treat him as we love him. O charity of Paul! I must again exclaim. O shame of modern Christians! We are in the number of those of whom thou hast said: “Having an appearance, indeed, of godliness, but denying the power thereof;”<sup>1</sup> we carry love on our lips, but have little of it in our hearts.

I conclude, my dear brethren, with the words of St. John Chrysostom: “You are no better than Paul or Peter. If you wish to gain the same reward as they did, why do you go by a different way to that travelled by them?”<sup>2</sup> Were not those holy apostles men like us? As far as the sinner is concerned, there is no other way for him but, with Peter, to repent of and do penance for his sins; otherwise he can have no hope of eternal happiness. And as for the just, they must persevere in the love of God and their neighbor; otherwise they will not enter heaven. I dare not and will not say that we must be as earnest and zealous as St. Paul in the love of God and our neighbor; otherwise wo to me! But that we may not go away without some fruit and comfort, we shall at least learn this lesson from the panegyric of that great Saint: that no matter how holy and pious we seem to be, we must always preserve ourselves in humility before God and men by remembering how small and mean our virtues are, compared to the wonderful virtues of St. Paul. If we cannot, like him, be inflamed with such a perfect love of God that no creature can interfere with it, let us at least love our God so constantly as never to consent to mortal sin for the sake of any creature. If we cannot love like

Exhortation  
and purpose  
to repent  
with Peter,  
and to love  
God above  
all things,  
with Paul.

<sup>1</sup> Habentes speciem quidem pietatis, virtutem autem ejus abnegantes.—II. Tim. iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Tu neque melior Paulo es, neque Petro. Si vis eadem cum illis assequi; quare contrariam ambulas viam?

Paul, whose heart and mind were always in heaven with God, let us at least so love as never to give place deliberately to unlawful thoughts and desires, and often during the day direct our thoughts, words, and actions to God by the good intention. If our love of God is not so great that, like Paul, we wish and desire, as it were, to endure all the torments and tribulations of the world, let us at all events so love as to bear with patience for God's sake those daily trials and troubles that we have to suffer, and which we cannot avoid in any case. If we cannot, with Paul, roam the world through love of our neighbor, and convert many souls by our preaching, let us at least bring to God, by our good example, paternal care, and Christian training, the servants and children committed to our charge, and teach them to fear and love God. If we cannot and will not, with Paul, sacrifice our health, our well-being and profit, nay, our own soul, for the good of our neighbor, let us at all events love all our brethren, look on all as our brothers and sisters, and help the poor and needy according to our means. Then we shall have derived fruit enough from this sermon. Yes, O Lord, such shall be now the resolution of one and all of us! I and all sinners will do penance with Thy servant Peter, and we shall spend the days of our lives in bewailing our past sins! I, along with all the just, if I may count myself among them, will endeavor to follow Thy servant Paul at least at a distance, and so love Thee, my God, above all things that no sin shall ever again separate me from Thy grace and friendship. Amen.

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*FORTY-FOURTH SERMON.*

**ON THE HOLY APOSTLE ST. ANDREW.**

Subject.

St. Andrew was the first disciple and follower, the first helper of Christ; therefore, before others, he was a worthy servant of Christ, and an apostle of God.—*Preached on the feast of St. Andrew.*

Text.

*Andreas Christi famulus, dignus Dei apostolus.*—(From the office of the day.)

“Andrew, the servant of Christ, the worthy apostle of God.”



### Introduction.

Were not, then, all the apostles servants of Christ? Were they not all made worthy to become apostles of God? There is not the least doubt of it. Why, then, does the Catholic Church give to St. Andrew alone, and not to the others, this praise, that he is "a servant of Christ, and a worthy apostle of God"? Either she could say nothing of him but what could also be said of the others, or she uses those words with some special meaning. This latter is indeed the case, my dear brethren, for when I consider the matter, I find something in St. Andrew, special to himself, that could not be said of the other apostles and disciples of Christ; on account of which the Church praises him in the manner quoted. And what is that? The others were apostles and disciples of Christ, but Andrew was the first of them all. The others helped Christ in the work of converting souls, but Andrew was the first of all to help Him. There you have the subject of this panegyric.

### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Andrew was the first disciple and follower, and at the same time the first helper of Christ; therefore, before others, he was a worthy servant of Christ and apostle of God: such is the whole subject. What we have to learn from it will appear from the moral lesson to be drawn.*

Christ Jesus, we beg of Thee, by the merits of Thy Mother, Mary, and the intercession of our holy guardian angels, to strengthen us with Thy grace, that we may imitate Thy holy servant and apostle Andrew, even if only at a distance.

When something has to be done that is unusual, rare, and at the same time dangerous and difficult, generally speaking, no one is willing to be the first to commence it. We say to ourselves: No, I will not meddle with it; who knows how it may turn out? I will wait till others begin, and see how they get on. But he who ventures to be the first to undertake the business is looked on as either daring, or as brave and heroic, or as wise and far-seeing. Thus people say: I should like to know who was the first to venture his life on the sea; he must have been a daring man, or he must have been much more clever than his fellows. And without doubt they who were present at that first venture must have trembled with dread, and been filled with amazement when they

He who is the first to do anything unusual and difficult is worthy of admiration.

saw the rash man set forth. But to-day no one is astonished to see countless numbers committing their fortunes to the raging deep, for there have been so many who have returned safely to land. If an unlettered artisan, whose sole occupation has been to patch up old shoes, were to set himself up as a doctor, what sick person would venture to be the first to entrust his life to him? I certainly should not care to be the first nor the twentieth to leave my health in the hands of such a man; nor should I venture on such a step until I had learned by experience that he had succeeded in curing many. Suppose, further, that a poor, strange, unknown man were to come into this city and to endeavor to upset all the old traditions and customs hitherto observed herein, to replace them by an altogether new and unheard-of order of things, and to secure his end by trying to gain as many as possible of the people over to his way of thinking; how long do you imagine he would have to wait before finding partisans? Not a single one would he find to agree with his project, much less to give up his business and attach himself to the new order. Eh! do we not know this well? It is not an easy matter to persuade people who are apparently good and pious to give up certain customs that they themselves acknowledge to be useless, and that certainly are scandalous, and to be more modest and Christian in their lives and conduct. If others like myself do it, they say, then I will follow suit; but I do not wish to be the first to begin a thing of the sort. I myself have heard many say in a similar case: If one can be found to be the first to do away with this abuse, I will be the second. See; nearly all desire to see things amended, but no one wishes to commence, and thus the change is never effected.

Such was St. Andrew, who was the first to follow Christ, and to adopt His strange doctrine.

But to my subject, my dear brethren. St. Andrew was a heroic and far-seeing man when, having seen Our Lord for the first time, he at once went with Him and became His disciple. Consider all the circumstances, and you will wonder at this exploit of the holy apostle. Christ came forward to deliver His doctrine to the people; it was quite a new doctrine, of which the world had hitherto heard nothing, a doctrine that was to upset all other forms of religion; one that utterly contradicted those sacred usages and ceremonies peculiar to the Jewish religion, that Andrew and all the Jewish people had always professed, namely, the law of Moses, that had hitherto been held in the highest honor, and could point for so many years to its patriarchs, prophets, judges, kings,

and high-priests; a law that was made illustrious in the world by the glorious temple, in which so many sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, and atonement had been offered to the Almighty by His own command; a law, the followers of which were called the chosen people of God. All who received the teaching of Christ and acknowledged themselves His disciples had to renounce that law and look on it henceforth as invalid. Truly, that was a strange doctrine; one that preached a hard, strict law, opposed to all sensuality; a law that spoke of nothing but mortification, humiliation, self-denial, chastising the flesh, loving one's enemies, detaching one's heart from all earthly things and riches, despising the world, and shunning all worldly customs; a law that represented happiness to be found in weeping, poverty, persecution, and so forth. Could we believe it possible, my dear brethren, that in those days even one man could be found in the whole world to adopt such a teaching; nay, that even one would listen to Christ when propounding such a law? See, now, what a wonderful man Andrew was. Hardly had he heard John the Baptist say of Our Lord, as He was passing by: "Behold the Lamb of God!"<sup>1</sup> when he at once followed Him and asked Him: "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?"<sup>2</sup> He then went with the Lord, and, as St. John tells us, heard His doctrine for a whole day. This alone was enough to convince him that Jesus was the true Messias, and to induce him at once to proclaim himself a disciple of Christ, and to live according to His doctrine.

Yes, you think; but what did the other apostles and disciples do? And countless numbers followed their example afterwards; and all good Christians in our own days do the same; all have truly adopted the same wonderful teaching that is so opposed to sensuality, and have determined to live as followers of Jesus Christ. What, then, is there in Andrew that deserves so much wonder? What! Do you not yet see the difference, as I explained it to you in the introduction? It is one thing to follow where many have preceded, and another to be the first to strike out on an unknown path, without any predecessor to guide you. "There is a great difference," says St. Chrysostom, "between entering on a smooth and easy road, where many travellers have already passed, and venturing on a way that has to be made with difficulty, that is full of stones and beset with wild beasts, and by

Truly, great numbers have followed the same doctrine, but they had examples.

<sup>1</sup> Ecce Agnus Dei!—John i. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi, ubi habitas?—Ibid. 38.

which no traveller has as yet journeyed.”<sup>1</sup> Who will not admit that the first task is much easier than the second? True it is that countless Christians have adopted the doctrine of Christ, but the way they entered on was smoothed and made easy for them by others. Soldiers rush forward to the walls of the besieged city with much greater intrepidity when they see that many of their comrades have succeeded in mounting. Much readier is the fisherman to throw himself into the water to swim when he sees others swimming about in safety. Did you ever read how those soldiers acted who had Simon Machabeus as their general? They came to a swollen torrent that separated them from the enemy; they were afraid of their lives to cross, and not one of them would have ventured had not Simon himself first made the attempt; then they all vied with one another in following him: “He went over first; then the men, seeing him, passed over after him.”<sup>2</sup> So powerful is the example of the first that it draws thousands after it, while, on the other hand, in a thousand you will hardly find one who will dare to be the first to attempt anything with which danger or difficulty is connected.

Andrew was the first of all to do this, and that, too, while Christ was still unknown and despised by the world.

Therefore what is most to be wondered at in the holy apostle St. Andrew is the fact that he first of all ventured on the unknown way, and became an adherent of Christ. And I cannot help thinking: What had he seen in Our Lord to bring him so suddenly to such a resolution? Imagine, my dear brethren, that poor, unlettered man of whom we have already spoken, who wishes to pass as a doctor, and think what qualities he would be likely to possess to gain the respect and sympathy of the world, and then you will have some idea of that man who then called Himself Jesus Christ, as He appeared before the world, to astound it by the doctrine He came to preach. For in the eyes of the world He was a lowly, ignorant, poor, unsophisticated artisan, unknown until that moment, hidden away in the cottage at Nazareth, earning His bread by the labor of His hands; He was one of whom the people could say no more than that He was a carpenter, who had never learned anything but His trade. His own countrymen, when they heard Him teaching in the synagogue, asked with amazement: “How came this man by this wisdom? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary?” How, then,

<sup>1</sup> Non æqualis est labor viam tritam et plane paratam post multos ingredi viatores; atque eam quæ nunc secunda est primo, quæque prærupta et saxosa, ferisque plena, nec ullam adhuc viatorem admittit.

<sup>2</sup> Transfretavit primus, et viderunt eum viri, et transierunt post eum.—I. Mach. xvi. 6.

can He teach others? "And they were scandalized in His regard;"<sup>1</sup> so that there was little chance of their listening to Him favorably and following His doctrine. Such, too, was the opinion formed of Him by the Jews when they heard Him in the temple: "And the Jews wondered, saying: How doth this man know letters, having never learned?"<sup>2</sup> Moreover, He was still an object of hatred and execration to the scribes and chief men of the people; nay, they conspired together, and agreed to put out of the synagogue any one who should venture to become His disciple: "For the Jews had already agreed among themselves, that if any man should confess Him to be the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."<sup>3</sup> See, now, how this poor, lowly artisan persuaded Andrew in one interview to be the first to follow Him; a circumstance of which Salmeron well says: "The greatest praise that can be given to Andrew consists in this, that he was the first who dared to believe in Christ."<sup>4</sup> And still greater praise is due to him because he gave up all he had, although he was only a poor fisherman, in order to follow Our Lord. For he might with good reason have said: Master, Thou art so poor that Thou hast neither house nor home; nor have I anything, except what I can earn by my daily labor. Now if I follow Thee, I shall have to leave my trade, give up my nets and boat; and then how shall we manage to live? But no such excuse fell from the lips of Andrew, for as soon as he had spoken to Christ he acknowledged Him as the true Messias, and went with Him as His disciple, without any delay or consideration as to where the means of livelihood were to come from.

And how did he know that Christ was the Messias? I know well that afterwards Nicodemus, one of the chiefs of the Pharisees, and a prince among the Jews, believed Our Lord to be the Messias, but that was after many great miracles had been wrought. "Rabbi," he said, "we know that Thou art come a teacher from God." How did he know that? "For no man can do these signs which Thou dost unless God be with him."<sup>5</sup> For the same

Nor had he seen Our Lord work any miracle.

<sup>1</sup> Unde huic sapientia hæc? Nonne hic est fabri filius? Nonne mater ejus dicitur Maria? Et scandalizabantur in eo.—Matt. xiii. 54, 55, 57.

<sup>2</sup> Et mirabantur Judæi, dicentes: quomodo hic literas scit, cum non didicerit?—John vii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Jam enim conspiraverant Judæi, ut si quis eum confiteretur esse Christum, extra synagogam fieret.—Ibid. ix. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Profecto maxima laus Andree est, quod primus omnium se ausus fuerit credere Christo.—Salm. Com. 4. Tract. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Rabbi, scimus quia a Deo venisti magister; nemo enim potest hæc signa facere, quæ tu facis, nisi fuerit Deus cum eo.—John iii. 2.



reason many of the people in Jerusalem believed in Our Lord: "Many believed in His name, seeing His signs which He did."<sup>1</sup> The same motive impelled others to follow Him in thousands into the desert, in spite of having to suffer hunger and thirst: "A great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased."<sup>2</sup> Truly, it is not surprising that a great multitude of people should run after Christ, and see that there was something more than human in Him, after they had beheld the water turned into wine, the multiplication of the loaves, the healing of the sick with one word, the instantaneous curing of the dumb and blind, of the lame and paralytic, the expulsion of demons, the raising of the dead to life, for no sound reason could resist the influence of such wonders as these. But for one to believe in a poor, unknown, and lowly man, and to follow him at the first word as the saviour of the world, before he had worked any miracles—that is something that human reason cannot grapple with. For what is most surprising in the conduct of Andrew is the fact that Our Lord had not yet worked any sign when Andrew followed Him as His disciple. As the Evangelist tells us, the first miracle was wrought afterwards, at the marriage-feast of Cana, where Our Lord and several of His disciples were present: "Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage."<sup>3</sup> There Our Lord changed the water into wine: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory."<sup>4</sup> So that Andrew had as yet seen nothing wonderful done by Jesus, and yet he believed in Him.

Hence he  
deserves to  
be admired  
and praised.

O what a wonderful man! Truly, I must repeat, with the learned Salmeron: The greatest praise that can be given to Andrew consists in this, that he was the first who dared to believe in Christ. "See," he continues, "what light must have been suddenly infused into him, to enable him to recognize the Messiah."<sup>5</sup> The Doctors of the Church can therefore hardly find terms expressive enough in which to praise him. "He had," says de Lyra, "the privilege of being the first disciple of Christ, the

<sup>1</sup> Multi crediderunt in nomine ejus, videntes signa ejus quæ faciebat.—John ii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Sequebatur eum multitudo magna, quia videbant signa, quæ faciebat super his qui infirmabantur.—Ibid. vi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Vocatus est autem et Jesus et discipuli ejus ad nuptias.—Ibid. ii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Hoc fecit initium signorum Jesus in Cana Galilææ, et manifestavit gloriam suam.—Ibid.

11.

<sup>5</sup> Vide huic quantum repente luminis sit infusum, ut Messiam agnoverit.—Salm. loc. cit.

first to point out the promised Messias.”<sup>1</sup> “O sweet apostle, and first calling of the Saviour!” cries out St. Peter Damian.<sup>2</sup> St. Lawrence Justinian calls him the first foundation of the Church: “He was truly worthy of being the foundation-stone for the building of the people into the house of God.”<sup>3</sup> By others he is called “the dean of the college of the apostles.”<sup>4</sup> “He was,” says St. Thomas of Aquin, “the first to be perfectly converted to the faith of Christ, and he was also the first to preach Christ; as Stephen was the first martyr after Christ, so Andrew was the first Christian.”<sup>5</sup>

Mark those words of the angelic Doctor, my dear brethren, “he was also the first to preach Christ.” Not only was Andrew the first disciple of Christ, but he was also the first who showed himself as an active co-operator with Christ, who won many for Him by his persuasion. For as soon as he knew who Our Lord was he gave himself no rest, but ran at once with joy and exultation to his brethren, to gain them also for Our Lord: “He findeth first his brother Simon, and saith to him: We have found the Messias. And he brought him to Jesus.”<sup>6</sup> “He did not keep for himself alone the treasure he had found,” says St. Thomas, “but ran at once to his brother, to share with him the goods he had received.”<sup>7</sup> “For the true way of finding God and being zealous in His love is to have a care of the salvation of our brethren,” says the Venerable Bede.<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Hugo, speaking of the text, “he findeth first his brother,” says: “That is, before he found others. Whereby we are told that Andrew called many to Jesus.”<sup>9</sup> Probably he went about and told all whom he met of the joyful news of having found the Messias,

He was also the first to bring others to Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Hanc prærogativam habuit, quod fuit primus Christi discipulus, primusque qui Messiam promissum digito monstravit.—Lyran. in c. 1. Joan.

<sup>2</sup> O dulcis apostolus, et primitiva vocatio Salvatoris!—S. Pet. Dam. Serm. 2. de S. And.

<sup>3</sup> Dignus certe, qui ædificandis in domo Dei populis lapis esset ad fundamentum.—S. Laur. Just. Serm. 20. de Sanctis.

<sup>4</sup> Decanus collegii apostolici.

<sup>5</sup> Prior conversus est ad fidem Christi perfecte, tum etiam Christum primus prædicavit; unde sicut Stephanus fuit primus martyr post Christum, ita et Andreas fuit primus Christianus.

<sup>6</sup> Invenit hic primum fratrem suum Simonem, et dicit ei: invenimus Messiam. Et adduxit eum ad Jesum.—John i. 41, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Non detinuit apud se inventum thesaurum, sed festinat et currit cito ad fratrem, traditurus ei bona quæ suscepit.

<sup>8</sup> Hoc est enim vere Deum invenire, vere illius dilectione fervere, fraternæ quoque salutis curam gerere.—Beda in Catech. D. Thom.

<sup>9</sup> Id est, antequam alios inveniret. In quo notatur, quod multos vocavit Andreas et Jesum.

and urged them to go with him and become disciples. Be that as it may, when he brought Peter to Christ he brought Him half the world. For what did not Peter afterwards do for Our Lord? In one day he converted three thousand infidels, on another occasion five thousand, and finally he won to Christ countless souls. Now it was Andrew, and Andrew alone, who brought into Our Lord's net this great fish, that caught the world, as Salmeron remarks: "Andrew has the name of being the first Christian, and the first who preached Christ and brought the first fish, namely, Peter, into the net of the gospel to Christ."<sup>1</sup> "Behold!" exclaims St. Peter Damian in astonishment, "Andrew in his very noviceship brings forth fruit, and becomes a preacher of the truth he had but just heard; being made a new disciple, he is not content with securing his own salvation; he seeks to make other disciples; his fraternal charity moves him to gain other souls."<sup>2</sup>

And worked  
most zeal-  
ously to do  
so.

Now if his zeal for souls was so great in the beginning, when he first knew Our Lord, how intense must it not have become afterwards when, filled with the Holy Ghost, he entered on his apostolate? Mark, my dear brethren, how Our Lord says to all the apostles: "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"<sup>3</sup> a command they all obeyed, for they divided the world among them, and each went to the part of the globe allotted to him and preached Jesus Christ: "But they, going forth, preached everywhere."<sup>4</sup> Yet the Catholic Church gives to Andrew this special praise, that he was the preacher and ruler of the Church; for she prays thus on this feast: "O God, we humbly beg of Thee that as the blessed Andrew was the preacher and ruler of Thy Church," etc. Why is that? Doubtless the Church wishes to show that among the apostles Andrew was a specially zealous preacher of the gospel and propagator of the true faith. And indeed he journeyed through many countries of the world, and with unwearied toil gained many souls to Christ. He preached the gospel in Scythia, as Origen testifies; in Ethiopia, or the country of the Moors, as Sophonius says; and the Roman

<sup>1</sup> *Andree nomen ponitur quasi primi Christiani, et Christum aliis predicantis, quique primum piscem, nempe Petrum, reti evangelico ad Christum traxit.—Salm. loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ecce Andreas inter ipsa novi tyrocinii sui rudimenta fructificat, et veritatis jam predicator efficitur, cujus adhuc vix erat auditor; novus discipulus factus, non est propria salute contentus; condiscipulos querit; ad lucrandos alios fraternalis se amor extendit.—S. Pet. Dam. Serm. 1. de S. Andrea.*

<sup>3</sup> *Euntes in mundum universum, predicatote evangelium omni creature.—Mark xvi. 15.*

<sup>4</sup> *Illi autem profecti, predicaverunt ubique.—Ibid. 20.*

Martyrology relates how he spread the faith in Thrace, Cappadocia, Bithynia, and even to the borders of the Black Sea. St. Gregory Nazianzen adds that he visited Albania; St. John Chrysostom asserts that he preached the gospel in Greece. Oh, who could count the number of souls that he gained for Christ in those long journeys, through so many extensive provinces? Let it suffice to say, with Denis the Carthusian: "St. Andrew converted countless souls to the faith."<sup>1</sup>

And how long did that zeal continue in him? To his old age, to the death of the cross; nay, what must strike all with astonishment, he continued to preach even in those circumstances, at that time when nature imposes silence on the most eloquent tongue; for he preached Christ even while he was hanging on the cross, suffering the most cruel agony, and struggling with death, and expounded the truths of faith to a vast crowd even to his latest breath, as we read in the history of his life.<sup>2</sup> Truly, no bridegroom ever longed so eagerly for the presence of his beloved spouse as St. Andrew did for his cross: "When he saw the cross afar off he began to exclaim: O good cross, long desired, earnestly loved, sought for without intermission, and now at last conceded to my earnest desires! receive me from among men, and restore me to my Master." What a wonderful thing! exclaims Denis the Carthusian: "Wholly filled with divine love, when he saw the cross prepared for him his joy was so great that he could hardly contain himself, and addressed the cross as if it could understand him."<sup>3</sup> So that Andrew was the first follower of Christ, the first helper of Christ, and therefore, before others, he was "the servant of Christ, and a worthy apostle of God."

Even to the death of the cross, for which he eagerly longed.

O my dear brethren, would that each one of us could with truth be called "a worthy servant of God"! But, alas, how unlike we are in this respect to the holy apostle St. Andrew! He was the first of all who followed the doctrine of Christ, and was faithful to Him, although he had no example to encourage him to this step. We have the example of many thousands of both sexes who have sworn fidelity to the holy doctrine and law of Jesus, and have been constantly faithful to Him till death; and yet we cannot make up our minds to be true followers of Christ, and

Bewailing those who, in spite of many good examples, do not remain true to Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Sanctus Andreas innumerabiles convertit ad fidem.

<sup>2</sup> Itaque cruci affixus est, in qua biduum vivus pendens, et Christi fidem nunquam prædicare intermittens, ad eum migravit ejus mortis similitudinem concupierat.—Brev. Rom.

<sup>3</sup> Divina dilectione plenissimus, visa sibi cruce parata, in tantum gavisus est, quod præ lætitia se ipsum vix cepit, ipsamque crucem affatus est, quasi et ipsa intelligere posset.



to order our lives according to his teaching! Such was the complaint uttered by the holy Pope Gregory, when writing on the gospel of to-day: "You have heard, my dear brethren, how Peter and Andrew at the first call left their nets and followed the Redeemer; they had not as yet seen Him work any miracle, they had not heard of any eternal reward from Him, and nevertheless, at His first command they seemed to forget all they possessed. How many miracles of His we have witnessed! How many stripes He has visited us with! What threats He utters to deter us from evil! And yet we refuse to come when He calls! He who has exhorted us to repentance is now in heaven; He has already subjected the heathens to the yoke of the faith; He has overcome the pomps of the world; by many calamities He warns us of the approaching day of His strict justice; and yet our proud heart will not relinquish that which we are daily obliged to lose against our will. What, then, my dearest brethren, shall we be able to say for ourselves in His judgment, since neither His commands nor His punishments can wean us from the love of this world?" So did St. Gregory speak to the Christians of his time. May not the same complaint be made nowadays of most of us Catholics? I know that we all boast of the name of Christian; we say that we are servants and followers of Jesus Christ; but how do our lives and actions harmonize with our professions?

They are  
ashamed to  
be the first  
in the ser-  
vice of God.

Andrew, a true servant and follower of Christ, was the first who, in circumstances in which no one dared to join Our Lord, professed himself boldly as His disciple. O human respect, what power thou hast over us! For to please a mere mortal, or to avoid displeasing him, we often trample on the law of God, omit doing good, and do evil against the voice of our conscience! Nay, we do the evil and omit the good even because we are ashamed to be the first to proclaim ourselves openly as servants of God! How often does not the tolling of the bell warn us, when the Blessed Sacrament is carried to the sick, of our duty to show the sovereign Monarch of heaven the honor of accompanying Him? How often are we not reminded in sermons that when the signal is given we should, morning, midday, and evening, greet the Mother of God on our knees by the recitation of the Angelus, in order to gain the usual indulgences? that we should appear in the church with humility and reverence, with downcast eyes, folded hands, on both knees, as before the throne of God? that we should say grace before and after meals with similar devotion? a custom



that, alas, seems to have fallen almost into desuetude amongst those people of the world who seem to belong to the better classes! How often are we not exhorted in sermons to give up this or that dangerous abuse, and so on? But at all this we shrug our shoulders! No one will be the Andrew; no one will be the first to show due honor to his God. If others like myself do it, such is the un-Christian excuse put forward, then I will follow them; but I am ashamed to be the first. As if it were a shame to be the first among the servants of God! Fie! Should not every one look on it as the greatest honor and glory to be before others in good? If the favor of a mortal sovereign is to be gained, if a handful of money is to be made anywhere, if a lucrative post is to be obtained, do we then think or say: I am ashamed to be the first? Oh, no! here every one will be a good Andrew; every one strives to prevent others from being beforehand with him. But where there is question of the true service of God, of the salvation of the soul, of the grace and favor of the sovereign Monarch, of the eternal happiness of heaven—then we look at others, and consider what they do; then no one will be the first to put in his claim; every one wishes to be the last. “What, then, dearest brethren, shall we say for ourselves in the judgment?” Alas, dear Christians! what shall we have to urge in our defence before the tribunal of God, when He Himself will show us how He will act in our regard: “He that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed when He shall come in His majesty, and that of His Father, and of the holy angels.”<sup>1</sup>

Andrew was the first who, not content with following Christ himself, at once went and induced many to follow Him. My dear brethren, if we wish to be true servants and followers of Christ, we, too, must show our zeal in this respect, and try to gain other souls for Christ and heaven. God has given a charge to every one concerning his neighbor; when occasion offers we must endeavor, by fraternal correction, exhortation, and good example, to restrain others from evil and encourage them to good. This is specially the case for you, Christian parents, fathers and mothers, superiors, and others in authority. The great Father of all has entrusted to your care the souls of your children, servants, and subjects, that you may keep a watchful eye on their actions, prevent and amend their sins and vices, keep them from the dan-

Those who neglect the duty of leading others to Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Qui me erubuerit, et meos sermones, hunc Filius hominis erubescet, cum venerit in majestate sua, et Patris, et sanctorum angelorum.—Luke ix. 26.

gers and occasions of evil, teach them the fear and love of God, and so one day restore them to Him in eternity; and wo to you if you neglect or perform carelessly this, your bounden duty! But, alas, how slothful most people are in this respect! In how many cities and country places are not shameful abuses and public vices tolerated through the indifference of those who should extirpate them, and who could do so! How many masters and mistresses there are who take more care of their horses than of the immortal souls of their servants! How many fathers and mothers who, when their sons or daughters experience a vocation to the religious state or the priesthood, try to restrain them from following it by caresses and endearments, by promises and threats, by blows and hard usage, nay, what is most horrible, even by leading them into sin! How many parents there are who cannot bear to see their children good and pious, and therefore send them into foreign countries that they may learn to live according to the maxims of the world! How many parents who, by word and exhortation and example, are the first to inculcate on their children, from their very youth, the vanity and folly of the world, and thus bring up those still innocent souls for the world and often for the devil! Wo to you! I say again. "What shall we say for ourselves in the judgment?" How shall you answer before the tribunal of God when He will ask at your hands those souls entrusted to you?

Who refuse  
to suffer for  
Christ's  
sake.

Andrew, in order to follow Christ, unceasingly sought for the cross, and when he saw it he rejoiced and exulted as if he had found the greatest treasure in the world. Christians! are we so minded that for Christ's sake we are ready, I will not say to desire and seek crosses and trials, but to bear them contentedly and cheerfully when they are sent to us? Oh, how true are the words of Thomas à Kempis: "Jesus has now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few to bear His cross; many He has who desire His consolations, but few who wish to share in His sorrows; He has many companions at His table, but few in His mortifications and fastings. All wish to rejoice with Christ, but few desire to suffer with Him. Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few follow Him in drinking the bitter chalice of the passion. Many honor His wonders and miracles, few go with Him to the ignominy of the cross. Many love Jesus as long as no trial comes in their way; many praise and bless Him because they are comforted by Him; but if Jesus

hides Himself and leaves them even for a little time, they either complain or fall into the greatest despondency." Truly, such is the case! Even those trials and crosses that we cannot avoid, no matter how we try, and that, according to the well-meaning intention of the Almighty, should be so many ladders to enable us to mount up to heaven—even these we turn into a means of thrusting ourselves down deeper into hell by our frequent and wilful impatience, by our cursing and swearing, by murmuring and complaining against God, and by giving way to despondency and despair. "What, then, dear brethren, shall we have to say for ourselves in the judgment" when the sign of the cross shall appear in the heavens as a consolation for those who have willingly borne their cross, but as a source of terror to those who have avoided it, or rejected it with disgust?

O dear Saviour. I see now how vainly I have hitherto professed myself Thy follower! By my actions and mode of life I have frequently contradicted what my lips have uttered, in spite of the many examples of true servants of Thine that have gone before me! Sometimes, when there was question of Thy public honor and glory, I was ashamed to be the tenth or twentieth when I should justly have been the first to show Thee due reverence! Instead of using the many opportunities afforded me of leading souls to Thee, alas, how often have I not turned them away from Thee by my dissolute manners, by instructing them in evil, and by giving scandal and bad example? The bare name of the cross has often quite disturbed me, although I cannot come to Thee in heaven except by the way of the cross! Ah, God of infinite goodness, give me Thy powerful grace that I may carry out what I now firmly resolve to do, and to some extent, at least, tread in the footsteps of Thy worthy servant and apostle, work zealously for my salvation and that of others, lay aside all human respect, acknowledge myself as Thy true servant, accept with resignation the crosses Thou art laying on me and those Thou art minded to send me, love Thee constantly, and so, with Thy holy apostle Andrew, ascend from the cross to Thee in heaven. Amen.

Conclusio  
and purpos  
to imitat  
St. Andre

## FORTY-FIFTH SERMON.

## ON THE HOLY APOSTLE ST. JAMES.

## Subject.

The holy apostle James was an unwearied worker for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; a labor for which he was richly rewarded.—*Preached on the feast of St. James.*

## Text.

*Dignus est enim operarius mercede sua.*—Luke x. 7.

“For the laborer is worthy of his hire.”

## Introduction.

Here Christ calls His apostles and disciples laborers, whom He has sent out to preach the gospel and convert souls. And this labor was indeed a grievous and troublesome task, which they all undertook with the utmost zeal; so that they deserved the reward promised them by the Lord: “Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.”<sup>1</sup> My dear brethren, if the reward is to be measured according to the greatness of the labor, what are we to think of the recompense merited by the holy apostle St. James, of whom I need not fear to say that he was one of the most zealous laborers, nay, that he was the most indefatigable of all? And this is the praise I now wish to give this holy apostle.

## Plan of Discourse.

*The holy apostle James was an unwearied worker for the honor of Christ and the salvation of souls; a labor for which he was richly rewarded. Such is the whole subject of this panegyric. The moral lesson shall form the conclusion.*

To understand it aright, give us Thy grace and light, O good God! This we beg of Thee through the intercession of Mary, of our holy guardian angels, and of Thy holy laborer James.

What an indefatigable workman is.

There are many diligent laborers in the world, who do not, however, merit the name of being indefatigable; some work, but not so as to interfere with their comfort; they engage in occupa-

<sup>1</sup> *Gaudete et exultate, quoniam merces vestra copiosa est in caelis.*—Matt. v. 12.

ions that they can attend to with little trouble and without any difficulty; others are busied the whole day in hard and difficult labor, whereat they sweat and toil until they go home in the evening, quite worn out; but they are compelled to work by want and necessity of earning their daily bread, or they are forced to it by the rich, who drive them to work by blows and stripes; and hence labor of that kind is not undertaken voluntarily, but against their will, and with many murmurs and complaints, and sometimes oaths and curses. Others work willingly as long as they succeed in their intent; but if things go wrong with them they give up in disgust. Of none of these can we say that he is an indefatigable worker. To undertake great and difficult tasks readily and willingly, despising all difficulties, and to persevere in them with cheerfulness and content, and, what is the chief point, to keep at them constantly, although they help little or nothing to the proposed end—that is a mark of a really indefatigable worker, who is determined to do his duty.

Such was the holy apostle St. James. To travel unceasingly barefoot through vast and unknown countries, to have to deal constantly with strange, uncultured, and obstinate people, to be hunted by them from one town to another, to have no nourishment but bread and water, to suffer hunger and thirst, often for whole days, and meanwhile to preach until he became hoarse; after those wearisome occupations to spend the night in watching and prayer, or to sleep in the open field, or sometimes in a barn, on the bare earth, for a few hours, and then to rise and begin the same tiresome work, and to keep at it year after year—what think you, my dear brethren? Is not that great, severe, and harassing labor? See what a life St. James voluntarily embraced when he began his apostolic preaching, and went to announce the gospel of Christ to heathens and Jews, and to gain many souls for heaven. In this toilsome work he consumed his strength until death.

Such was St. James for he undertook hard labor for Christ.

But, you will say, the other apostles did the same; for each of them had his share of trouble, difficulty, discomfort, and suffering when preaching Christ in the part of the globe allotted to him. It is true, and I readily grant that in this respect what James had and did was common to him with the others. But in this difficult task I find something special in our apostle, as far as the zeal, the eagerness, the joy are concerned, with which he undertook to work for Christ. For, mark this well, he is the

And <sup>was</sup>, too, with the utmost zeal and joy of heart.



only apostle who, before all the others, and before they had divided the world among them, went forth to preach the gospel. St. Vincent Ferrer, in his sermon on this feast, is of the opinion that James, as soon as he heard the words of Christ, "go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature,"<sup>1</sup> fulfilled the command at once, and without any delay, or, as is probable, at least after having received the Holy Ghost, went and announced Christ to the heathens. "Who," asks St. Vincent, "first went on this embassy, going into the whole world? Not Peter, nor Andrew, nor John, but this James. The tradition of the churches of that province tells us that he went at once into Spain, and there converted some to the faith."<sup>2</sup> That such is the case is attested by Cardinal Baronius in his annotations on the Martyrology; for, he says, since St. James suffered death in Jerusalem, before the world was divided among the apostles, and they had separated in order to go to the different provinces appointed for each one, it must necessarily be true that he, as the most zealous of all, went into Spain immediately after the death of St. Stephen. So great was his eagerness, his longing to labor for Christ and for the salvation of souls, that he could not wait for the division of the world, but had to go forth at once to find some outlet for his fervor. Nay, he did not even wait till he arrived in Spain. Immediately after the Ascension of Christ he began to give public proofs of his zeal, and to preach Christ, as we read in the Breviary in the lesson of to-day: "After the ascension of Christ into heaven he preached His divinity in Judea and Samaria, and converted souls. Presently he went into Spain," although no part of the world had as yet been appointed for him.

Although  
he effected  
very little.

And what were the fruits of his labor there? Here we have the chief proof of my proposition; for as far as being indefatigable is concerned, St. James had none to equal him among all the apostles in undergoing labors, sufferings, and persecutions for Christ. How so? In the whole time during which he was in Spain he only converted a few to the faith, as tradition says. What was the exact number of the few? We know not. St. Vincent Ferrer says he only converted nine.<sup>3</sup> Others are of the

<sup>1</sup> Euntes in mundum universum, prædicate evangelium omni creaturæ.—Mark lxi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Quis hanc legationem exequatur, eundo per mundum? Non Petrus, nec Andreas, nec Joannes, sed Jacobus iste. Mox Hispaniam adiisse, et ibi aliquos ad fidem convertisse, ecclesiarum illius provinciæ traditio est.—S. Vinc. Fer. Serm. in hoc festo.

<sup>3</sup> Solum novem discipulos convertit.—S. Vinc. loc. cit.

opinion that he gained only seven souls to Christ during his stay in Spain. Is that all? Yes, that is all he gained there by his labor. Afterwards, when he returned to Jerusalem, shortly before his death, he converted two sorcerers, Hermogenes and Phigellus, and brought them to the light of the true faith; but they relapsed soon after, and went back to their former errors, as is clearly stated in the Second Epistle of St. Paul to his disciple Timothy: "Thou knowest this, that all they who are in Asia are turned away from me, of whom are Phigellus and Hermogenes."<sup>1</sup> And again: "And their speech spreadeth like a canker; of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, who have erred from the truth."<sup>2</sup> So that if the opinion of those writers quoted above is true, only seven altogether remain of all whom James converted during his whole apostolate outside of Judea. But, you may well ask me, what do you mean by this? You undertook to describe to us the great exploits of this apostle as something worthy of our admiration. We were expecting to hear wonderful things of him; how he converted millions of Jews and heathens; and now you tell us that the number of his converts was so wretchedly small! Is there, then, an extraordinary meed of praise due to him for having converted so few? Yes, my dear brethren, from this very fact appears most clearly how admirable and praiseworthy is this apostle in his really unwearied efforts to procure the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls.

For, think and consider well what a grievous disappointment it is to work hard and effect nothing or little. How disappointing for the hunter to roam about in the forest all day, and not find a single head of game. How annoying for the fisherman to drag his nets all day, and catch nothing but a few worthless fishes. What were the feelings of the disciples when they had labored all the night and caught nothing? They had already given up work and were washing their nets when Our Lord came up to them. "Launch out into the deep," said He to Peter, "and let down your nets for a draught." But the latter replied, "Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken noth-

How disap-  
pointing to  
labor and  
effect noth-  
ing.

<sup>1</sup> Scis hoc, quod aversi sunt a me omnes qui in Asia sunt, ex quibus est Phigellus et Hermogenes.—II. Tim. 1. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Sermo ut cancer serpit; ex quibus est Hymenæus et Philetus, qui a veritate excludunt.—Ibid. ii. 17, 18.

ing;” ‘ we are tired of fishing. And so it is. Never is the man of business more chagrined than when he returns from the market after a long, difficult journey, and has made but little profit on his wares; if I had known how things were to go, he thinks to himself, I should have stayed at home. Never is the husbandman more acutely disappointed than when he has nothing to bring into his barns after having well tilled and sown his lands; what did I give myself so much trouble for, he says; I might have taken things easier. Never is the owner of a vineyard more annoyed than when, in spite of all his labor, he hardly brings home a few bunches of grapes at vintage time. And if these people were thus unsuccessful three, four, or five consecutive years they would begin to despair, and the one would give up his traffic, the other his tillage, the third his vineyard. In a word, experience teaches us how true it is that labor in vain is the most disagreeable kind of labor, and that which tires us quickest.

While experience teaches that it is easy to work when the desired fruit is gained.

On the other hand, to labor, and to labor long and hard, where there is a prospect of gaining the desired end and making a great profit—oh, that is an easy and a consoling task. If the husbandman has to work hard from morning till night in the field, gathering his crops, heaping them on wagons, and storing them in his barns in rich abundance, who would say that he is an indefatigable workman? Who would wonder at the diligence of the merchant, who, barely taking time enough for his meals, is hard at work every day in his shop, receiving money, and heaping it up in his coffers? Who would say: What an indefatigable man! he is certainly not tired of working? Eh! why should he be? In such circumstances that is no labor or trouble for those people; it is rather a pleasure and delight for them; and their satisfaction is so great that they can hardly sleep at night thinking of their gains. But have they not labored and toiled the whole day? Yes; but what immense gains they have made by their work! Therefore they have not found the least difficulty in it, but rather joy and pleasure. Useful and lucrative labor, I repeat, is easy, sweet, and full of consolation. And again experience teaches us the truth of this.

This is especially the case with

This is especially the case with those apostolic men, who, impelled by the Spirit of God, labor for His glory and the salva-

<sup>1</sup> *Duc in altum, et laxate retia vestra in capturam. Præceptor, per totam noctem laborantes, nihil cepimus.*—Luke v. 4, 5.

tion of souls, and by their labor convert many and bring them to Christ in heaven. Oh, what joy! what an indescribable heavenly consolation such success causes in the hearts of zealous servants of God! It can be fully understood only by those who have had experience of it. If one could have seen into the heart of the holy apostle Peter, when he converted, with his first sermon, three thousand, and on another occasion, over five thousand, to the true faith, what joy would he not have found therein! With what exultation the disciples came forward, after they had driven out demons by their labor: "And the seventy-two returned with joy, saying: Lord, the devils also are subject to us in Thy name,"<sup>1</sup> as St. Luke tells us. Ask the many zealous lovers of souls what their feelings were in their arduous missions, in countless labors, in journeys hither and thither, in dangers by sea and land, in the want of the necessaries of life, and they will tell you that they were always filled with heavenly joy and consolation, which they often felt at the conversion and absolution of even one sinner. St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Vincent Ferrer could not refrain from shedding tears of consolation while hearing confessions; they called the confessional their paradise, on account of the great joy and almost sensible pleasure caused them by the repentance and conversion of the worst sinners. St. Ignatius, the founder of our Society, commanded all his subjects, in whatever part of the world they might be sent to spread the glory of God, to write to him once a year and tell him how many sinners were converted each month, how many received the sacraments, how many heretics and infidels were brought to the true Church. These letters he used to read with tears in his eyes, and with such interior joy that he could often not sleep at night on account of it. For my own part, I must acknowledge that sometimes when God granted me the happiness of absolving a great sinner I could not help shedding tears of consolation. From this I can conclude how great must be the joy of apostolic men who have received the grace by their preaching and instructions to win hundreds and thousands of souls to Christ. Therefore we must confess that the labor that brings in the desired fruit must necessarily be much lessened and sweetened by the consolation and joy it causes. In a word: to labor and convert many souls is, I do not

apostolic  
labor.

<sup>1</sup> Reversi sunt autem septuaginta duo cum gaudio, dicentes: Domine, etiam demonia subjiciuntur nobis in nomine tuo.—Luke x. 17.

hesitate to say, as far as men are concerned, no trouble or difficulty, but rather a pleasure and delight.

Which is all the more disagreeable the less it effects.

But in spite of that labor to effect little or nothing, to run hither and thither, to call and shout at the top of one's voice, to exhaust all one's strength, and yet to hardly move to good one or two souls, alas, that is a troublesome and grievous thing for one who means well to God and to souls! Imagine, my dear brethren, a general to whom his sovereign has entrusted an army to be led against the enemy; he brings into requisition all his experience in military matters; he is busy day and night scheming how he can best circumvent the foe; and yet all his plans are of no avail; he cannot gain the least advantage, although at different times he hears news of great victories being gained elsewhere by other generals of his king. What disappointment and chagrin must he not feel! Imagine one who is very much in love, and who puts forth his best efforts to make money, so as to have something worth while to offer the beloved one; but he is always unsuccessful, while he has at the same time the mortification of seeing his rival prospering. Here you have a kind of sketch of the displeasure and inward disappointment of the zealous servant of God, who, with all his labor, troublesome as it is, can make no progress towards the desired end, while others with the same or less labor gain rich harvests of souls. For what makes them work is the burning love of God, the earnest longing to do something for His honor and glory, and to rescue souls from the evil one. Hence the greater this love and desire, the greater must necessarily be the secret sorrow and regret that they naturally find in seeing their efforts fruitless. Therefore you must not wonder at the conduct of a certain preacher in this very cathedral, one whom the most of you knew well; at first, as very few came to listen to him, he used to go, after the sermon, and kneel down at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and there, weeping bitterly, complain that in spite of the trouble he had taken to prepare his sermon during the whole week so few came to hear him, and so little good was done.

Yet James did not cease from his almost useless labor.

Now I leave it to yourselves to see whether St. James does not deserve, more than the others, the name of an indefatigable laborer for the honor of Christ; for in spite of the fact that they reaped such rich fruit by their preaching, while he gained little or nothing, yet, without being in the least disgusted with his profitless labor, he continued at it constantly, persistently, as if



he had converted half the world. Reason enough had he to think to himself: What! seven souls, after so much hard work! Is it really worth the while? Why do I plague myself so long? Should I not rather give up the work that I find so unprofitable? But our great apostle did not look at matters in that light; to further the glory of Christ and announce His gospel he did not cease to put forth his best efforts as long as life lasted; and if it had been granted him to live longer, he would have continued his thankless task with just as much energy and vigor.

But the envy of his enemies did not grant him that; they plotted against his life in all parts. Already in Granada in Spain, during his apostolate there, how many persecutions and sufferings had he not to endure at the hands of the Jews, who publicly denounced him as a traitor, a seducer of the people, a sorcerer and wizard? Often they bound him with chains and ropes, with the intention of putting him to death; and they would have done so had he not been miraculously helped and delivered out of their hands. As soon as he returned to Jerusalem, and there began, with his wonted zeal, to preach Jesus Christ, the high-priests and all the Jews regarded him with special hatred and determined to get rid of him by a violent death. The execution of this plan was entrusted to Abiathar, the high-priest, and his subordinate, Josias, who with the help of the Roman soldiers seized James as he was preaching, and crying out that he was a disturber of the peace, and a preacher of a false religion that was contrary to the laws of Rome, they tied a rope around his neck and brought him before King Herod, at whose command the executioner at once struck off his head. St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, says that all the Jews were exceedingly exultant at the death of this apostle; so that Herod was inclined to put to death Peter, as well. "And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And seeing that it pleased the Jews he proceeded to take up Peter also." <sup>1</sup> From this it appears that James must have been especially zealous, since the Jews were so exceedingly anxious to have him put out of the way before the other apostles. "It is evident," says Theophylactus, "that he was inflamed with an ardent zeal from the very fact that Herod put him to death to please the Jews." <sup>2</sup> And in fact St. James

All the reward he had for it in this life was the persecution of his enemies and martyrdom.

<sup>1</sup> Occidit autem Jacobum, fratrem Joannis, gladio. Videns autem quia placeret Judæis, apposuit ut apprehenderet et Petrum.—Acts xii. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Manifestum illum ingentis zeli fuisse, tum ex eo quod Herodes, ut placeret Judæis, gladio illum occidit.

was the first of the apostles whom the Jews seized and put to death for the faith. See, now, my dear brethren; contradictions, sufferings, persecutions, chains, and imprisonments, and finally a martyr's death—such were the rewards this apostle received during his life for his hard and wearisome labor.

But for that very reason God rewarded him all the more after death with a copious harvest of souls.

During his life, I say, for the pleasure the Almighty had in his indefatigable zeal was shown after his death, when he was rewarded with a harvest of souls such as no other apostle gained during life. The Holy Scripture says of Samson that he threw down the house in which a thousand Philistines were. "He killed many more at his death than he had killed before in his life."<sup>1</sup> The contrary may be said of St. James: he gave life to many more after his death than he had given life to when living. For, according to the saying, what you do by another is done by yourself. Now the seven disciples whom James had gained for Christ in Spain were afterwards consecrated bishops by St. Peter, and sent to Spain; and throughout that vast kingdom and its mighty provinces, and among its many different nationalities, they converted crowds of Jews as well as heathens to the Catholic faith, doubtless not without the special assistance and influence of St. James; for he had by his preaching sown the good seed that was afterwards to produce such abundant fruit, to be gathered by his disciples into the granary of the true Church; or, rather, James himself was that grain of wheat of which Our Lord says in the gospel of St. John: "Unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."<sup>2</sup> By a wise arrangement of Providence it was decreed that our apostle should effect little during life with all his labor; he had first to die and shed his blood for the faith, and then gather in rich fruits, just as was the case with his divine Master. How Our Lord toiled and labored during the last three years of His life, going from place to place! He preached everywhere, and worked wonderful miracles; and yet there were very few whom even with His divine eloquence He could induce to believe in Him fully as the Son of God; not one of the high-priests, hardly any of the Pharisees and scribes, whom He spoke to most frequently. Many of the people regarded Him as a seducer, a seditious man, a

<sup>1</sup> Multo plures interfecit moriens, quam ante vivus occiderat.—Judges xvi. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet; si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert.—John xii. 24, 25.

*On the Holy Apostle St. James.*

drunkard, a wizard; and all who at one time followed Him, and believed in Him to some extent, abandoned Him, and many of them even cried out: Crucify Him! crucify Him! That, my dear brethren, as we see, was just the fate of the apostle St. James while he still lived. But see what happened after the death of each. Christ said of Himself: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself."<sup>1</sup> And that is indeed what happened after His death; for He sent His apostles to preach the gospel throughout the world, and thus subjected it to His Church. The same, due proportion being observed, may be said of St. James. I, he might have said, being free from this earth, will by my disciples draw many in those countries to me. And such was really the case after his death. So says St. Vincent Ferrer, who attributes to the apostle nine converts in Spain. Just as our Saviour, he says, converted twelve apostles, as so many grains of corn, who were afterwards to spread the seed of the gospel throughout the world, "so it was with the blessed James; for his nine disciples were nine fruitful grains, who converted all Spain."<sup>2</sup> And how they converted it! From that time forward the light of faith has so shone in that country that it has never been extinguished to the present moment. Although the other apostles have planted the Catholic faith in other lands, yet we know by experience that in many places it has died out in time; while Spain, once converted, has never lost the faith, but still remains a Catholic kingdom in which to the present day no heretic is allowed; and therefore the ruling sovereign retains the title of Catholic King. Oh, what a glorious fruit and reward for the labor of our apostle! "What is most to be admired and praised in James, according to my opinion," writes a learned bishop, "is the fact that he first went to Spain, first wandered about and preached therein, and that kingdom has never lost the faith it once received."<sup>3</sup> So that in him especially, before the other apostles, is fulfilled the prophecy of Christ: "I have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain."<sup>4</sup> Mark, my dear brethren, the words, "your fruit should remain;" the fruit

<sup>1</sup> Ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad melsup.—John xii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ita beatus Jacobus; nam illi novem discipuli fuerunt novem grana fructificantia, qui totam Hispaniam converterunt.

<sup>3</sup> Quod de Jacobo magni faciendum, sentio illud est, quod Hispaniam primo per se ascendit primus eam perambulans et prædicans, quæ illam quam semel recepit lucem, non deseruit.—Epsc. Monopolit.

<sup>4</sup> Posui vos ut eatis, et fructum afferatis; et fructus vester maneat.—John xv. 16.

brought forth by the other apostles in many other provinces and kingdoms gradually dried up and was lost, while the fruit planted by the labor of James and his disciples remained, and is there to this day.

And made  
him illus-  
trious be-  
fore the  
world even  
above the  
other apos-  
tles.

Yes, even to this day our Saint continues to bring forth new fruit of souls; and that is the other reward of his indefatigable zeal. Denis the Carthusian applies to St. James the words of Ecclesiasticus about the Prophet Elisens: "After death his body prophesied. In his life he did great wonders, and in death he wrought miracles;"<sup>1</sup> for a dead body placed in the grave of the Prophet was restored to life. "How much more," continues Denis, "may not those words be said of the most holy apostle James, who after his death wrought many great and surprising miracles, such as are possible to omnipotence alone; for he raised several dead people to life. But after he was slain in Judea his body was carried thither (to Spain) by an angel, and there it shone with so many wonderful miracles that crowds were converted."<sup>2</sup> That sacred body has hitherto served as a bulwark to Spain against the attacks of the infidel; for St. James often showed himself in the air, and put to flight whole armies of enemies to the Christian name. It would be necessary to write whole volumes to describe the prodigies and miracles, as well as the numerous conversions of heathens and hardened sinners, which have for the last seventeen hundred years taken place in the sight of the world at his glorious tomb at Compostella. Therefore it is not to be wondered at that pilgrims from all parts of the world, many crowned heads being among them, go in procession to prostrate themselves before his sepulchre; so that we may apply to James, with good reason, the words uttered by the Prophet Isaias of Christ, the apostle's blood relation: "The root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people; Him the Gentiles shall beseech, and His sepulchre shall be glorious."<sup>3</sup> St. Antoninus gives as a reason why Our Lord inspired the faithful of all nations with such great veneration and esteem for the rel-

<sup>1</sup> Mortuum prophetavit corpus ejus. In vita sua fecit monstra, et in morte mirabilia operatus est.—Ecclesi. xlviii. 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Quanto magis verbum istud dici potest de sacratissimo apostolo Jacobo, qui post mortem suam tam multa et magna, tam præclarissima, solique omnipotenti possibilis fecit miracula, inter quæ etiam plures suscitavit defunctos. Eo autem in Judæa occiso, corpus ejus illic angelo duce miraculose delatum, tantis ibidem radiavit prodigiis, ut per hoc plurimi sint conversi.

<sup>3</sup> Radix Jesse, qui stat in signum populorum; ipsum gentes deprecabuntur, et erit sepulchrum ejus gloriosum.—Is. xi. 10.



ics of this apostle, and why the vow to visit his grave at Compostella cannot be dispensed with except by the Pope (as is also the case with the vow to visit the sepulchre of Christ at Jerusalem, and the tomb of the holy apostles Peter and Paul at Rome), that, namely, "as less honor and glory were given to him during life than to the other apostles by the faithful, on account of the shortness of his life, the divine munificence should make a return to him after his death, by causing his relics to be honored more than those of the other apostles."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, generally speaking, God is wont to exalt His servants after their death in those very places in which during life they were despised and looked down upon for His sake; and therefore we have reason to believe that since St. James was so disgracefully treated and banished by the Jews and heathens in Spain, so that he converted very few of them, God rewarded His faithful servant for the humiliation and scorn he suffered in that country by the great glory and honor He conferred on him afterwards in the sight of the whole world. And what must be the recompense reserved for him in heaven among the elect if his dead bones are held in such honor by men on earth? So great is the pleasure God has in the indefatigable zeal of His servant, although his labor seemed to be to no purpose.

This is a comforting thought for you, zealous preachers and pastors of the flock of Jesus Christ, who, according to the obligations of your office, diligently endeavor, by frequent sermons, instructions, and exhortations, to abolish vice, to bring sinners to true repentance, to urge all to do good, and so to gain many souls for Christ and heaven. It often happens either that few hear your preaching or that few receive it, so that the only result of your efforts is to bring down scorn and ridicule on yourselves, while little or no good rewards your trouble. Oh, do not get wearied of your work; do not be downhearted or despondent, and much less should you think of giving up preaching altogether; for your reward from God will not be a whit the less because the present results are so small. Hear the beautiful words in which St. Augustine addresses you: "As the evil counsellor, who tries to lead others into sin, justly incurs the penalty of his deceit, although his efforts have not been successful, so the

Lesson for  
preachers  
and pastor  
of souls.

<sup>1</sup> Ut quod minus honoris et gloriæ cæteris apostolis illi in vita collatum sit a fidelibus, propter brevitatem vitæ ejus, hoc quasi divina munificentia supplerit post mortem ejus, plus quam apostolorum omnium visitatis et honoratis ejus reliquit.—S. Antonin. 1. parte, tit. 6. c. 7.



faithful preacher of justice, although he is ridiculed by all, will by no means be deprived of his reward from God for the faithful fulfilment of his duty.”<sup>1</sup> How does the town-crier act when the magistrate orders him to publish a certain command or prohibition on public market days? He goes and does as he is told; whether few or many of the people are there to listen to him, whether they observe the law or not, is no affair of his. If any are afterwards subjected to punishment on account of having transgressed the law they may thank themselves for it. So you should say to yourselves: it is my duty to spare neither diligence nor study for the glory of God, to tell the truth and announce the will of God, without allowing myself to be influenced by human respect; that, with the help of God, I have hitherto done; that I will do in future. It is not in my power to make others profit by what I say, and derive fruit from it; nor has God obliged me to do so. The so-called author of the Imperfect Work, speaking of the words in which Christ called Peter and Andrew, “come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men,”<sup>2</sup> gives great comfort to those who, in spite of all their labor, cannot gain the desired fruit of souls. He says that it is not the duty of the fisherman always to catch a great quantity of fishes, for that is not in his power; his duty consists in this, that he diligently furnishes his hook with the proper bait, and casts it into the water, that he spreads his nets in a proper way, and does all he can to catch fish, and then waits patiently for whatever God will send him. In the same manner it is not the duty of the fisher of men always to catch a number of souls; that is not in his power, but in the power of God and His grace, as Our Lord Himself says: “No man can come to Me except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him.”<sup>3</sup> The duty of the pastor is to use every effort he is capable of, with the help of God’s grace, to do good to souls. The author quoted above says: “As in the fisherman all that is required is the labor of fishing and drawing the nets, while God sends the fish, so it is with the pastor of souls; for it is not a man who can make the people amend their lives,

<sup>1</sup> Sicut malignus suavor peccati, etiamsi non persuaserit, merito pœnam deceptoris incurrit; ita fidelis justitiæ prædicator, etiamsi ab omnibus respuatur, absit ut apud Deum sui officii mercede fraudetur.—S. Aug. l. 5. Controv. c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Venite post me, et faciam vos fieri piscatores hominum.—Matt. iv. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Nemo potest venire ad me, nisi Pater, qui misit me, traxerit eum.—John vi. 44.

but God.”<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, although the labor undergone is without fruit as far as the conversion of souls is concerned, yet it will not lose its reward with God, but rather have all the more merit in His sight; for, as we have seen, the merit is greater the more difficult and fruitless the work.

The same consolation is for you, Christian parents, fathers and mothers, if sometimes your children, without any fault of yours, turn out undutiful and thus cause you much trouble! I know that it is a sad thing for parents, when they have done their best to bring up their children to virtue and the service of God, by teaching, paternal correction, and good example, and thus to bring them to heaven—it is a sad thing to see them turn out disobedient, obstinate, and dissolute, given to lying, deceit, cursing, drinking, impurity, and other vices, and thus hurrying to the everlasting flames of hell. Could a well-meaning father or a pious mother have a greater cross than this to bear? Meanwhile, although you have compassion on the souls of your children, who are wantonly rushing to destruction, do not lose heart; your grief should and must be lessened by the knowledge that you have done your duty, and not been wanting in any part of a father’s or mother’s obligation; and more than that God will not require from you. If your trouble and care have little or no effect on your undutiful children, your own future reward will be no less, but will be all the greater and more abundant on account of the trouble and difficulties you had to contend with.

For parents and the heads of families.

Pious and oppressed Christians! you sometimes complain and sigh forth: Ah, how is it that the good and merciful God, who grants so much happiness even to the most wicked, has so completely forgotten me? I do my best not to commit any sin; my first and greatest care is to serve Him diligently every day, and to do His holy will in all things. And yet He treats me so harshly; He leaves me unassisted in my secret poverty and great want; one misfortune comes upon me after the other! What does He mean to do with me, since He thus turns His heart and thoughts away from me? Hush, Christians! God has not turned His fatherly heart away from you; He is most certainly thinking of you, although He seems to have forgotten you. Think of the generous reward He bestowed on the holy apostle St. James! But when

For the pious in adversity.

<sup>1</sup> Sicut enim in piscatore solus labor requiritur piscandi et jactandi retia; Deus autem transmittit capturam; sic et in doctore contingit, quia populum non corrigit homo, sed Deus.  
—Auct. Op. Imperf. hom. 7. in Matt.

and where did He bestow it? During the Saint's life He sent him nothing but sufferings and persecutions, but after death He made him glorious and illustrious in heaven and on earth. Oh, what a splendid reward awaits your zealous service of God and your patience in bearing crosses! And if God does not give it you in this life, it is a sure sign that he is keeping it for you till eternity. Tell me: is there any one of you who would wish to have his reward in this life, and to forfeit it in the next, and thus, like the wicked, to be content with an apparent happiness? I cannot think that any sensible Christian would be guilty of such folly. And is there any one who would like to give up a part of his heavenly reward, so as to be freed from his crosses in this life and enjoy a little earthly happiness? Neither do I think that any one would agree to that when he remembers how short and momentary is the sorrow that is to be rewarded with an eternal, heavenly joy. Therefore do not complain; be satisfied with what the well-meaning Lord appoints for you now; and rather rejoice and say with me: I thank Thee, O dear Lord! for that which hitherto has been to me the occasion of inordinate sorrow, because I did not understand things aright. Now I resign myself willingly to the cross which Thou hast laid on me; I do not want any reward in this life, but with an assured hope I await it in eternal life with Thee. Amen.

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*FORTY-SIXTH SERMON.*

ON THE HOLY APOSTLE ST. JOHN.

Subject.

St. John a true son of Mary.—*Preached on the feast of St. John.*

Text.

*Dicit matri suæ: Mulier, ecce filius tuus. Deinde dicit discipulo: Ecce mater tuâ.*—John xix. 26, 27.

“He saith to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother.”

Introduction.

No greater happiness could John have received from Christ on earth than to be loved by Him in such a special manner, and

thus to be distinguished among the other apostles as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Nor could Our Lord have given John a surer sign of this special love than to give her of whom He deigned to be born to John as his mother, and at the same time to give him to her as her son. “He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother.” “O wonderful proof of love!” exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova, “He puts John in His own place with His Mother, and leaves John to the Blessed Virgin as a son in His stead!”<sup>1</sup> “Could that favor have been made any greater?”<sup>2</sup> And to the great glory of this apostle, all we can add in his praise is this, that as John was publicly declared the son of Mary by Christ Himself, so he was a true son of such a great mother. This glory and honor of this great Saint I mean to represent to you to-day, my dear brethren, and I say:

Plan of Discourse.

*St. John was a true son of Mary. Such is the whole subject of this panegyric. Let us, too, endeavor to be worthy children of Mary: such shall be the conclusion.*

Obtain for us this grace, O holy St. John, from Jesus, who loves you, through the hands of Mary, your mother, and our holy guardian angels.

To be a son of Mary—Oh, what an honor! what happiness for a mortal man! To have as mother the greatest lady of the world, the Queen of heaven and earth, the chosen daughter of the Eternal Father, the beloved spouse of the Holy Ghost; to be called the son of the same mother of whom was born Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and thus to be a brother of Jesus Christ; what an honor, I repeat; what a dignity, and what incomprehensible happiness! Where, since the beginning of the world, will you find any mere creature who has enjoyed a similar happiness? None of the angels, not even the greatest of the seraphim, could hope to be raised to such a dignity: “To which of the angels hath He said at any time: Thou art My son?”<sup>3</sup> Such is the question we may well ask about Mary, which St. Paul in wonderment asks of the Eternal Father. Oh, truly, no! All the princes of heaven,

A great honor and happiness to be a son of Mary.

<sup>1</sup> O magnum dilectionis indicium! suo loco apud matrem substituit eum, et pro se in filium virginis reliquit eum.

<sup>2</sup> Huic gratiæ quid amplius addi potest?

<sup>3</sup> Cui enim dixit aliquando angelorum: filius meus es tu?—Heb. i. 5.

great as they are, are quite satisfied to have the honor of saluting this virgin as their empress, of serving and waiting on her most humbly as her vassals. When St. Margaret of Cortona once heard, after holy communion, those words from Our Lord: "My daughter," she was ravished out of herself with joy, fell into an ecstasy, and after a considerable time, awakening as from the dead, cried out in a loud voice: "O infinite sweetness of God! O blessed words! My daughter! such is the name given me by the great God! Is it possible that I still live, and that my soul was not forced to leave my body by such an overwhelming weight of happiness?" My daughter! Jesus has said that to me! What, then, is there in the world for me to desire any longer? What, think you, lovers of Mary, would be your feelings if any one of you heard from the lips of the Mother of God the words: My son; my dear child? For my part, if that happened to me, I could not contain myself for joy; but to no purpose should I expect such a great and unmerited favor.

This was reserved for St. John alone.

This joy, this honor, this happiness fell to the lot of John alone among all mere creatures; for from the lips of the infallible truth, Jesus Christ Himself, he heard himself publicly proclaimed as the son of Mary when he heard the comforting words: "Woman, behold thy son," which the Lord said to His Mother; "After that He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother." Whereby He meant, as a learned author says, "For My sake you have said to your parents: I know you no longer; behold, now the Mother of God is your mother! You left the fisherman's boat; behold, now you guide the merchant's ship that bringeth her bread from afar; I commit to your care what I love best on earth."<sup>1</sup> "O happy and blessed St. John," exclaims St. Bernard, "to whom the Lord deigned to commend such a treasure! O prudent disciple, beloved by Christ before all, whom the Lord made the private chamberlain of His most beautiful palace!"<sup>2</sup> Denis the Carthusian is also struck with astonishment, and cries out, congratulating John: "How great is thy honor and glory, and what a precious treasure is entrusted to thee! The vessel of all holiness, the Lady of the world, the Queen of heaven, who had and brought forth one and the same Son with the Eternal Father, from whom the Holy

<sup>1</sup> Dixisti parentibus tuis propter me: Non novi vos; ecce Dei genetrix mater tua! Renuntiasti naviculæ piscatoris; ecce navem gubernas institoriam de longe portantem panem suum; quod dilectissimum in mundo habeo, tuæ fidei committo.

<sup>2</sup> O felix, beatus Joannes, cui talem thesaurum Dominus dignatus est commendare! O Christi dilecte præ omnibus et prudens, quem constituit Dominus privatum camerarium aulae suæ spectosissimæ!—S. Bern. de Lament. Virg.



Ghost truly proceeds, is given and is sent; that Mother is committed to thee, and is become thy mother, and thou art called her son! Truly, Jesus loved thee when He conferred such a favor on thee!"<sup>1</sup> John, the son of Mary! Nothing more glorious can be said in his praise.

John, the son of Mary, not merely in word and name, not merely by adoption, as rich and childless people sometimes adopt poor children, and make them their heirs, but a true son of Mary. Such is the opinion plainly asserted by some of the holy Fathers. Hear St. Thomas of Villanova: "Let us not imagine," he says, writing of the words: Behold thy mother; "let us not think those words of the Saviour to have been uttered in vain; for there are not wanting pious and learned men who maintain that he is not merely Mary's son in the opinion and estimation of men, as if by adoption, for they say He who by His word created all things out of nothing could make a son of one who was not a son; but if He could, He did; for He did not say: Have her as your mother; but assertingly: Behold thy mother."<sup>2</sup> St. Peter Damian seems to have no doubt of this, writing of the same words of Christ: "These words are efficacious and founded on the infallible truth; for that only-begotten Word of the Father that hung on the cross is substantially in the substance of the Father and is eternal; therefore the words spoken by Him, since they are the spirit and the life, cannot be empty. Just as He said to the Mother: This is thy son; so He said to the disciples: This is My body—words that have such great power and efficacy that the bread which He held out to them at once became the body of the Lord; for He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created." From which the holy Doctor draws this conclusion: "By analogy, then, we may say that St. John was not to bear merely the name of son, but he deserved by the force of those words of the Saviour to be united with the Blessed Virgin in the bonds of a stricter relationship." Origen contradicts all who would wish to dispute

Not only in name, but in truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Quantus tibi est honor et gloria? Vas omnis sanctitatis, domina mundi, regina cœli, quæ cum Patre Æterno habet et genuit unum eundemque Filium, a quo Spiritus Sanctus vere procedit, datur et mittitur, tibi committitur, Mater tua efficitur, et tu filius ejus appellaris! Vere diligebat te Jesus, quem ad tantam gratiam prælegit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Neque putemus vacua illa Salvatoris verba fuisse; neque enim defuere pii et docti, qui assererent, non sola æstimatione humana filium potius reputari quam esse, quales lex et adoptio solet filios procreare; sed eum qui verbo suo cuncta creavit ex nihilo, potuisse, adjunt, filium facere de non filio; quod si potuit, fecit; non enim dixit: Habeto eam matrem; sed assertive: Ecce mater tua.—S. Thom. a Villanova, Serm. de S. Joan.*

this sonship of John, and says: "If, according to the judgment of those who think rightly, no one but Jesus is the son of Mary, and if Jesus said to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son; it is the same as if He had said: Behold, this is Jesus whom you brought forth;" or, This is thy son, as Jesus, whom thou didst bring forth, is thy Son.

He had all the marks of a true son of Mary: in filial love for her.

Be that as it may, my dear brethren, this much is certain, that John possesses all the qualities that go to make a true son of Mary. For in the first place, a true son loves his mother, and is loved by her in return. Oh, who can describe the tender and affectionate love that Mary had for John as her son, and John for Mary as his mother? Let St. Cyril of Alexandria speak of it: "Christ," he says, "commended His Mother to the disciple that he might perform the duties of a son to her; in the same way He admonishes the Mother to have the authority of a parent over the disciple; that is, He wished them to be as united in the bonds of love and charity as if they were bound to each other by the ties of the strictest relationship according to nature." Speaking of the words, "behold thy son; behold thy mother," St. Thomas of Villanova says: "By these words the Lord impressed on the heart of the virgin a certain maternal love towards John more ardent and strong than that which mothers generally have by nature; and He gave to the apostle a filial reverence, such as no son naturally possesses."<sup>1</sup> And how must not this maternal and filial love have grown and increased while these most holy and amiable persons were living in the same house, united by the strictest ties, conversing, eating, and praying together, and that not merely for one or two years, but, as the probable opinion has it, for twenty-three whole years? Oh, that we had been vouchsafed a glance at that holy society! What comfort and joy that motherly and childlike love must have caused them mutually? If a single greeting of the Mother of God made John the Baptist exult in his mother's womb, "what, think you," says St. Thomas, "must have been caused in the Evangelist by such long-continued association with the same virgin?" And that, too, the association of such a mother with such a loving son; of such a son with such a tender mother?

<sup>1</sup> Impressit in hoc verbo Dominus statim cordi virgineo amorem quemdam maternam in Joannem, fortioem et ardentioem, quam solet matribus natura tribuere; visceribus etiam apostoli reverentiam filialem in virginem inseruit, qualem nullus filius naturæ habet in matrem.

Moreover, the true son is recognized by his likeness to the mother; for children are generally like their parents, and they resemble the mother more than the father, not only in the outward form and appearance of the body, but also in their character. Well does Salvianus say of children: "Before they are able to use their parents' property they have the parents themselves in their dispositions."<sup>1</sup> As St. Paul says: "For if the first fruit be holy, so is the lump also; and if the root be holy, so are the branches."<sup>2</sup> Of which passage a learned author writes thus: "As the leaven must be like the mass, and the branches like the root, so must children resemble their parents."<sup>3</sup> Therefore parents are wont to say of a child that is not like them: That is not my child; he must have been changed in the cradle. And of one who is like father or mother: That child is the living image of its father; it is the very stamp of its mother, etc. And it is in that respect, my dear brethren, that St. John is a true son of the Blessed Virgin; for if we compare them with each other we find in him a perfect image of Mary, showing forth clearly the disposition and the virtues of the divine Mother. Let us see whether such is really the case.

And a true likeness of disposition to her.

It is an infallible truth that Mary was always an immaculate virgin, the Virgin of virgins, who, according to the testimony of the holy Fathers, would have preferred not to be the Mother of God than to sully her virginity. Is not John exactly like her in this respect? For there is no doubt that from his childhood till his death he remained a chaste virgin. Euthemius writes of him that from his youth he was most careful in guarding his virtue, "so that he never allowed even an impure thought to enter his mind."<sup>4</sup> The doctors and interpreters of Holy Writ are generally of the opinion that it was on account of this virginal purity that he was so specially beloved by Christ, as de Lyra says: "Jesus loved him and showed him special marks of love on account of his virginal purity."<sup>5</sup> According to St. Thomas, "he was beloved especially on account of the beauty of purity, because he was chosen as a virgin by the Lord."<sup>6</sup> St. Bonaventure says: "He was with reason beloved by the Almighty on account of his inviolable

As far as virginal purity is concerned

<sup>1</sup> Prius quam in dominio suo habere incipiant res paternas, habent in animis ipsos patres.

<sup>2</sup> Quod si delibatio sancta est, et massa; si radix sancta, et rami.—Rom. xi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Necessè est, fermento massam, et radici ramos assimilari: sic parentibus filios.

<sup>4</sup> Ut ne turpem quidem cogitationem unquam in cor suum ascendere permiserit.

<sup>5</sup> Quem diligebat Jesus, specialia ei dilectionis signa ostendendo præ cæteris, propter munditiam virginalem.

<sup>6</sup> Fuit magis dilectus propter munditiam puritatis, quia virgo est electus a Domino.

purity.”<sup>1</sup> To the same effect are the words of St. Jerome, Theophylactus, Albert the Great, and others. On account of the same purity he received from God a wonderful light, greater than that given to the other evangelists. “Not without reason,” says St. Peter Damian, “was such a profound and accurate knowledge of the divinity given to a virgin.”<sup>2</sup> It was John alone who recognized Christ when He appeared to the disciples after the resurrection, while none of the others knew who He was. “It is the Lord!”<sup>3</sup> cried out John with joy. De Lyra tells us the reason of this: “John, who was purer than the others, being a virgin, recognized Christ quicker than they.”<sup>4</sup> And it was on account of the same virginal purity that he received Mary as his mother, as St. Jerome testifies: “To him the Lord, while hanging on the cross, commended His Mother, that a virgin might have charge of a virgin.”<sup>5</sup> Mary herself called him her angel, on account of his purity; for when asked by her divine Son, after His death, whether He should send her the archangel Michael as her guardian, she answered, as the Abbot Guericus tells us: “It is not necessary; I am satisfied with that new angel in the flesh, the disciple whom Jesus loved.”<sup>6</sup> But why should we spend so long to prove this? The purity of Mary alone excepted, no greater purity has been found in the world than that of John, as St. Peter Damian does not hesitate to say.<sup>7</sup> Therefore in this respect John was a son of Mary, quite like his Mother.

A tender  
lov- of  
Christ;

Again, there was never a creature in heaven or on earth who loved Jesus so tenderly as Mary, His Mother; and we may well say that after Mary there was never any one in the world who loved Jesus so tenderly as John, the son of Mary, who was so like her. This is already evident from the fact that he was “the disciple whom Jesus loved;” for if Christ loves those who love Him, as the eternal Wisdom expressly says, “I love them that love Me,”<sup>8</sup> then John must necessarily have loved

<sup>1</sup> Merito dilectus a Deo ob integritatem sacræ virginitatis.

<sup>2</sup> Non immerito tam profunda, tam supereminens revelatio deitatis virgini debebatur.—Serm. 1. de S. Joan.

<sup>3</sup> Dominus est.—John xxi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Joannes, qui cæteris purior erat, tanquam virgo citius aliis cognovit Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Hinc Matrem suam pendens in cruce commendavit Dominus, ut virginem virgo servaret.—S. Hieron. in Prolo. Evan. Joan.

<sup>6</sup> Non est opus; sufficit mihi meus novus in carne angelus, discipulus ille, quem diligebat Jesus.—Gueric. Serm. 2. de Assumpt. Virg.

<sup>7</sup> Cæteras a mundi primordio virgines antecellit.

<sup>8</sup> Ego diligentes me diligo.—Prov. viii. 17.

more than all the others, since he was loved by Christ above all the others. So it is, says the learned Salmeron: "John loved more intimately and sweetly, therefore he was loved by the Lord more tenderly and sweetly."<sup>1</sup> This, too, is the opinion of St. Augustine, whose words are quoted by Albert the Great: "The cause of this special love was that John in his turn also loved Christ more than the others loved Him."<sup>2</sup> St. Peter Damian calls his heart a burning furnace of divine love;<sup>3</sup> and indeed he could not hide his excessive love for his Saviour. From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; we know that all lovers gladly speak of the object of their affection, and exult and rejoice at the thought of being loved; now almost everything that John spoke was filled with love, as St. Gregory says: "Let us consider the words of John; for everything he utters is inflamed with the fire of charity."<sup>4</sup> Therefore he repeats so often the words: "The disciple whom Jesus loved," as St. Chrysostom well remarks: "It is usual for lovers to be unable to conceal their love; they often speak of it, that they may thus receive some consolation."<sup>5</sup> And it is the property of lovers to be willingly in each other's company, and to be unable to bear separation without pain. And how that showed itself in John! Wherever Jesus went John was with Him. "Hence," says Surius, "the seat he desired to have next Our Lord, with his brother, was not asked through ambition, but for the love of Christ, since he did not wish any one to be nearer to the Beloved One than himself."<sup>6</sup> He showed the same afterwards, when he hastened with Peter to the grave of Our Lord; the gospel says: "They both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre."<sup>7</sup> For, as St. Gregory says: "He who loves more ardently runs quicker and arrives first."<sup>8</sup> Many a one, seeing John reclining on the bosom of the Lord, would have ac-

<sup>1</sup> Joannes familiaris ac suavius amabat; unde a Domino et dulcius suavius deamatus.—Salm. tom. 11. Tract. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Causa hujus præcipuæ dilectionis erat, quod Joannes vice versa etiam Christum præ cæteris dilexit.

<sup>3</sup> Velut caminus quidam divini incendii.

<sup>4</sup> Joannes verba pensemus, cujus omne quod loquitur, charitatis igne vaporatur.—S. Greg. Hom. 11. in Ezech.

<sup>5</sup> Hicamantium mos est, ut amorem suum silentio tegere nequeant; enarrant frequentius, ut ipsa assiduitate narrandi solatium amoris sui caplant.

<sup>6</sup> Hinc etiam manifestum est, quod cathedram, quam proxime Christum cum fratre petivit, non gloriæ, sed Christi amore petiverit, eo quod nollet hic altum esse sibi dilecto viciniorem.

<sup>7</sup> Currebant autem duo simul, et ille alius discipulus præcucurrit citius Petro.—John xx. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Qui amat ardentius, currit velocius, et pervenit citius.



cused him of a discourtesy or want of thought in behaving thus in presence of the other apostles; but, as Salmeron says, "it was done through excess of love, which does not consider its actions, and is only concerned about being united with the loved one."<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas says: "The beloved John, without being ordered, without asking permission, confidently reclines on the Lord's bosom. Love did that; for love is beyond measure daring."<sup>2</sup> For he knew that Christ was aware of the tenderness of his love, and would not take his conduct in ill part.

Suffering  
with Christ:

Further, no one can deny that Mary truly suffered with her divine Son; therefore she is called by the Catholic Church the Queen of martyrs; for she it was who, standing close to the cross, with her own eyes contemplated the sufferings of her Son as He hung dying between two thieves; all the pain and agony that He suffered in His body that Mother felt in her soul, so that, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sharp sword of sorrow pierced her heart. There again, my dear brethren, you can see the resemblance between Mary and John, her son. For he alone it was who kept constantly at her side during her bitter sorrows, with this difference, that Mary felt the torments of Christ as those of her son by nature, while John felt them as those of one who was now given to him as a brother. And indeed it would seem that, as far as the length of time is considered, the sufferings of John with Christ lasted longer than those of Mary; for of the latter we read only that she stood at the foot of the cross, and saw how Jesus died; while John was present at the whole passion from beginning to end. He saw the bloody sweat in the Garden; and from there he accompanied Our Lord to the house of Caiphaz; thence to the tribunal of Pilate; from Pilate's house to the cross, and from there to the grave. "He was present with Him in the palace," says St. Thomas; "he was present in the prætorium; he was present as He hung on the cross; he weeps, grieves, and groans. It was a wonderful dispensation of love that the beloved disciple should be present at the terrible torments of his Lord, and that he should drink the chalice of the passion with his dear Master at the foot of the cross."<sup>3</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> Ex nimia dilectione, quæ non considerat quid agat, sed tantum ut dilecto adhereat.

<sup>2</sup> Joannes dilectus non jussus, non petita venia, confidenter recumbit super pectus Domini. Amor facit hoc; est enim supra modum audax dilectio.

<sup>3</sup> Adstat in palatio; adstittit in prætorio; adest etiam patibulo; lacrymatur, dolet, gemit. Mira utique amoris dispensatio fuit, ut terribilibus Domini sui cruciatibus dilectus adesset et calicem passionis ad pedem crucis cum dilecto suo potaret.

truly, if the sorrow of Mary on account of the sufferings of her Son were so great that they are compared by the Prophet Jeremias to a vast sea, "great as the sea is thy destruction,"<sup>1</sup> then, too, must we say of the sorrow of John that it was like a rapid, rushing river. For, O my God! what anguish must have filled the heart of the loving disciple when he saw his dear Master fettered with chains and dragged like a dog through the streets, buffeted, spat upon, and ridiculed as a fool! What pain it must have caused him to hear the whips and rods raining down the cruel blows, and tearing and wounding Jesus from head to foot! To see Him crowned with the sharp thorns, streaming with blood, more like a worm than a man, exhibited publicly to the people, condemned to death, and obliged to carry the heavy load of the cross on His shoulders up the steep hill of Calvary! To see Him nailed hand and foot, lifted on high, hanging three hours in extreme agony, and finally giving up the ghost! What pain to behold that most sacred bosom, which had formerly served as his sweetest resting-place, and that heart by which he was so tenderly loved pierced with a lance! Who can comprehend the greatness of this torment? "Those two martyrs," says St. Bernard, speaking of Mary and John, "kept silent, and could not speak on account of the greatness of their sorrow."<sup>2</sup> Both almost died of compassion with Our Lord; that is, Mary and John, the suffering mother and her son, who was like her in suffering.

Finally, to epitomize the virtues of this Mother and of her son, there never was any mere creature so united with the will of God as Mary was. In all circumstances, in sorrow and in joy, she repeated with contented heart that humble act of submission: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." Even on Mount Calvary, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers, she was ready, although to her own greatest sorrow, to nail her most beloved Son to the cross with her own hands, if that had been necessary for the redemption of the world, and had been required by the will of God. My dear brethren, if we wish to know whether and how far St. John was like his Mother in this great virtue, we need not examine his whole subsequent life; the last years of it are enough for us; if we consider them briefly we shall find circumstances which many perhaps have hitherto passed over. Mark

In conformity to the will of God.

<sup>1</sup> Magna est velut mare contritio tua.—Lam. 11. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Tacebant ambo illi martyres, et præ nimio dolore loqui non poterant.—S. Bern. in Lament. Virg.

what I am about to say: after Christ had died on the cross and ascended into heaven; after Mary, the Mother of Christ, had been assumed, body and soul, into heaven; after all the other apostles and disciples of Christ, set free from the trammels of the flesh by the death of martyrdom, had been received into heaven: John alone remained alive on earth;—and how long? Not for a few months only, but for many years after; and although he was the youngest of the apostles at the time of their calling, he was the oldest of them at the time of his death, for, as some writers tell us, he was ninety-three years old, or, as others say, ninety-eight, and, according to some, he even reached the hundred and sixtieth year of his life.

This he showed especially in old age.

Yes, you think, but what is the meaning of all this? What conclusion do you wish to draw from it? This: that John was an example of the most perfect conformity with and resignation to the divine will. How so? Consider for a moment what a hard thing it is for a lover to be separated even for a few weeks from the object of his affections. Every day in which he sighs in vain to be in the loved one's company seems a year to him. How hard, then, must it not have been for that holy apostle so filled with ardent love, to be left quite alone by his Master, his dear Mother, Mary, his beloved brothers, the other apostles, and that for so many years, in this sorrowful vale of tears, while they were in the full possession of eternal joys, in the presence of Jesus and Mary, in the heavenly fatherland! "I am straitened," exclaims St. Paul; "having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ."<sup>1</sup> "I am dying because I do not die," cried out St. Teresa,<sup>2</sup> so intense was her desire to be with Christ, her spouse. For life seemed to her more bitter than death, on account of the fervent desire she had to be united with her God. How many similar sighs, then, will not St. John beyond all doubt have sent to heaven, since he enjoyed such a special degree of intimacy with Our Lord on earth, and yet had to abstain from seeing His divine countenance till he had reached a ripe old age? O good Jesus, is it then true that this is the disciple whom Thou didst love most tenderly? If so, why didst Thou leave him so long on earth? Why didst Thou not call him to Thee before all the others, since his wish to be with Thee was so intense? What a fine opportunity of dying he had when, weakened by age and constant apostolic labor,

<sup>1</sup> Coarctor; desiderium habens dissolvi et esse cum Christo.—Phillip. 1. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Morior quia non morior.

he was scourged and put into a caldron of boiling oil, in the city of Rome, out of hatred to the faith? Oh, how his heart must have bounded with joy on the occasion! Praised be God! he must have cried out; now at last I have reached the goal of my desires! now I am dying for love of my dear Master! now the long wished-for moment has arrived for me to come to Him whom I have loved more than myself! But he was disappointed. God preferred to work a miracle rather than allow John to die then. The boiling oil was to him a cooling bath, in which his body was made more vigorous and strong. "He came out of it stronger and healthier than he entered it,"<sup>1</sup> says St. Jerome, and such, too, is the testimony of Tertullian. But, O dear Lord, what does that mean? When St. Andrew was hanging on the cross he cried out, fearing lest the people should rescue him: "O Lord, King of eternal glory, receive me hanging on the gibbet;"<sup>2</sup> and Thou didst hear his prayer! Thy holy martyr Ignatius cried out, through a desire of death: "May I be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts!"<sup>3</sup> Let the lions, O Lord, devour me, that I may come to Thee! And Thou didst hear him! Many other martyrs begged of Thee to put an end to the miracles by which they were enabled to withstand different torments, so that they might at last lose their lives; and Thou didst grant their prayers! Thou dost take from the world many who dread nothing more than death, and desire nothing more than a long life. And behold, the disciple whom Thou lovest, who loves Thee so much, wishes for nothing more than to die; naturally speaking, he should have succumbed in the bath of boiling oil; yet Thou didst not permit him to die! The very means that should have destroyed his life were by Thy Almighty power made the means of enabling him to live longer! Oh, what a hard fate! I repeat. Meanwhile, how did John submit to this arrangement of Divine Providence? Did he become downcast, or did his love grow less? No; he was fully satisfied and in the same dispositions towards his divine Master as before; daily he preached nothing to his disciples but the love of Christ and of his neighbor; he who in the same sentiments as Mary stood at the foot of the cross always thought in his heart like his Mother: Behold the servant of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word; according

<sup>1</sup> Purior et vegetior exivit, quam intravit.

<sup>2</sup> Domine, Rex æternæ gloriæ, suscipe me pendentem in patibulo.

<sup>3</sup> Dentibus bestiarum molar!

to Thy holy will let me live how and as long as my God wills; let me die how and when it may be pleasing to Him.

So that John  
is a true son  
of Mary.

My dear brethren, could a child be more like his mother than John was like Mary? So that he was a son of that Mother, according to the last testament of Christ; a son of that Mother, being adopted to that position; a son of that Mother by filial love; a son of that Mother by likeness of disposition and virtue; and therefore John was a true son of Mary. Yes, holy apostle of charity, we congratulate thee, and rejoice that thou hast been raised to such a high dignity and happiness as to have received as thy mother her who bore the Saviour of the world! "Truly, Jesus loved thee, since He conferred such a favor on thee!" Ah, would that we, too, might have the happiness of venturing to greet Mary as our mother, and to call ourselves her children!

We, too,  
should try,  
after John's  
example, to  
be true chil-  
dren of  
Mary.

But what am I saying? Venturing? Dear Christians, rejoice! Even we, too, have all of us that great happiness; and on account of it we are bound every day of our lives to render most humble thanks to Jesus Christ. According to the holy Fathers, when St. John heard the words of Christ at the foot of the cross, "Woman, behold thy son; behold thy mother," he stood there in the person of the whole Catholic Church, and in the name of all the faithful he received Mary as his Mother; so that we are adopted children of Mary, and Mary is the Mother of us all. But to be true and beloved children of this great Mother depends on ourselves, and on how we behave towards her. We shall be her true and beloved children, if, like St. John, we show her a constant, tender, childlike love, not merely in word and in daily greetings, but in deed and truth. But this cannot be done by us unless we love Jesus, her divine Son, with our whole hearts, and constantly; for it is a falsehood to pretend to love Mary when one is in the state of mortal sin and an enemy of Jesus. Undutiful are those children who disobey Him whom the Mother loves more than herself, and wills every one to love above all things! We shall be true children of Mary, if, like St. John, we endeavor, as far as possible, to become like to that Mother, that is, to imitate her life and virtues, especially in as far as purity according to our state is concerned. No one is more displeasing to this most chaste virgin than he who is contaminated with the horrible vice of impurity. We must imitate her also in suffering with Christ, that is, in bearing with true patience the crosses and trials that are laid on us; and we must be like her in the con-



formity and resignation of our will to the will of God in all His decrees. O dearest disciple of Christ, true son of Mary! thou canst now do all with these two in heaven; obtain, we beseech thee, for us all the grace to be as we profess to be—true children of thy Mother and ours; then we shall have a sure pledge and sign that we shall one day rejoice with thee forever in heaven in the society of Jesus and Mary. Amen.

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FORTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON THE HOLY APOSTLE ST. THOMAS.

Subject.

The holy apostle St. Thomas was an active and zealous apostle in his faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.—*Preached on the feast of St. Thomas.*

Text.

*Noli esse incredulus, sed fidelis.*—John xx. 27.

“Be not faithless, but believing.”

Introduction.

He is indeed an unbelieving Thomas! Such is the expression in common use when we wish to speak of one who is obstinate and hard to convince; and generally St. Thomas is represented in the pulpit as having refused to believe in the truth of the resurrection of Our Lord. My dear brethren, I intend to-day to save the apostle's memory from that horrible calumny, and to show the contrary, to his undying fame. I repeat, then, without further introduction:

Plan of Discourse.

*St. Thomas was an active and zealous apostle in his faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ: such is the whole subject of this panegyric. The moral lesson will follow by way of conclusion.*

Great apostle, before all I must publicly acknowledge that I have never experienced more consolation, pleasure, joy, and readiness in study than I did in the preparation of this sermon; this I ascribe to thy assistance, and conclude therefrom that thou art pleased with it—a conclusion that confirms me all the more in the

intention that I now wish to carry out. One thing I ask of thee: give strength to my words so to move the hearts of all present that they may henceforth have a better opinion of thy faith and imitate thee better therein. The same grace I expect from the Queen of the apostles and our holy guardian angels.

Thomas  
was at first  
incred-  
ulous.

Thomas the most active and zealous in the faith, and that, too, in the resurrection of Christ? How can that be? Does not the very gospel of to-day, dictated by the infallible truth, assert the contrary? What time and trouble were not required to bring Thomas at last to confess his belief in the resurrection? The other disciples all assured him that they had seen the Lord alive with their own eyes after He had risen from the tomb, and had spoken with Him; and what answer did Thomas make? We have heard it already: "But he said to them: Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And the words of my text, pronounced by Our Lord, seem also to be against my proposition: "Be not faithless, but believing." And when at last the apostle was convinced Our Lord said to him: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed."<sup>1</sup> So that we have undeniable proof that after all the other apostles had signified their belief in the resurrection of Christ Thomas alone still had his doubts. Was it not great obstinacy on his part to contradict the words of so many witnesses so worthy of credence? And still worse for him to remain a whole week in his incredulity? Nay, what presumption on his part to state boldly that he would not believe until Our Lord fulfilled certain conditions laid down by him: "Except I shall see, etc., I will not believe"? Is that the way to be active in the faith? Is it not rather being the slowest and most obstinate of all the apostles? Such, my dear brethren, is the manner in which many preachers depict the character of this glorious apostle, and condemn him of a grievous fault. I confess that formerly I, too, was of the same opinion; but now that I am better instructed in the matter I withdraw all I have said before, and proclaim that with other preachers I have done this apostle great wrong.

<sup>1</sup> Ille autem dixit eis: Nisi videro in manibus ejus fixuram clavorum, et mittam digitum meum in locum clavorum, et mittam manum meam in latus ejus, non credam. Et non esse incredulus, sed fidelis. Quia vidisti me, Thoma, credidisti; beati qui non viderunt, et crediderunt.—John xx. 25, 27, 29.

How so? Is it not true that Thomas was first unbelieving? Yes. I cannot and dare not deny that, after the words of the gospel which he himself spoke: "I will not believe." So that in the beginning Thomas did not wish to believe. But what did he not wish to believe? That Christ was risen from the dead? The gospel says not a word to that effect, nor can such a conclusion be drawn from it. And if the gospel says nothing of it why should we blame the holy apostle and accuse him of being guilty of disbelieving the resurrection of Our Lord, in spite of the many prophecies of it he himself had heard from Christ's own lips? This is the incredulity I dare not accuse him of, much less can I say that he was obstinate, stiff-necked, presumptuous. I could prove the contrary, and say that at the very time when Thomas said straight out, "I will not believe," he had not the least doubt of the resurrection of Christ; and I should be able to help out my proof by plenty of testimonies from the Doctors and Fathers of the Church, as well as by arguments drawn from reason. Hear what St. Ambrose says, speaking of this apostle: "He seemed to doubt, not of the resurrection of the Lord, but of the circumstances of it."<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine agrees with this when he says: "The words: I will not believe, are those of one who is inquiring, not denying; for when he speaks them his wish is to be instructed and confirmed in his faith."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere he calls him a just man, a faithful man, a saint, even because he wished to put his hand into Our Lord's side: "Therefore," says St. Augustine, "as Thomas was holy, faithful, and just, he was eager to search after all these things, not that he doubted, but to put aside every suspicion of disbelief."<sup>3</sup> Still clearer are the words of the holy Bishop Gaudentius, who lived in the time of St. Ambrose: "It was an ardent desire, and not incredulity that impelled him to say to the disciples who had seen the Lord in his absence: Except I shall see, etc., I will not believe. For he was most anxious to enjoy the sight of that which he believed in his heart."<sup>4</sup> Such is the opinion of those

Yet he did not deny the resurrection of Christ, but believed in it firmly. Proved from the holy Fathers.

<sup>1</sup> Ille non de resurrectione Domini, sed de resurrectionis qualitate dubitasse.—S. Amb. in c. 24. Luc.

<sup>2</sup> Vox ista inquiringis est, non negantis; dum hoc dicit, doceri voluit, confirmari desiderat.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas ergo cum esset sanctus, fidelis, et justus, hæc omnia solícite requisivit, non quod ipse aliquid dubitaret, sed ut omnem suspicionem incredulitatis excluderet.—S. Aug. c. 10. Serm. 5. in Oct. Pasc.

<sup>4</sup> Ardētis desiderii fuit illud, non infidelitatis, quod condiscipulis suis, qui ipso absente Dominum viderant, ait: Nisi videro, etc., non credam. Erat enim valde anxius ne non et oculis frueretur, quod corde credebat.—S. Gaudent. in Tract. de Die Dedic. Basil.

holy Doctors and Fathers of the Church regarding the faith of Thomas in the resurrection; and most of the other Fathers do not contradict this opinion.

Deduced also from the fact that Thomas did not fear the Jews as much as the other apostles did.

And to me it seems quite probable, and I am still more confirmed in this belief when I consider the undaunted courage of St. Thomas, a courage that could be founded only on a faith in the resurrection of Christ. Mark, my dear brethren, what the gospel says of the apostles: "Now when it was late that day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came." None of them had the courage to leave the room, much less dared they go into the street, fearing lest they should be taken by the Jews and served as their Master was. Peter and John had gone to the sepulchre a little while before; but they went in the dark night; nor did they remain long, but hastened back, and joined the others, as St. Cyril says: "My opinion is that they came back all the quicker, because they knew how angry the Jews were against the disciples of Christ; nor did they think it safe to remain at the tomb till daybreak."<sup>1</sup> And where was Thomas meanwhile? The gospel says: "Thomas was not with them when Jesus came." So that he did not fear the Jews, but went out boldly and let himself be seen in public, either for the purpose of bringing food to the others, or to find out what was being said about Christ in the city; "Thomas was not with them." Now I ask: Why were the other apostles so much afraid of going out? Because they knew not how things were with them, and still doubted whether Jesus was in reality risen from the dead; so that they had no more help, assistance, or protection, such as He had given them during His life, to hope for from Him than from a dead man. And why was not Thomas afraid? Doubtless because he relied on the prophecies of Our Lord regarding the resurrection on the third day, and being assured of that, could trust confidently in the help of the Saviour, who was again truly living, and for whom he was ready to give his life if the Jews should seize him. And he had already given proof of his heroism in this respect; for when Christ wished to go to Jerusalem before His passion, all the other apostles were terrified, and tried to persuade Him not to go: "Rabbi, the Jews

<sup>1</sup> Citius autem arbitror reversos fuisse, quoniam Judæorum iram adversus discipulos Christi non ignorabant; unde nec sibi tutum putabant, ad diem usque circa monumentum morari.—S. Cyril. l. xii. c. 45.

but now sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?"<sup>1</sup> Thomas was the only one who encouraged them to go even to death with Christ: "Thomas therefore said to his fellow-disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with Him."<sup>2</sup> "These words of Thomas exhorting the disciples," says Cajetan, "are a sign of great fervor and courage; he does not say: Go, but: Let us go with Jesus, that we may die with Jesus, be stoned and slain with Him."<sup>3</sup> And the same fervor and courage moved him after the death of Christ to show himself boldly in the streets, and to run the danger of death for the sake of his beloved Master. He certainly would not have acted in that manner had he doubted the truth of the resurrection of Our Lord, and consequently His divinity; for he surely would not have incurred such danger for the sake of a dead man whose prophecies turned out false.

Moreover, this faith of Thomas is evident from the words which make some condemn him of obstinacy and incredulity: Except I shall see, etc. How did Thomas know that Jesus would retain the wound marks in His hands, feet, and side after He was risen from the dead? for it is not natural for a living man to have his hands and feet pierced, and his heart opened in his side. And how did he know that the wound in the side would be large enough for him to put his hand into it? The Lord had indeed foretold His disciples that He would rise again on the third day; but He said nothing to them of preserving the marks of the wounds in His body; so that Thomas must have known and understood more than the others of the resurrection of Christ, as he was so eager in insisting on putting his fingers into the place of the nails and his hand into the side of Our Lord. He must, therefore, either have received a special revelation from God, or else have spoken those words under the impulse of some prophetic spirit. So it is, says St. Peter Chrysologus: "For why should he have expressed such a desire, unless he had known from God that Our Lord would preserve the marks of the wounds as a proof of the truth of His resurrection?"<sup>4</sup> And hence Thomas must have believed in that resurrection.

Confirmed  
by his own  
words.

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi, nunc quærebant te Judæi lapidare, et iterum vadis illuc?—John xi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Dixit ergo Thomas ad condiscipulos: Eamus et nos, ut moriamur cum eo.—Ibid. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Magni fervoris, impavidique animi verba sunt hæc Thomæ adhortantis discipulos; non ite, sed eamus cum Jesu, ut cum ipso Jesu simul moriamur, simul lapidemur, simul occidamur.

<sup>4</sup> Nam cur talia peteret, nisi a Deo ad indicium resurrectionis suæ, servata vulnera prophetali spiritu cognovisset?—S. Chrysol. Sermon. 84.



By the  
favor shown  
him by  
Christ.

Finally, if Thomas had been as obstinate in denying the resurrection as some would have us believe, Our Lord would not have met him with such marks of friendship and favor. Such is the conclusion drawn by St. Gaudentius: "Surely," he says, "if Thomas were as incredulous as some say, Christ would not have deigned to appear to him after the resurrection; for it is written that He is found by those who do not tempt Him, but appears to those who have faith in Him."<sup>1</sup> Or at all events, as I cannot help thinking, Our Lord would have reproofed him for his unbelief, as He was wont to do with the disciples whenever they committed even lesser faults. What a severe reproof He administered to the well-meaning Peter, who tried to dissuade his beloved Master from undergoing the bitter sufferings of His passion and death! "Go behind Me, Satan," said Our Lord, with displeasure; "thou art a scandal unto Me; because thou savorest not the things that are of God."<sup>2</sup> James and John asked for the first seats in His kingdom, and they received the harsh reproof: "You know not what you ask."<sup>3</sup> When the same two disciples asked Him to bring fire down from heaven to destroy those who refused to receive them, they were again reprimanded by Him: "Turning, He rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are."<sup>4</sup> When the apostles disputed among themselves at the last supper as to which of them was the greater, Jesus at once reproached them in these words: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that have power over them are called beneficent; but you not so. But he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth."<sup>5</sup> In the Garden of Gethsemani the disciples were awakened by the reproof: "What! could you not watch one hour with Me?"<sup>6</sup> In a word, never did Our Lord notice a fault in His disciples without correcting it. Now Thomas would certainly have been guilty of a grave one if he had denied the resurrection of Christ as obstinately as is supposed, and therefore would have merited a severe reproof; but

<sup>1</sup> Qui utique, si juxta opinionem quorundam infidelis fuisset; Christus illi post resurrectionem suam, non fuisset apparere dignatus; scriptum est enim: invenitur ab his, qui non tentant eum, apparet vero his, qui fidem habent in ipsum.—S. Gand. loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Vade post me, Satana; scandalum es mihi; quia non sapis ea quæ Dei sunt.—Matt. xvi. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Nescitis quid petatis.—Ibid. xx. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Conversus increpavit illos, dicens: Nescitis cujus spiritus estis.—Luke ix. 55.

<sup>5</sup> Reges gentium dominantur eorum, et qui potestatem habent super eos benefici vocantur; vos autem non sic. Sed qui major est in vobis, fiat sicut minor, et qui præcessor est, sicut ministrator.—Ibid. xxii. 25, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Sic non potuistis una hora vigilare mecum?—Matt. xxvi. 40.

instead of that Christ never alluded even by a word to any unbelief on his part, but rather showed him an amount of favor, condescension, and love such as He had not given to any of the others immediately after the resurrection. For Thomas' sake alone, says St. Gaudentius, He appeared a second time to the disciples: "He appeared a second time to the apostles to satisfy the desire of Thomas; so that this desire was advantageous to the others as well."<sup>1</sup> When the Lord found them all together He turned to Thomas at once, and in a most friendly manner said to him: "Put in thy finger hither and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side." Mark, says St. John Chrysostom in astonishment: "Jesus stands at his side, and without waiting to be asked by him, and without a word having been uttered on his part, Jesus Himself first satisfies his desire."<sup>2</sup> This special grace, this loving intimacy He reserved for Thomas in preference to all the others; and what other conclusion can we arrive at except that Thomas was especially dear to Him? He indeed reproved the incredulity of Thomas in the words: "Be not faithless, but believing;" and again: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed;" but He does not say that this incredulity or this faith concerned His resurrection. Why, then, should we interpret this event so as to blame the apostle for such a grievous fault, since, as we shall see presently, we can understand the words quoted in a far different sense? It is a well-known rule that we must put the best possible interpretation on the doings of our fellow-man, and not accuse any one of wrong unless his guilt is clear and evident; but no such proof of the guilt of Thomas is furnished by the Holy Scriptures.

In what, then, did the incredulity of Thomas consist? What did he actually mean by his "I will not believe"? I answer that he did not wish to believe what the other disciples told him. And what did they say? That the Lord was risen from the dead? No; they told him something new that he had never heard of before, something that was quite unknown to him. If they had said at once: The Lord is risen, that would not have been anything new for Thomas, and he could readily have answered: You need not tell me that, for it is an undoubted truth,

He only refused to believe that Christ had appeared to the apostles.

<sup>1</sup> Apparuit secundo apostolis, ut Thomæ desiderium adimpleret; profuit cupiditas ejus et cæteris.—S. Gaud. loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Adstitit Jesus, neque ab illo rogari expectat, sed nihil eo dicente, ipse Jesus primum ejus satisfacit desiderio.—S. Chrysos. Hom. 86.

since the Lord Himself has often told and prophesied to us that He would rise again on the third day after His death, a day that is now long past. And what news, then, did they give him of which he had known nothing? Read the gospel, my dear brethren: "The other disciples therefore said to him: We have seen the Lord." That was all. Whereupon Thomas at once replied: "Except I shall see, etc., I shall not believe." You tell me you have seen the Lord; I do not and will not believe you until I have seen Him myself. For Thomas could not believe that the disciples had really seen the Lord after His resurrection, that the Lord had then really appeared to them. There we have the whole incredulity of this apostle, as far as the Holy Scripture says anything of it. And in this sense we may easily understand the words of Christ to him: "Be not faithless, but believing." That is: Thomas, thou hast hitherto refused to believe that thy fellow-disciples have seen Me, although they all have assured thee to that effect; be not so incredulous in future, and when they all unite in telling you anything do not doubt of it again. And again: "Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed;" that is: Thou didst not wish to believe that I have really appeared to thy fellow-disciples until thou didst see Me thyself; since thou hast now seen Me thou believest that the others have seen Me also. There is no forcing or distorting the meaning of the text in this interpretation.

And cannot be accused of obstinacy on that account, for he had his own reasons for disbelieving what they said.

Now I do not see how St. Thomas can be accused of obstinacy on account of refusing to accept the words of the disciples. For although they told him that they had seen the Lord, yet it appears he had some good grounds for not believing that to be really true. In the first place, he might have reasoned thus with himself: My fellow-disciples tell me they have seen the Lord; but I cannot trust them; they have often been deceived before in similar cases, and I have been deceived with them; perhaps this is another instance of hallucination on their part. On a former occasion we saw Christ in reality, and imagined Him to be a ghost; such was the case when we saw Him coming towards us as we were in the boat, and commenced to cry out for fear. "And they, seeing Him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying: It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear."<sup>1</sup> If the disciples took Him for a ghost then, it may well be the

<sup>1</sup> Videntes eum super mare ambulantem, turbati sunt dicentes: Quia phantasma est. Et præ timore clamaverunt.—Matt. xiv. 26.

case that they have seen a ghost now and taken it for the Lord; so that, deceived by a false apparition, they have said to me: "We have seen the Lord." But I am not so easily persuaded; I must have better proofs before I believe them. Such is the manner in which Albert the Great excuses St. Thomas: He did not wish to believe them because he had seen signs of weakness in them. Men of his stamp are slow to believe, but once they have given their assent, very tenacious of their faith. For, as Chrysostom says: "It is a praiseworthy thing not to be too quick to believe what is not clearly proved."<sup>1</sup>

Again, it is likely that in this instance Thomas acted as one who loves truly. For example: My dear friend, whom I love, and who, as I know, loves me in return, goes off somewhere, and says to me: In three days I will come back. Now four or five days later different mutual acquaintances come and tell me that my good friend has visited them the day before yesterday and told them how he fared on his journey. I am naturally disturbed at this, partly through jealousy and sorrow, and partly through wonderment that he did not come to see me also. What? I say; how can that be? I can hardly believe you, for certainly he would have come to see me, too. Such, perhaps, may have been the thoughts of Thomas when disturbed by the sudden announcement that the others had seen the Lord. No, he said to himself, that cannot be! Will the Lord exclude me alone from His visitation, although I love Him so truly, and have received countless proofs of love from Him? No, I cannot and will not believe it until I am certainly convinced that there is no deception in it. Such is the manner in which St. Cyril of Alexandria defends St. Thomas: "Although it seems to me that Thomas was disturbed, not so much by infidelity as by a great sorrow at not having seen the Lord with his own eyes."<sup>2</sup>

And was disturbed by love and sorrow.

In the third place, might not the words, "I will not believe," have been uttered through the influence of sudden joy and fear? Of joy, at hearing the agreeable news of Christ's appearing to His disciples after the resurrection, for he, too, hoped to see the Lord? of fear, lest the tidings might not be true? For when we hear a piece of news that is very pleasing to us, even if it is con-

Partly through fear and joy he did not believe.

<sup>1</sup> Quia multa signa infirmitatis viderat. Et tales sunt tardi ad credendum, et quando credunt, firmissime credunt. Sicut enim dicit Chrysostomus: Laudabile est, rem non probatam non cito credere.—Alb. Mag. in Joan. xx.

<sup>2</sup> Quamvis mihi Thomas videri soleat, non infidelitate magis, quam summo mœore perturbatus fuisse, quia Dominum oculis suis non viderat.—S. Cyril, l. 12. in Joan. c. 57.



firmed by the testimony of many good witnesses, we are wont to have all the more fear and anxiety lest it should be false the greater the joy it would cause us if it really turned out true. Hence on such occasions we are wont to say, with a mixture of joy and fear: Yes, that would be indeed good news if it were true! Ah, I can hardly believe it; I must have some better proof of it! Such is the manner in which Surius writes of the incredulity of St. Thomas: "Overcome by joy at the news, he did not believe that to have really happened which he so longed for; and hearing it, did not believe it; for the transports of an exceeding great joy make one less apt to believe what one hears."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, too, he cannot be accused of presumption.

And from this it follows that it was not out of presumption that he made the condition: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails." For, as we have seen already, not trusting to the words of the apostles, lest they should have been deceived by a false apparition, since on a former occasion they had taken Christ Himself for a ghost, he thought to himself: The same thing might happen to me again if the Lord should appear to me, and I might think I saw, not a living being, but a ghost; therefore I will not trust my own eyes; but to be sure and certain that He has really appeared to the disciples, and that it will be really Himself whom I, too, shall see in time, I shall prove the matter with my own hands, and touch the marks of the wounds. St. Bernard seems of the opinion that it was an ardent and holy love of Jesus and His sacred wounds that prompted Thomas to utter those words; therefore he calls him a man of ardent desires, and wishes that he, too, had had the good fortune of touching the wounds of Christ: "Like Thomas, that man of desires, I wish to see Him altogether, and not only to touch Him, but to approach the sacred wound of His side."<sup>2</sup> Thus he confirms the words of St. Gaudentius: It was an ardent desire that made him say, Except I shall see, etc., "for he feared to be deprived of the sight of that which he believed in his heart, and to be denied the enjoyment of that light by which the other apostles gloried in being illumined."<sup>3</sup> And I am still farther strengthened in this

<sup>1</sup> Ille propter id, quod audiebat, lætitiæ affectus, quod fieri desiderabat, id factum esse audiens non credebat: solet enim ingentis lætitiæ exsuperationes esse tardiores ad ea credenda quæ dicuntur.

<sup>2</sup> Sicut Thomas ille vir desideriorum, totum eum videre desidero, et tangere non solum, sed accedere ad sacrosanctum lateris ejus vulnus.

<sup>3</sup> Erat enim valde anxius, ne non et oculis frueretur quod credebat, et ne privaretur aspectu illius lucis, quæ cæteri apostoli illuminatis gloriabantur.



opinion when I consider that Christ at once accedes to this desire in a most friendly and condescending manner, without being asked to do so, and offers Thomas the wounds in His hands and side to touch. See, my dear brethren, how we cannot hold it as absolutely certain that Thomas ever doubted the resurrection of Christ, or that he was stiff-necked or obstinate in unbelief; on the other hand, we have good reason to give him the praise of having shown himself most firm and zealous in his faith in the resurrection of Our Lord.

But suppose the opinion of those who seem to assert the contrary is true, and indeed it is not now my intention to dispute it, or to prove it erroneous;—suppose that at first Thomas really doubted of the resurrection, yet I still maintain that in the faith in that mystery he was the firmest and most zealous of all. For who would deny the charitable zeal of St. Peter or St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, because the former had denied his divine Master and the latter had persecuted Christ? Generally speaking, are not they who have sinned grievously against God far more zealous in the divine service after their conversion than they who have been always innocent? as St. Gregory says: “Penitents are often more fervent than the innocent.”<sup>1</sup> The same I say of our holy apostle Thomas; if it be true (which I do not believe) that he vacillated in the faith, yet he acknowledged the resurrection of the Lord more quickly and unhesitatingly, more zealously and solemnly, than the other apostles. Let us consider the history of the first apparition of Christ to His apostles as it is described by St. Luke; there we shall find the whole matter explained. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary of James, and others, who had come with Jesus out of Galilee, had visited the grave, seen that Our Lord’s body was not there, and having learned from the two men in shining garments that Christ was truly risen, went back again, and related all to the disciples who were gathered together. Then the two disciples came from Emmaus, and told them all that had happened to them on their journey—how they had had a long conversation with Jesus, and at last recognized Him in the breaking of the bread: “Saying: The Lord is risen indeed. Now whilst they were speaking these things, Jesus stood in the midst of them, and saith to them: Peace be to you; it is I; fear not.”<sup>2</sup> Thus far St. Luke, as

Even if he doubted the resurrection at first, yet he was still the most zealous in the faith, and professed it, quicker than the others.

<sup>1</sup> *Sæpe ferventiores pœnitentes innocentibus.*

<sup>2</sup> *Dicentes: Quod surrexit Dominus vere. Dum hæc loquuntur; stetit Jesus in medio eorum, et dicit eis: Pax vobis; ego sum, nolite timere.—Luke xxiv. 34, 36.*

you may read in his gospel, twenty-fourth chapter. Mark that in all this Thomas was not present; otherwise the words of St. John would not be true: "Thomas was not with them when Jesus came." Nor would the disciples afterwards have told him anything new, when speaking of the resurrection, if he had seen the Lord as well as they. Now, my dear brethren, note how the apostles behaved: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary of James were holy women, greatly esteemed by Our Lord and worthy of credence; did the apostles believe them when they said that Christ was risen? No; and they even looked on the words of the holy women as madness. "And these words seemed to them as idle tales; and they did not believe them."<sup>1</sup> The two who came from Emmaus and told the apostles of the resurrection of Christ were also worthy of credence; were they believed? No; for their narration was interrupted by the arrival of Christ: "Now whilst they were speaking these things, Jesus stood in the midst of them." Now at least they will have believed? No! they indeed behold the Lord with their own eyes; they hear Him say: "It is I;" and yet they do not believe: "They, being troubled and frightened, supposed that they saw a spirit."<sup>2</sup> Then, to convince them, Christ encourages them, shows them His wounds, and invites them to touch them and see for themselves that it was He in reality: "And He said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself; handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have."<sup>3</sup> But still the disciples were not to be moved: "But while they yet believed not and wondered for joy."<sup>4</sup> They wonder and rejoice, but will not yet believe. Until Our Lord had eaten with them and held a long discourse in which He explained the Scriptures they did not believe that He was truly risen from the dead. See what trouble it cost to persuade them. But with Thomas all that was not necessary; he had not yet seen the Lord, nor heard Him say: "It is I;" he had not yet received permission to touch the place of the wounds, but had merely heard from the apostles, who a short time before could not believe their own eyes and ears, these

<sup>1</sup> *Visa sunt apud illos, sicut deliramentum verba ista; et non crediderunt illis.*—Luke xxiv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Conturbati vero et exterriti, existimabant se spiritum videre.*—Ibid. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Et dixit eis: Quid turbati estis, et cogitationes ascendunt in corda vestra? Videte manus et pedes, quia ego ipse sum; palpate et videte, quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habet, sicut me videtes habere.*—Ibid. 38, 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Adhuc autem illis non credentibus, et mirantibus præ gaudio.*—Ibid. 41.

few words: "We have seen the Lord;" and that was what he denied. But as soon as he saw Jesus in the second apparition, and satisfied his wish to behold the wounds, he laid all doubts aside and publicly confessed the resurrection of Christ. Now, my dear brethren, you can see whether or not Thomas was quicker and more zealous in professing his faith in the resurrection than the other apostles.

And how did he make this profession? With the utmost possible solemnity: "Thomas said to Him: My Lord and my God."<sup>1</sup> "His profession of faith," exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova, "is far greater than his incredulity; it could not have been made more emphatically."<sup>2</sup> "For whatever the faith in Christ contains is included in that brief profession."<sup>3</sup> Salmeron, considering those few words, says: "They form a most brief, but a perfect confession of the sovereign dominion of Christ, of His divinity, of His divinity and humanity, or of the hypostatic union of the two natures in Him."<sup>4</sup> "He saw and touched the man," says St. Augustine, "and confessed the God whom he neither saw nor touched."<sup>5</sup> A confession, the like of which for clearness and emphasis no one before him had made with regard to Our Lord. Peter, Nathanael, Martha, the centurion on Mount Calvary indeed confessed Him to be the Son of God; but Thomas was the first who called Him his God. "Thomas compensated for the guilt of his unbelief by the greatness of his profession; for he was the first who expressly confessed Christ to be the true God;"<sup>6</sup> such are the words of Cajetan. "Truly," says Barradius, "it was a great privilege for Thomas to be the first to profess and proclaim the divinity of Christ."<sup>7</sup>

And made a much more solemn profession of faith than the others.

If time permitted, my dear brethren, I should like to bring you in imagination into the wide world, and show you how zealously our apostle preached the faith in Christ as the true God really risen from the dead, and brought countless numbers to the true

And most zealously preached the faith throughout the world.

<sup>1</sup> Dixit ei: Dominus meus et Deus meus.—John xx. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Major incredulitate confessio; altius sonare non potuit.—S. Thom. a Villanova, Serm. in Oct. Pasc.

<sup>3</sup> Quidquid fides habet, brevi elogio comprehendit.

<sup>4</sup> Est brevissima, sed perfecta dominii Christi, ac divinitatis, sive humanitatis ac divinitatis, sive duarum naturarum in una hypostasi Christi confessio.

<sup>5</sup> Videbat, tangebaturque hominem, et confitebatur Deum, quem non videbat, nec tangebatur.—S. Aug. Tract. 121. in Joan.

<sup>6</sup> Thomæ incredulitatis suæ culpam magnitudine professionis pensavit; primus enim fuit, qui professus sit expresse, Jesum esse verum Deum.—Cajetan in Joan. xx.

<sup>7</sup> Magna hæc est Thomæ prærogativa, quod divinitatis Christi primus ipse fuerit expresse professor proclamator.

fold. To put the matter briefly: imagine you see the wildest, most ignorant, savage, and cruel people on earth; go in thought to those nations that live, so to speak, at the very ends of the earth—to the Indians, Moors, Parthians, Persians, Medes, Hircanians, Bactrians, Abyssinians, Chinese, and others who live in far distant islands and countries, wandering about like brute beasts; and then say: These are the lands and nations that Thomas undertook to evangelize and instruct in the faith. And in fact Thomas alone brought the faith to those places; so that the author of his Life cannot understand how it was possible for a man merely to travel through so many distant lands, without speaking of remaining in them long enough to instruct their barbarous inhabitants. Yet that was done by that man, who, as Surius says, wandered about everywhere, “pallid in face, emaciated, bloodless, and evidently without vigor, so that he carried with him, so to speak, not a body, but a mere shadow covered with a torn and soiled garment.”<sup>1</sup> Methinks I hear that apostle preaching in this guise, and convincing those nations of the truth of Our Lord’s resurrection in the words he could have said, and probably did say, whenever he baptized any one: See these hands of mine that have poured the waters of salvation on your head; they have had the great honor of being warmed in the open side of the Saviour who arose from the dead, and who is my true God and yours! And when absolving a sinner in the sacrament of penance: This hand that is raised over you has had the favor of touching the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, and of being sanctified in His most sacred heart. Oh, what power these words must have had! what influence they must have exercised over the hearts of men for their conversion! St. Lawrence Justinian says that there is no counting the number of nations that Thomas brought to the faith, for he effected the conversion of countless peoples.<sup>2</sup> Such, too, is the opinion of Denis the Carthusian, who says: “Vast and countless were the numbers of infidels that he converted to the faith.”<sup>3</sup> Who, then, can number the souls converted by him, if the nations themselves are countless? And in fact some Doctors of the Church do not hesitate to say that Thomas alone brought more to the faith than all the

<sup>1</sup> *Vultu pallidus, totus aridus, exsanguis, et plane succo carens, et ut semel dicam, non tam corpus, quam umbram corporis circumferens, sordido et trito amictus pallio.*

<sup>2</sup> *Innumerabilem conversionem populorum.*

<sup>3</sup> *Copiosissimum et innumerabilem populum infidelem convertit ad Christum.—Dion. Carthus. Serm. 1. de hoc festo.*



other apostles put together. Nor did he cease from this laborious and harassing mode of life, which brought in such rich fruit, until his heart was pierced with a lance, and he thus sealed with his blood the faith he had planted and spread.

See now, my dear brethren, how true it is that Thomas was the most active and zealous of the apostles in his faith in the resurrection of Christ. Therefore not without reason has the Catholic Church, enlightened by God, used in the office and Mass of this feast the words: Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may rejoice on the solemnity of Thy blessed apostle Thomas; to the end that we may always have the assistance of his prayers, and zealously profess the faith he taught;—mark those words. Therefore this Saint is the special patron of those who have to combat temptations against faith, and who call upon him with confidence. I remember having heard one of our Fathers relating how, while he was still in the world, he heard a sermon on the obstinacy and incredulity of this apostle, and he then conceived a low opinion of him, and thought to himself: Truly he is an unworthy apostle; whereupon he was assailed by such frequent and violent temptations against faith that he was quite disturbed, and knew not what to do, till he fled to that holy apostle for help, and at once found himself completely freed from the temptations. For my part, my only advice to all who complain to me of similar assaults is to have recourse to St. Thomas with confidence in fervent prayer; and they have assured me that they experienced immediate help and relief. O great apostle, I now beg of thee in my own name, in the name of all here present, stretch out over us thy powerful hand, which was consecrated in the heart and wounds of Jesus Christ, and keep us constant to the true faith; but let our faith be lively and active, that in and by it we may gain eternal life!

O Christians! we should send forth this short prayer daily to the holy apostle St. Thomas; for, alas! how many infidels are there not, not only among heretics and heathens, but even in the bosom of the true Church, among those who profess to be true Christian Catholics, but whose lives and actions do not at all correspond with their profession? With the lips they say they believe in one God, whom we must love and honor above all things; with their works they adore many false gods, against the law of the true God. With the lips they profess to believe in an eternal, joyful heaven that is prepared for the good; in an eternal

So that Thomas was the most active and zealous believer in the resurrection of Christ.

Lesson for those who have not a lively faith



hell of torments appointed for the wicked; and yet they live as if all this were a mere fable. With the lips they profess to believe that Jesus Christ, the true son of God, is risen from the dead, and that they, too, will one day rise to an immortal life, and will have to appear before the tribunal of Christ to receive from Him an irrevocable sentence, either of eternal damnation among the demons, or of eternal happiness with the elect; and yet they live as if they were to die after the manner of brute beasts. In a word, they profess with the lips to believe in each and every article of the faith; and yet they continue to live on in their old vices and sins. A dead, fruitless faith like that is of no help to eternal life, as I have already shown in detail on another occasion. To these I say to-day: Be not faithless, but believing; believe, but live according to the truth which you profess.

\*  
And who  
always put  
off their  
conversion.

Again, if it be true that St. Thomas did not believe at first in the resurrection of Christ, yet at the first word of Our Lord at once he gave adhesion to that truth. This, too, is an example for you, wicked Christians, who, after you have frequently offended your God by grievous sin, become blinded by your evil passions, and never think of repentance and amendment, in spite of the many inspirations you receive from the good God, in spite of the warnings given you by preachers and other servants of God to amend your evil ways—an amendment that you keep putting off from month to month, and from year to year! Ah, what are you thinking of? Do you not see clearly before your eyes the great danger in which your soul is, the danger of being hurried off by a sudden death, that may come at any moment? Ah, to these also I must cry out: Be not faithless, but believing; be not obstinate and stiff-necked in your sins! It is human to err, and to err grievously; but to persist in wickedness is diabolical. Therefore: “To-day, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts,”<sup>1</sup> that you may not hereafter, through want of time, and to the eternal loss of your souls, be unable to repent when you would perhaps be willing to do so.

For those  
who have  
sinned  
grievously,  
and repent-  
ed.

Finally, if it be true that St. Thomas did not at once wish to believe in the resurrection of Christ, yet, after the first vivid illumination he received, he not only believed in it, but atoned for his former incredulity, inculpable though it was, by a more solemn profession of the faith and by a greater zeal in spreading it. A beautiful lesson and warning for you who have been sin-

<sup>1</sup> Hodie si vocem ejus audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra.—Ps. xciv. 8.

ners! It shows you how, after having laid aside the load of your sins and been fully reconciled to God, you must try to atone, by greater zeal in His service, for the insults you have offered the Divine Majesty, and how you ought to love all the more ardently the good God with your whole hearts, since at one single repentant prayer of yours He so graciously remitted your many and grievous transgressions. Thus the words of St. Gregory may be verified in you: "See how a zealous life after sin may often become more pleasing to God than a tepid innocence."<sup>1</sup> This warning is for me, O my Lord and my God! I must confess before heaven and earth that I am bound in the strictest sense of the word to serve Thee with all possible zeal when I remember how Thou hast so patiently borne with me, a wretched sinner, in so many grievous insults I have offered Thee for year after year, and how with fatherly mercy Thou hast again received me into the number of Thy beloved children, and heaped so many graces and favors on me. Shall I not, then, love Thee? Shall I not serve Thee with all my strength and with my whole heart? Ah, if I refused to do so I should be the most ungrateful man on earth! Truly, I will love Thee, O my God, and to the last moment of my life love Thee with all the greater fervor the more I have to acknowledge having offended Thee in the past; and with the help of Thy grace I will never offend Thee again. Amen.

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*FORTY-EIGHTH SERMON.*

**ON THE HOLY APOSTLES SS. PHILIP AND JAMES.**

Subject.

SS. Philip and James were apostles most like to Christ. 1. The one in his life. 2. The other in his sufferings and death.—*Preached on the feast of SS. Philip and James.*

Text.

*Philippe, qui videt me, videt et Patrem.*—John xiv. 9.

"Philip, he that seeth Me seeth the Father also."

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce fit plerumque Deo gratior amore ardens vita post culpam, quam securitate torpens innocentia.*—S. Greg. 3. p. Past. Admon. c. 29.

## Introduction.

By these words in which He answered the eager desire of Philip to see the eternal Father our dear Lord wished to signify that He is like to His heavenly Father in everything that pertains to the divine nature, and that He has the same perfections, the same divine being with the Father; so that he who sees Him sees the Father also. "Not," says St. Augustine, "that He is the Father and the Son at the same time; but that the Father and Son are so alike that who knows one knows both. For we are wont to say of those who resemble each other: Have you seen him? then you have seen the other, too."<sup>1</sup> My dear brethren, the same, it seems to me, could be said, though not exactly in the same sense and meaning, of both those holy apostles whose yearly anniversary we commemorate to-day; namely, that he who sees and considers those two disciples of Christ, in a certain measure must recognize Christ Himself, their divine Master; not indeed that they have the same divine nature with Christ as He has with His heavenly Father; for they were but men, and whatever good they possessed they had to ascribe to the generosity and grace of Christ; but on account of the exact resemblance to Our Lord which was specially evident in those two apostles; for the one in his life represented the life of Christ, while the other in his passion and death was a perfect imitation of the passion and death of Christ. And this is what I now mean to explain, to their greater honor and glory.

## Plan of Discourse.

*SS. Philip and James were apostles most like to Christ. Such is the whole subject of this panegyric. James was most like Him in his life: the first part. Philip was most like Him in his passion and death: the second part.*

That we may resolve, after their example, to be like to Christ in our life and death, grant us Thy grace, O Jesus, most perfect Model and Exemplar of all holiness; we ask it of Thee through the intercession of Mary, of the holy angels, and of the apostles Philip and James, who were so like to Thee.

<sup>1</sup> Non quod ipse sit Pater et Filius : sed quod tam similes sint Pater et Filius, ut qui unum noverit, ambos noverit. Solemus enim de similibus ita loqui : vidistis istum ? illum vidistis. —S. Aug. Tract. 70.

I do not speak now of an outward resemblance in bodily stature, although even in that respect St. James was most like Our Lord; so that one was hardly to be distinguished from the other; and therefore James was called the brother of Our Lord. "James was called the brother of the Lord, that is, of Christ," says Denis the Carthusian, "because he was most like Him in face, in bodily stature, and in manner."<sup>1</sup> The holy martyr Ignatius, in an epistle to St. John the Evangelist, writes thus: "If I may, I should like to go to Jerusalem with you to see that venerable James, whom they say to be most like to Jesus Christ in face, bodily stature, and manners as if he were His twin brother."<sup>2</sup> Therefore some think that it was not without reason that Judas the traitor agreed with the Jews to give a certain sign by which they were to know Christ when he was about to betray Our Lord into the hands of His enemies: "Whomsoever I shall kiss that is He; hold Him fast."<sup>3</sup> For he feared that in the dark night, by the fitful light of the lanterns, they might make a mistake and apprehend James instead of Our Lord, so great was the resemblance between them. Be this as it may, I will not delay longer on it; for although the Scripture says of Christ: "Thou art beautiful in form above the sons of men,"<sup>4</sup> and therefore James must have been most comely of form, yet that kind of beauty re-ounds little to a man's praise, as it is the free gift of God, and is not in the power of our free will; and sometimes we find two brothers alike in appearance and comeliness, of whom the one is good and holy, while the other is a wicked wretch, in spite of his beauty.

St. James was like Our Lord in outward appearance.

That for which St. James is chiefly to be praised is this: he was like to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his manners and conversation; that is, in holiness of life, in morals and virtue. St. Epiphanius says of him: "James is called the brother of the Lord on account of the likeness of manners, not by nature, but by grace."<sup>5</sup> To the same effect writes St. Jerome on the words, "other of the apostles I saw none, saving James, the brother of

But especially in his disposition and virtues.

<sup>1</sup> *Jacobus iste dictus est frater Domini, scilicet Christi; quoniam in vultus dispositione, lineamentisque corporis, ac modo conversationis existit ei simillimus.*

<sup>2</sup> *Si licitum mihi est, apud te Hierosolymam volo ascendere, ut videam illum venerabilem Jacobum, quem referunt Jesu Christo simillimum facie, vita et modo conversationis.*

<sup>3</sup> *Quemcunque osculatus fuero, ipse est; tenete eum.—Matt. xxvi. 48.*

<sup>4</sup> *Speciosus forma præ filiis hominum.—Ps. xlv. 3.*

<sup>5</sup> *Jacobus frater Domini appellatur, propter morum similitudinem, non secundum naturam, sed per gratiam.*

the Lord":<sup>1</sup> "Let this suffice, that on account of his excellent virtue and incomparable faith and unusual wisdom he was called the brother of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> For, as St. Epiphanius writes, James was brought up with Our Lord from his childhood, and he saw daily for years the most holy life and wonderful virtues of the incarnate Wisdom, whose every action should serve as our model and pattern; so that he must have increased daily in sanctity by the force of this holy example, and have inherited the disposition and manner of Him in whose footsteps he trod. For if it is true: "With the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the innocent man thou wilt be innocent, and with the elect thou wilt be elect,"<sup>3</sup> then James must have put on some resemblance to Our Lord, since even from his childhood he consorted with the Holy of holies, with innocence itself, and with the Crown of the elect; especially since He who afterwards said to His apostles, "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you so you do also,"<sup>4</sup> must have daily instructed His companion, not only by example, but also by word and teaching.

In humility  
and meek-  
ness.

To see this clearer, let us compare the two: Jesus Christ and James. For when we wish to know whether the copy is like the original, the picture like the model, all we need do is to set them beside each other and compare them. The foundation of all the other virtues is humility and meekness; the whole life of Jesus Christ, from His incarnation to His death on the cross, was a constant exercise of humility and meekness; and these virtues are the ones He recommends most warmly to His Christians: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."<sup>5</sup> Excellently well did St. James learn this lesson and take it to heart. Of all the apostles he may well be called the most humble and meek. "His eye was gentle and placid,"<sup>6</sup> writes Surius of him; and he mentions that as a point of distinction between him and the other disciples. He showed himself so in reality; for if it was to be ascribed to the humility of Christ that He remained unknown to the world for thirty years, concealing the dignity

<sup>1</sup> Alium apostolorum vidi neminem, nisi Jacobum fratrem Domini.—Gal. i. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Hoc sufficiat, ut propter egregios mores et incomparabilem fidem, sapientiamque non modicam, frater dictus sit Domini.

<sup>3</sup> Cum sancto sanctus eris, et cum viro innocente innocens eris, et cum electo electus eris.—Ps. xvii. 26, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciat. —John xiii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde.—Matt. xi. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Oculus ejus lenis et placidus.



and excellence of His person, and afterwards, during His public mission, wished to be known only as the Son of Man, as He always called Himself; in the same way, says Surius, the profound humility of James caused him to keep the strictest silence about the special graces with which Christ honored him, especially that signal favor Our Lord conferred on him in appearing to him immediately after the resurrection, as St. Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, tells us; and this silence he kept so strictly, lest he should be thought too much of. For the same reason in his Epistle he calls himself only by the name of "servant of God." "Although," as Surius remarks, "he might have called himself an apostle or a bishop, or, what is still greater, the brother of the Lord—names by which Paul speaks of him, writing to the Galatians—yet he seems to delight in the humble appellation, and makes known to the tribes of Israel that he is the servant of God." <sup>1</sup> Christ showed His wonderful meekness in bearing with the uncouthness of His disciples, who at first were very ignorant, and often quarrelled and disputed with one another; and by the same meekness and affability He gained the hearts of the multitudes who followed Him. James was also meek; for, according to the opinion of the Venerable Bede, he was chosen in preference to all the other apostles, after the stoning of St. Stephen, to be bishop of Jerusalem, in order to win the hearts of the Jews, who were embittered by the sharp reproofs addressed to them by the zealous protomartyr. "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost;" <sup>2</sup> and so great were his meekness and affability that he gained them over in great part to Christ. For nine and twenty years he governed the Church in the greatest tranquillity, and without any opposition, so that the heathen and Jewish converts, who formerly had some disputes with each other, united in regarding him as their father; and even the blind and perverse Jews who refused to be converted held him in the highest esteem.

Amongst the many beautiful sayings which the wise Plato has left the world is the following: "Nothing is more like to God than one among men who is found to be very just." <sup>3</sup> If such is

In justice  
and inno-  
cence of  
life.

<sup>1</sup> Cum ei liceret seipsum vocare apostolum, aut episcopum, aut, quod majus est, fratrem Domini, quibus nominibus ipsum quoque Paulus significavit, scribens ad Galatas; videtur delectari humilioribus, se esse servum Dei significat tribus Israel.

<sup>2</sup> Dura cervice, et incircumcisis cordibus et auribus, vos semper Spiritu Sancto resistitis. —Acts vii. 51.

<sup>3</sup> Deo nihil est similis, quam cum ex hominibus aliquis justissimus est.

the case, my dear brethren, who will not see the resemblance of James in this respect to Our Lord, who says of Himself: "It becometh us to fulfil all justice,"<sup>1</sup> and who was able to challenge His envious foes to convict Him of guilt: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?"<sup>2</sup> In the History of his life and in the Annals of the Church this apostle is generally called James the just; James the divine; "James, the brother of the Lord, whom all call the just."<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Baronius writes of him: "He was looked upon by all as most just on account of his great wisdom and the piety which he cultivated so assiduously during his life."<sup>4</sup> On account of the same justice and holiness, as Simeon Metaphrastes testifies, he alone was allowed to enter the tabernacle or the holy of holies in the temple of Jerusalem as often as he pleased, although the high-priest could not do so more than once a year. And although the Acts of the Apostles say that there was a terrible persecution set on foot by the Jews in Jerusalem against the Christians, "at that time there was raised a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem,"<sup>5</sup> yet James alone continued to go into the temple, and up to the six and ninetieth year of his age to preach Jesus Christ crucified, in presence of all the people, without the least hindrance; for although the stiff-necked Jews were so embittered against the Christian religion, they did not dare to do anything against the person of James, through respect for his innocence, justice, and holiness of life; on the contrary, each one thought himself fortunate to be allowed to touch even the hem of the apostle's garment, as was the case with Our Lord during His life on earth. St. Jerome says that "such was his sanctity and the veneration in which he was held by the people that they strove with each other to touch the hem of his garment."<sup>6</sup> What the scribes and Pharisees said to Our Lord in their hypocrisy and envious desire to ensnare Him in His speech, "Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and carest not for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth,"<sup>7</sup> that the scribes

<sup>1</sup> Decet nos implere omnem justitiam.—Matt. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato?—John viii. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Jacobus frater Domini, quem omnes justum appellant.—*Annual*. Anno 63. n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Propter summum sapientiæ, et pietatis studium, quod in vita assidue excoluerat, ab omnibus justissimus putabatur.—*Metaph.* in Vita S. Jacobi.

<sup>5</sup> Facta est autem persecutio magna in ecclesia quæ erat Jerosolymis.—Acts viii. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Vir fuit tantæ sanctitatis et rumoris in populo, ut fimbriam vestimenti ejus certatim cuperent attingere.

<sup>7</sup> Magister, scimus quia verax es, et non curas quemquam; nec enim vides in faciem hominum, sed in veritate viam Dei doces.—Mark xii. 14.

and Pharisees said in earnest to James afterwards, when they tried to induce him to dissuade the people from believing in the faith of Christ: "We beg of you to restrain the people; for we all have confidence in you; for we protest, and all the people with us, that you are just and are not a respecter of persons."<sup>1</sup> Could any copy be more like the original than James is like Our Lord in this respect?

We know well from the gospel how earnestly Our Lord exhorted His disciples to constant prayer, not only by words, but also by example, so that He often separated Himself from them during the day to go into the mountain to pray, and even deprived Himself of rest during the night for the same purpose: "He passed the whole night in the prayer of God,"<sup>2</sup> says St. Luke. We need not say anything of His fasting and mortification; for besides the forty days' fasting in the desert, He calls the fulfilment of His Father's will His food and drink: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work."<sup>3</sup> How did James act in both these respects? He hardly did anything else but pray; he was always on his knees in the tabernacle in the temple, as Hegesippus and Metaphrastes testify; the latter says: "He constantly went alone into the holy of holies; and immediately on entering threw himself on his knees, and begged for the remission of the sins of the people; so that his knees became hard, like those of a camel, from being bent so constantly."<sup>4</sup> The Church of the time had to thank this prayer for the preservation of the life of the Prince of the apostles, St. Peter; for as he lay in prison, waiting to be led forth the following day, St. James assembled all the Christian people, and they prayed most fervently for the release of Peter: "Prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him;"<sup>5</sup> and Peter was liberated miraculously by an angel. The city of Jerusalem had to thank the same prayer for being saved so long from the terrible punishments and vengeance prophesied against it by Christ as a chastisement for the crime of deicide it had

In the spirit  
of prayer  
and temper  
ance.

<sup>1</sup> Rogamus te, inhibe populum; nam tibi omnes fidem habemus; nos enim protestamur, et omnis populus nobiscum una, te justum esse, nec personam accipere.

<sup>2</sup> Erat pernoctans in oratione Dei.—Luke vi. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Meus cibus est ut faciam voluntatem ejus, qui misit me, ut perficiam opus ejus.—John iv. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Solus in sancta sanctorum perpetuo ingreditur; ingrediens autem se inclinabat in genua, et populo conciliabat remissionem peccatorum; adeo ut instar camelorum ei genua obdurescerent, eo quod ea flecteret assidue.

<sup>5</sup> Oratio autem fiebat sine intermissione ab ecclesia ad Deum pro eo.—Acts xii. 5.

committed; for at once after the martyrdom of James, and when he had ceased praying, the city was taken by the Emperor Titus. With regard to the self-denial of this apostle, we may well say that as his life was a continual prayer, so also it was a continual fast and mortification. We read in the Divine Office that “James, the brother of the Lord, surnamed the just, from his childhood drank neither wine nor any strong drink, and abstained from the use of flesh-meat; he barely took bread and water enough to still the pangs of hunger, and with these he mingled bitter tears for the sins of the people.”

In the love  
of others.

Stern and severe as he was to himself, so he was affable and beneficent to others. “His hands were always employed in doing good,”<sup>1</sup> says the author of his Life. Is not that exactly what the Scripture says of Our Lord? Who “went about doing good and healing all.”<sup>2</sup> The love and beneficence of both were exercised chiefly for the good of the souls of men; their efforts tended to the conversion of sinners, to lead the erring back to the right path, to keep the just constant, and to bring all, as far as in them lay, to eternal happiness; to this end tended all their preachings and exhortations. What beautiful and instructive lessons St. James gave to his people of all classes you can see for yourselves in his Epistle. There you will read how he encouraged the desponding in temptations; how he comforted the sorrowing in tribulations; how he instructed the rich not to be elated by their wealth, but rather to be humble; the poor to be patient and think themselves happy in their poverty; while he exhorts all to avoid vainglory and much talking, to shun anger, cursing, the love of the world, and similar vices; how he encourages all to practise mercy, charity towards one another, constant prayer, and confidence in God; hardly a virtue is there which he does not inculcate on his people with a most wonderful eloquence. But is not that the same doctrine that Jesus Christ preached during His public mission? Open the gospel and compare the teaching of Christ with that of St. James, and you will be obliged to confess that both speak, as it were, out of one mouth. And where and to whom did Our Lord preach? To the Jewish people alone in the city and country of Judea. “I was not sent,” He says, “but to sheep that are lost of the house of Israel.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Manus ejus semper movebantur ad benefacendum.

<sup>2</sup> Pertransiit benefaciendo et sanando omnes.—Acts x. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Non sum missus nisi ad oves quæ perierunt domus Israel.—Matt. xv. 24.



There you see still clearer the resemblance between them; these very Israelites in Jerusalem were the people to whom St. James preached the gospel; for when the other apostles divided the world between them, and went out to convert the heathens, it was doubtless provided by Divine Providence that James should remain with the Jews. Finally, both received the same reward for their beneficence and love from the same thankless nation whom they had benefited, namely, a violent death; Christ, at the instigation of the high-priests and chief men of the people, was crucified; James, at the instigation of the envious high-priest Ananus and the chiefs of the Jews, was hurled from the top of the temple and killed with a blow of a club.

O holy apostle, what a glory and honor for thee to be so like Jesus, the Son of God, in all things! If the eternal Father has elected for heaven those "whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son,"<sup>1</sup> how high must thou not have ascended in glory, since from the very beginning of thy life to the end thou hast so closely imitated this divine Son in all thy actions! To the end of thy life, I say; for in this respect nothing but the mode of death interferes with the perfection of the resemblance to the death of Christ on the cross. But this special praise thou dost leave to him whose feast is celebrated on this day in union with thine; namely, thy holy companion Philip, for of all the others he was most like the Son of God in His death, as thou wert in His life. We shall consider this in the

St. James is congratulated on this likeness to Christ.

### Second Part.

It is true that all the martyrs of Christ are like Him in as far as His passion and death are concerned; for they all suffered with and for Christ, and died violent deaths; yet in the manner in which most of them died we find a great difference. Many had nothing more to suffer than to have their heads cut off by a blow of a sword or an axe; others were poisoned; others died through privation in prison; others were pierced with a spear; others shot with arrows, others stoned to death, others flayed alive, others burned, and so on. Our Lord suffered nothing of the kind. Peter and Andrew were indeed crucified, but none of the things that happened to Our Lord before and after His execution

St. Philip, in all the circumstances of his sufferings and death, was like his suffering and dying Saviour.

<sup>1</sup> Quos præscivit et prædestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui.—Rom. viii. 29.



happened to them. To Philip alone belongs the honor of suffering and dying almost exactly like his divine Master in nearly every circumstance. Let us see if this is not the case.

Before his sufferings.

What aroused the Jews and incited them to take Our Lord prisoner and nail Him to the cross was the envy of the high-priests and scribes, who could not bear the doctrine He preached publicly, nor the many miracles He wrought everywhere, especially the raising the dead to life, on account of which the people followed Him in crowds, and listened eagerly to His doctrine. "What do we?" said they, filled with wrath and envy; "for this man doth many miracles."<sup>1</sup> "Behold, the whole world is gone after Him;"<sup>2</sup> we must not suffer that any longer. We will condemn and sentence Him to death as a sorcerer, who draws the people to Him by the black art. And this plan they determined to carry out; the innocent Son of God was seized in the Garden of Gethsemani and dragged away. My dear brethren, it was also a diabolical envy, and for the same reasons, too, that plotted against the life of St. Philip and eventually caused his death. "This wonderful apostle," says Metaphrastes, "having been appointed to Asia as the scene of his apostolic labors, travelling about that country visited all its towns and villages, and brought a vast number of people to the light of the true faith, all of whom he baptized and brought to the eternal Father; nay, he even cured the sick and freed those possessed by the demon by a mere word, or by the imposition of his sacred hand; and thus he converted a great number to Christ."<sup>3</sup> Amongst other miracles it is to be noted that he raised three dead persons to life.<sup>4</sup> The gospel tells us that Our Lord restored three dead people to life: the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son of Naim, and Lazarus. That it was that made the envious demon so enraged with our holy apostle; the wonderful and evident miracles he wrought, the conversion of so many souls, the extraordinary spread of the divine honor and glory he could not endure, and therefore he excited the chiefs of the city of Hierapolis, where the apostle then was, and by their aid aroused the heathens against him, so

<sup>1</sup> Quid facimus, quia hic homo multa signa facit?—John xi. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Ecce, totus mundus post eum abiit.—Ibid. xii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Admirabilis hic apostolus, sortitus Asiam, ipsamque circumiens, et omnes in ea urbes oppidaque pervadens, innumerabilem multitudinem adduxit ad pietatem, quos universos lumine regenerationis consignans, cœlesti adduxit Patri. Quin et infirmitatibus morbisque afflictos solo verbo, sanctæque manus impositione curabat; atque ita maximum credentium per se numerum adduxit Christo.—Apud Bolland. in Act. Sanct. 1. Maji.

<sup>4</sup> Nan et tres mortuos legitur suscitasse.

that in their blind fury they fell upon St. Philip and dragged him to prison. Thus this zealous apostle began his passion like Christ, his Master, and from the same cause. See now if his martyrdom was not like Our Lord's passion throughout.

Nearly everything that the gospel tells us of the sufferings of Christ seems to me a symbol of that which was afterwards done to Philip. For if I consider the shameful abuse and blasphemy that the scribes, high-priests, and the Jewish rabble uttered against Christ I hear the senseless heathens raging in the same terms against the apostle of Christ. Hardly had he appeared before the tribunal when one of the chief men of the city accused him of being a seducer and a sorcerer, who befooled the people and led them astray. If I consider Christ as He was dragged by the Jews through the streets of Jerusalem, buffeted, spat upon, and pulled along by the hair, I see Philip, too, in similar circumstances, suffering the same vile treatment from the heathens. And the same chief man of the city, at the first sight of the holy man, was so inflamed with anger and fury that he became, as it were, beside himself, forgot his dignity and office, and laid violent hands on the apostle, dragged him by the hair from one place to another, and finally threw him into a cesspool,<sup>1</sup> as we read in the history of his life. I will leave you to imagine what the wild multitude did to the servant of God, after having seen such an example in their chief. Metaphrastes describes it in a few words: "They, too, took him and put him into a vile dungeon, and beat him most cruelly."<sup>2</sup> If I further consider how Christ, when under the hands of the reckless rabble, was inhumanly scourged until the blood streamed down from His sacred body, I read also of Philip that he suffered the same cruel treatment from the barbarians,<sup>3</sup> as Surius tells us. Finally, if I cast my eyes on Christ hanging on the shameful cross, which was then looked on as the most painful and disgraceful death, and see Him exposed to the mockery and insults of the crowd on Mount Calvary, in the same way I behold St. Philip hanging on a shameful cross, on a height near the city of Hierapolis, for the honor of Christ and of our holy faith. I do not read in his Life that he was crowned with thorns; but the humble disciple of Christ wished to leave that mark of honor to his divine Master

During his sufferings.

<sup>1</sup> Aristarchus apprehensa apostoli coma, ipsum per lutum impulit.

<sup>2</sup> Qui eum comprehenderunt, duro incluserunt carceri, duriusque ceciderunt.

<sup>3</sup> Acerbius flagellaverunt et verberarunt.

as the King of martyrs; yet we may say that in some measure this crown was represented in his martyrdom, for as he was hanging on the cross, in the utmost agony, the infuriated rabble threw stones at him, thus forming for his head a crown far more glorious than diamonds and precious stones. Truly, he was a faithful servant who so steadfastly followed every footstep of his Master, even to the cross.

in the man-  
ner in  
which he  
suffered.

There is one circumstance I must not pass by in which the resemblance of the suffering apostle with the suffering Redeemer is still more striking; namely, the manner in which Philip accepted his martyrdom and bore it. We know from the gospel how eagerly Our Lord longed for His passion, how joyfully He foretold it to His disciples, how He congratulated Himself that the time for it had at last arrived, and what wonderful and incomprehensible patience and meekness, love and beneficence, He showed towards His tormentors amidst so many insults, pains, and tortures. In all these things Philip tried to imitate the example of his Master, and to follow it to the best of his ability. From the beginning of his apostolate he desired nothing more eagerly, and in his long and tedious journeyings through different countries and kingdoms, preaching the gospel, announcing the true faith, he sought for nothing more earnestly than the happiness of dying, shedding his blood and giving his life for Him who died for men. And how he rejoiced when, after so many labors, in the eighty-seventh year of his age, he learned by divine revelation the death that was in store for him! As if he could not contain himself for joy, he assembled the chiefs of his Christians, and told them of the combat that was before him. "Seven days before his death he summoned the priests, deacons, and bishops of the neighboring cities, and said to them: Seven days has the Lord still granted me to live."<sup>1</sup> He then exhorted them to be constant in the faith and to rely on the divine aid. "Be mindful of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and act manfully. But the Lord will fulfil His promise, and strengthen and confirm His kingdom."<sup>2</sup> And with what joyous courage did he not learn by revelation that his enemies were already on the way to apprehend him! He could not wait their arrival, but got up at once and

<sup>1</sup> Ante septem dies migrationis suæ vocavit ad se omnes presbyteros et diaconos, sed et vicinarum urbium episcopos, et dixit eis: Hos septem dies mihi Dominus in ista vita concessit.

<sup>2</sup> Memores estote Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et state viriliter. Dominus autem complebit promissum suum, et corroborabit Ecclesiam suam.

went boldly to meet them,<sup>1</sup> and offered himself voluntarily to them, as Christ presented Himself to the traitor Judas and the Jewish rabble. With regard to his invincible patience and meekness, we can well say that, as the Prophet said of the Saviour of the world: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter. . . and He shall not open His mouth;"<sup>2</sup> so we may say of the apostle that as he was led to the slaughter he opened not his mouth, unless to sound the praises of God. And what most surprises me here is the wonderful love and benevolence with which he regarded his executioners, even in the midst of his torments. You know, my dear brethren, that Christ by the mere touch of His hand healed the ear of Malchus, one of the servants of the high-priest who had come out to apprehend Him, and whom Peter had wounded with a sword: "And when He had touched his ear He healed him."<sup>3</sup> Hear how Philip treated his worst enemy, the magistrate of the city. The latter, as we have seen already, had seized the holy man and dragged him along by the hair; hardly had he withdrawn his sacrilegious hand when he felt the effects of the divine wrath. His hand withered, he lost the sight of one eye, he became deaf in both ears, and his whole body was tormented by an intolerable cramp. What did the holy man do? He prayed to God, and then commanded one of his disciples to make the sign of the cross on the magistrate's body, and behold, at once all the pains were taken away, and he was restored to the full use of all his members and senses.<sup>4</sup> Is not that being a true imitator of Jesus Christ, since he not only suffered nearly all the different kinds of torture endured by Our Lord, but in his sufferings displayed so heroically the virtues of Christ?

To make this resemblance still clearer, let us go to the places of execution, and cast our eyes on the crucified Saviour and on the disciple hanging also on a shameful cross, and consider how the glorious death of the one resembles that of the other in almost every circumstance. By the cross of Christ I behold Mary standing, His most holy and virginal Mother, burning with love for her divine Son, and overwhelmed with sorrow and compassion; by the cross of Philip I see his virginal sister, Mary, or, as she is called by some, Mariamne, who accompanied him in his toilsome journey to Hierapolis, stood by him in his passion, and shared his

Before  
death.

<sup>1</sup> Intrepide exivit.

<sup>2</sup> Tanquam ovis ad occisionem ducetur . . . et non aperiet os suum.—Is. liii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Cum tetigisset auriculam ejus sanavit eum.—Luke xxii. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Aristarchum articulis restauratis integrum effecti.—Hagiogr. Antwerp. in Mirac. S. Phil.



sufferings as far as her wish went, at least.<sup>1</sup> I hear Christ speaking seven times on the cross; Philip preached the whole day, as long as he lived on his cross, and did not cease to give the people salutary instructions until his last breath, and to exhort them to put their trust in God.<sup>2</sup> Christ on the cross prayed for His enemies; so also did Philip for those who crucified him.<sup>3</sup> At the crucifixion and death of the Saviour the earth trembled and shook through compassion and horror at the murder of its Creator; at the crucifixion of Philip the earth not only shook, but even opened and swallowed down his persecutors:<sup>4</sup> “The people began to sink down into the crevice, and were in imminent danger of perishing miserably;”<sup>5</sup> nor, as there is reason to believe, would any one have been saved had not the people acknowledged their fault, and appealed unanimously to the holy apostle for help: “They begged of him to stretch forth his helping hand to them, and not to allow those to perish who were in danger on his account alone.”<sup>6</sup> Whereupon they were saved by God, who miraculously rescued them from the abyss, in which many of them had already sunk. Christ did not wish to descend from the cross, although He might have done so by His almighty power, and the Jews scornfully invited Him to come down: “If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”<sup>7</sup> Philip did not wish to be freed from his cross, although the people who had been so wonderfully saved by his intercession ran up to take him down, and begged of him to allow them to free him: “Philip prevented them, for he knew that he was about to go to Him whom he so longed to see.”<sup>8</sup> Finally, when Christ was on the point of death, He gave up the ghost with a loud cry into the hands of His heavenly Father; the dying Philip did the same: “He went to the Lord whom he loved, commending his soul into His hands.”<sup>9</sup> Riba-

<sup>1</sup> Soror Mariamne corpore et animo virgo, neque magis natura fratri conjuncta, quam animo, aderat patienti Philippo, cum eoque patiebatur ac sustinebat cruciatum.

<sup>2</sup> Sublime pendens, de iis quæ erant eis futura utilia, tota die disserbat, et fiducia confirmans eorum animos, sacrosancte cum sacris excessit eloquiis.

<sup>3</sup> Pro eis supplicans.

<sup>4</sup> Concussa terra, et tremorem insolitum patiente . . . subvertitur funditus locus, atque in profundum dehiscit.

<sup>5</sup> Absorbetur populus, eratque in periculo miserrimæ perditionis.

<sup>6</sup> Rogabant dexteram eis suam porrigeret, neque despiceret animas, ipsius solius causa periclitantes.

<sup>7</sup> Si Filius Dei es descende de cruce.—Matt. xxvii. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Prohibuit Philippus, sciebat enim sese jamjam emigraturum ad illum quem desiderabat.

<sup>9</sup> Ad Dominum quem amaverat, transit, animam suam in manus illius commendans.—Metaph. in Vita.



deneira adds: "Dying, he returned due thanks to God for having deigned to cause him to imitate the death of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> And indeed what greater grace could he have prayed for or desired than that of such conformity with his suffering and dying Redeemer?

Nay, after the death of the apostle some circumstances occurred After death. which are most like those that happened after the death of our Saviour. Do we not read that hardly had Our Lord breathed His last when the centurion who had to assist at the fulfilment of the sentence against Him opened his eyes to the light of faith, acknowledged Him who was hanging dead on the cross to be the Son of God, and freely confessed his belief: "Indeed this was the Son of God"?<sup>2</sup> And, as St. Luke tells us, the people, too, were touched, and acknowledged their error: "And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned, striking their breasts."<sup>3</sup> When they saw the earth quake, says St. Matthew, they were sore afraid. Metaphrastes relates a similar incident at the death of St. Philip: as soon as he gave up the ghost on the cross the eyes of the heathens were opened, and partly through astonishment at his invincible virtue, and partly through dismay at the earthquake, they execrated their own cruelty, and having renounced idolatry, served the true God with all their hearts. "This opened the way of salvation to the infidels, who while they acknowledged the great power of Philip, praised and glorified much more the Almighty whom he had preached to them."<sup>4</sup> Last of all, let us accompany both to the tomb. The more ignominious the death of Christ, the more glorious was His sepulchre, for He was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea, a noble, and by Nicodemus, a prince among the Jews, who anointed His body with costly spices, and placed it in a new tomb hewn out of the rock, in which no one had ever been buried. Was not almost the same honor shown to Philip after the disgrace of the cross? "His sacred body," writes the author of his Life, "was placed, with hymns and sacred rites, in a consecrated and becoming

<sup>1</sup> *Moriens meritas Deo gratias egit, quod se Dominicæ mortis imitatorum facere dignatus esset.—Ribaden. 1. Maji.*

<sup>2</sup> *Vere Filius Dei erat iste.—Matt. xxvii. 54.*

<sup>3</sup> *Omnis turba eorum, qui simul aderant ad spectaculum istud, et videbant quæ fiebant, percutientes pectora sua revertebantur.—Luke xxiii. 48.*

<sup>4</sup> *Hæc fuit via fidei ad salutem infidelibus, et simul quidem magnum esse Philippum, majorem quoque illum quem annuntiabat Dominum prædicarunt.*

place by Bartholomew and Mariamne, after they had performed in splendid style the usual funeral obsequies.”<sup>1</sup> So that in both cases the honor paid after death atoned in some sort for the disgrace suffered before it. Could any stronger proof be adduced to show the resemblance between Christ and Philip in their passion and death?

So that both  
were most  
like Our  
Lord.

There, my dear brethren, you have two true disciples, perfect followers, and, in a word, as I undertook to prove, two apostles most like to Christ; the one imitating the life of Christ, the other His death, both with an exactitude that fills the world with astonishment. Truly, their fame is not to be surpassed; nor can anything more be added to the praise due to them. The eternal Truth Himself says, in the gospel of St. Matthew: “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.”<sup>2</sup> If it is an honor and glory for a man to be like another man who is his master, have we not reason to say that these true servants, these zealous disciples of Christ have reached the highest pinnacle of honor and glory, since they were raised with their divine Master to such a wonderful likeness to the great Monarch of heaven and earth? Yes, O glorious apostles, it is enough! this alone is more than enough; this alone is the highest and greatest thing that can be said of you, that you were most like to Christ. This alone is enough to show the excellence of your virtues, your perfection and holiness; this alone is enough to enable us to form some idea of the greatness of your merits; this alone is enough to make your glory, your praise, your fame illustrious and immortal before heaven and earth.

We, too,  
must be like  
Him.

My dear brethren, can we take any part of this fame and glory to ourselves? Are not we, too, disciples and servants of Christ? Yes, we profess to be such when we say that we are Christians. But wherein do we show the likeness to Christ, our Master? Is it not that likeness that makes the true disciple of Christ? “What does it mean to be a Christian?” asks St. Gregory of Nyssa. And he answers the question by saying that “it means having a likeness to God as far as is possible to human infirmity.”<sup>3</sup> The same answer is given by St. John Climacus: “The Christian,” he says,

<sup>1</sup> Venerandum illius corpus a Bartholomæo et Mariamne, cum ea splendide persolvissent, quæ fieri in sepulturis consueverant, depositum est cum hymnis et obsequiis sacris, in loco sancto et decenti.

<sup>2</sup> Sufficit discipulo, ut sit sicut magister ejus, et servo sicut dominus ejus.—Matt. x. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Quid est aliud esse Christianum? Nisi habere cum Deo similitudinem, quatenus capit humana ratio.—S. Greg. Nyss. in Verbb. Faciames Hominem.

“is one who tries to imitate Christ in word and work as far as is possible for a human being.”<sup>1</sup> That is the first and most sacred duty to which we bind ourselves in holy baptism, a duty that nothing can excuse us from fulfilling. Besides the redemption of the human race, that was the chief object that Christ had in view in His life and passion; namely, to be our model, as St. Peter says: “Leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps,”<sup>2</sup> and endeavor to be like unto Him. If we do not tread in His footsteps, if we do not follow His example, if our lives and actions do not harmonize with the life and actions of Christ, then to no purpose do we boast of being Christians. “To no purpose are we called Christians if we are not imitators of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

And how is it with us in this particular? The whole life of Our Lord was nothing but humility, meekness, self-denial, mortification, temperance, and abstinence, love of God and man—in a word, it was the most perfect justice and holiness. We have seen how excellently St. James imitated his divine Master in this respect. Now let each of us compare his own life with that of Christ, and see whether there is any resemblance. Must we not acknowledge that in nearly every point we find a difference? Instead of humility we find pride and worldly vanity; instead of meekness, anger and desire of revenge; instead of self-denial and mortification, the satisfaction of our own will, the gratification of our senses, and the constant search after bodily comforts and the delights of the flesh; instead of temperance and abstinence, gluttony and drunkenness; instead of the love of our neighbor, hatred and envy; instead of the love of God, a coldness and tepidity so great that the least occasion is enough to turn our hearts away from God to the unlawful use of creatures. In a word, instead of justice and perfection, we find nothing but sin and vice. Truly, a fine way to resemble such a perfect and divine model. Ah, too true is the complaint of Haymo: “We find Christ on the lips of all, but not in the lives of all;”<sup>4</sup> for, alas! He is found there only in very few cases.

But most people are not at all so in their lives.

<sup>1</sup> Christianus est qui Christum quantum homini possibile est, imitari nititur verbis et operibus.—S. Joan. Clim. de Vian. Vita, pag. gr. 1. c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini vestigia ejus.—I. Pet. II. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Frustra appellamur Christiani, si imitatores non sumus Christi.—S. Leo, Serm. 5. In Nativ. Dom.

<sup>4</sup> Omnium vox Christum clamat, sed non omnium vita Christum clamat.—Haymo, Dom. Septuag.

And in sufferings.

And finally, what shall I say of our conformity to the passion and death of Christ? Philip bore nearly all the different kinds of torments that Our Lord suffered, for His sake; what have we endured for Christ? Philip, after the example of Christ, desired the cross and suffering; we have a horror and dread of it; we shun every kind of pain, mortification, and chastening of the flesh, no matter how necessary it may be; the bare name of those things shocks and makes us cowardly. Philip, during his martyrdom, showed an invincible patience, and although he could have come down from the cross, preferred to die on it, to be like his divine Master; if the smallest cross is laid on us, if the least stroke of adversity befall us, we murmur and complain and bewail our lot, and strain every nerve to get rid of the cross. Philip, after the example of Christ, prayed while on the cross for those who nailed him to it, as if they had conferred on him the greatest benefit, and actually saved them from the most imminent danger of temporal and eternal death; but we curse and vilify those from whom we imagine we received an injury; we try to be revenged on them, and do them all the harm we can. Is that the way in which we ought to act as disciples of Christ, as true Christians? Must we not be ashamed to see what a perfect resemblance to Christ those holy apostles reached, while we are so utterly unlike Him? Were they perhaps obliged to be more strict in imitating His virtues and holiness than we? Did He propose Himself as a pattern to them alone, and not to us as well? Has He not said to all: "Learn of Me; for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you so you do also"?<sup>1</sup> Truly, my dear brethren, these words are for us all. We are Christians as the apostles were; we have to follow the same holy doctrine and example of Christ; the same duties and obligations to fulfil; and even the same way of virtue and the cross that Christ pointed out to them must be our road to heaven also. Once for all, according to the express words of St. Paul, we must be made conformable to the image of the Son of God if we wish to be in the number of those whom God has chosen for eternal glory and happiness.

Exhortation to imitate those holy apostles in

Come, then, let us at least make a resolution for the future, and determine to live and suffer like Christ, Our Lord, after the example of the holy apostles Philip and James. If we dare not

<sup>1</sup> Discite a me; exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci vobis, ita et vos faciat. —Matt. xi. 29; John xiii. 15.



promise to imitate His perfection, humility, meekness, self-denial, charity, justice, and holiness in the same degree as the apostle St. James, we can at all events strain every nerve to follow Him at a distance, and represent in ourselves to some extent those virtues that were proper to the Saviour. If we have not the heart and courage to enter with Our Lord on the bitter way of the cross, after the example of Philip, and to remain constantly thereon till death, then let us at least bear with patience and contentment, after the example of Christ, the daily trials, crosses, and disappointments that we seem never to be without, that in some manner we may prove ourselves His true disciples. Yes, dearest Lord, this is my firm resolve, and that, too, I trust, of all here present. Do Thou grant us the help of Thy powerful grace, which we humbly beg of Thee through the intercession of these holy apostles of Thine, that we may keep our resolution, walk in Thy footsteps, and so zealously endeavor to imitate Thy example, and to be made conformable to Thee, that we may one day merit to gain this likeness, and resemble Thee in glory, as Thy holy disciple St. John has promised to all who follow Thee: "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him."<sup>1</sup> Amen.

following  
Christ in  
life and suf-  
fering.

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FORTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE HOLY APOSTLE ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

Subject.

St. Bartholomew was, before all the other apostles, a most glorious and illustrious martyr of Christ.—*Preached on the feast of St. Bartholomew.*

Text.

*Elegit . . . Bartholomæum.*—Luke xiii. 14.

"He chose . . . Bartholomew."

Introduction.

It is already a great distinction for Bartholomew to be selected, in preference to so many others, to join that company of men whom Our Lord Himself had chosen from all eternity to be His

<sup>1</sup> Scimus, quoniam cum apparuerit similes ei erimus.—I. John iii. 2.



helpers in the great and holy work of the redemption; I mean those twelve to whom He gave the title of Apostles, of men sent by Him, and to whom, during His life on earth, He revealed the most hidden secrets and decrees of Providence; nay, to whom He opened His own heart, and to whom He left, after His ascent into heaven, full power to rule the work so laboriously begun by Him, His newly-established Church, and to spread it throughout the world. For what could be said more in praise of any mere mortal than that he was chosen to perform such an important and sublime duty, appointed to such a divine office by the God of infinite wisdom, who is so foreseeing in the choice He makes? Yet perhaps this privilege might be looked on as an act of sheer generosity, an unmerited favor bestowed by Our Lord. Much more, then, does our holy apostle deserve praise, because, as far as he could, he made himself worthy, by a virtuous and exemplary life, to be raised to this high dignity. For according to the most celebrated historians Bartholomew was that renowned disciple Nathanael, who, as the gospel tells us, at his first calling merited to be praised and publicly lauded by Christ, the eternal Truth, as a true Israelite, in whom there was no guile or deception, nor anything worthy of blame. But, in my opinion, the chief praise of this great apostle consists in this, that as he was dignified by Our Lord with the office of apostle, so he brought to Christ, his Master and Redeemer, special and extraordinary honor, praise, and glory, as well in his apostolate and while preaching the gospel as in his martyrdom, and by the constancy with which he endured the most cruel and inhuman torments; so that with just reason he is called, in preference to the other apostles, a most glorious and illustrious martyr of Christ in his sufferings, and therefore is deserving of admiration and praise. There you have the matter of this panegyric.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Bartholomew, in his martyrdom, was a most glorious and illustrious martyr of Christ, in preference to the other apostles: such is the whole subject. The moral lesson shall be that as we are not worthy of martyrdom, yet, after the example of St. Bartholomew, we should at least honor Our Lord by constancy in bearing trials, and by mortification and chastising the flesh.*

Help us to do this by Thy powerful grace, O Christ Jesus, King of martyrs; this we beg of Thee through the merits of Thy holy Mother, Mary, and of the holy angels.

Of course all the elements, and all lifeless and senseless creatures give their Creator honor and glory by doing, according to their nature, in their different ways, that for which the divine omnipotence has called them into being; nor is there a blade of grass so worthless, a grain of sand so small as not to pay its Creator the due meed of service and honor by doing the work for which God created it, and proclaiming His majesty. Yet these creatures show forth the divine honor still clearer when, at a single sign on the part of God, they either restrain their natural movements or allow themselves to be used to produce effects that are extraordinary and contrary to their nature. Thus never did the sea proclaim more wonderfully the power of its Creator than on the day when, at the command of God, it divided, so that its waves, quite in opposition to their natural movement, heaped themselves up like a wall on either side, to make for the Israelites, pursued by Pharaoh, a way by which they might pass dryshod through its hitherto untrodden depths. "Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified,"<sup>1</sup> they sang with one voice when they beheld this wonder. Never did fire better proclaim the honor of God and show its obedience to Him than when in the Babylonian furnace it restrained its sevenfold fury, and not only did not the least injury to the three Hebrew youths, but even appeared to them as a cooling breeze, as a most refreshing air. The proud Nabuchodonosor could not restrain his astonishment at this; he "was astonished," says the Scripture, "and rose up in haste . . . and breaking forth, said: Blessed be their God . . . who hath delivered His servants that believed in Him."<sup>2</sup> Never did the winds give greater praise to their Creator than when, being on the point of overwhelming all with their impetuosity, they, at a single word of Christ, allayed their fury and became tranquil. All who were present knew not how to give expression to their wonder and awe: "Who being afraid, wondered, saying one to another: Who is this, think you, that He commandeth both the winds and the sea,

Lifeless things give most glory to God when they obey Him against their nature.

<sup>1</sup> Cantemus Domino; gloriose enim magnificatus est.—Exod. xv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Obstupuit, et surrexit propere . . . et erumpens ait: Benedictus Deus eorum, qui . . . eruit servos suos, qui crediderunt in eum.—Dan. iii. 91, 95.

and they obey Him?"<sup>1</sup> Are not those wonderful effects, produced by senseless and lifeless creatures at the command of their Creator, irrefragable proofs, sufficient to convince even the most obdurate of the unlimited power of the Almighty, and of the right He has to our praise and adoration? But why should I delay long on what such lifeless things do to honor their God by extraordinary effects, and by acting contrary to their nature, as if they could even thus add much to His honor? They are, after all, but senseless tools, compelled by a force they cannot resist to do this or that in opposition to their natural tendencies.

Far more honor did God receive from the holy martyrs, who overcame their nature, and suffered painful deaths for His glory.

Reasoning men, endowed with free will, ye brave and faithful servants of God, and you, especially, heroic martyrs of Christ, you indeed show far more honor to the Divine Majesty, far more glory and homage, when with your own free will and choice, for the sake of God's glory, you fight against yourselves, freely conquer your own natural inclinations, sacrifice goods and life for His honor and glory, and go cheerfully to torments and death, against which your nature struggles most violently, impelled solely by your desire to prove to the world your love for God. These are wonders of the grace of God, by which His perfections are most clearly shown forth; these are heroic exploits of human weakness, strengthened by grace, which compel the admiration even of the angels; these are the victories and conquests that God Himself looks on as His own triumphs, and in which He places His honor and glory, as St. Jerome says: "The sufferings of the martyrs and the blood they shed are the triumphs gained by God."<sup>2</sup> In a word, these are the most glorious proofs that a reasoning creature can give of his adoration and reverence for the infinite, divine Majesty. Therefore the holy Fathers prefer martyrdom to all acts and practises of virtue, and praise it as the greatest proof of charity. "Of all virtuous acts," says St. Thomas of Aquin, "martyrdom especially shows the perfection of charity;" for we prove our love for anything most of all by giving up for its sake that which we should otherwise most love, and select what we should otherwise most abhor. Now it is certain that of all the goods of this life there is none we love more than life itself, and nothing we hate more than death, especially a painful death; hence it is evident that the sufferings of the mar-

<sup>1</sup> *Timentes, mirati sunt ad invicem, dicentes: quis, putas, hic est, quia et ventis et mari imperat, et obediunt ei?*—Luke viii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Triumphus Dei est passio martyrum et pro Christi nomine cruoris effusio.*

tyrs are more perfect than all other acts of human virtue, and are a proof of the greatest love, according to the words of Christ: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."<sup>1</sup> This is the reason why they who shed their blood and give their lives for Christ are called martyrs, that is, witnesses of blood; because by shedding their blood they prove to the whole world, and publicly profess that the infinite and priceless majesty and goodness of God are such that for their sake one ought to be ready to do, abandon, suffer, and endure all. It was these heroic witnesses who most promoted the glory of Christ on earth, who spread His doctrine and law throughout the world, and who preached His name, often with tongues cut out or silenced in death, most powerfully of all to the heathens and infidels of the world.

Now I think we may say of all the holy apostles that they were not only martyrs of Christ, but even among the martyrs the highest place belongs to them. For in addition to the fact that during the life of Christ they shared to some extent in His persecutions and sufferings for His sake, they were the chief of those who preached the gospel of Christ throughout the world, and they were the first to testify to its truth by the sacrifice of their lives, so that, as it were, the whole earth was moistened with their blood, and they were almost the first to give the heroic example of suffering martyrdom; so that, as they were placed by Our Lord as the heads of Christianity and the examples of all virtue, and should be regarded by us in that light, so also, in the same degree, we must consider them as our patterns in patiently bearing torments and afflictions for the name of Christ, and we honor them as the chiefs of the martyrs. With reason does St. John Chrysostom add this to the other praises of the apostles: You are they who gave the example of constancy to the martyrs, who encouraged them in their sufferings, inflamed them with zeal for the divine honor, and made them invincible, in spite of the tortures they had to endure.<sup>2</sup> Yes, O holy apostles, this can be said of you alone, that you are, as it were, the crown, the ornament, and pattern of all the martyrs, and as their blood is the seed of Christianity, according to Tertullian,<sup>3</sup> so we may say

It is true that all the apostles were martyrs of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> *Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis.*—John xv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Vos estis martyrum tolerantia.*

<sup>3</sup> *Sanguis martyrum semen est Christianorum.*



of you that the blood you shed for Christ was the seed that produced so many martyrs in the Church of Christ, which, like a fruitful field, was fertilized by your blood.

Yet herein  
the prefer-  
ence is to be  
given to  
Bartholo-  
mew.

Yet as far as martyrdom is concerned, permit me to give Bartholomew the preference above you all, and allow me to assert boldly that he was the most illustrious and glorious martyr of Christ, your Master, and the one who gave Him most honor and glory in his sufferings. Why so? Mark this, my dear brethren. There is no doubt that the hero procures greater renown and honor for the king under whose banner he fights the greater and more powerful the enemy whom he contends with and subdues; for the might of the hostile force and the opposition made is, as it were, the test of the glory obtained by victory, and therefore of the honor gained by the sovereign. In the same way it cannot be denied that that martyr gave more glory to Christ, his heavenly King, and gained the brightest crown and palm of victory, who endured with fortitude even to death the most atrocious, cruel, and long-continued torments; for in this respect it is the same with the valiant warrior and the constant and brave sufferer. Now which of the apostles had to endure such a cruel, difficult, and protracted martyrdom as St. Bartholomew? Truly, it was a hard thing to offer one's neck freely to the sword, or to the axe, as did St. Paul, St. James the Great, SS. Judas and Matthias; a hard thing to offer one's body to the cross, as SS. Peter, Andrew, and Philip did; a hard thing to expose one's breast to the hostile lance violently thrust against it with deadly intent, as did the holy apostles Thomas and Matthew, or to stretch out the body and allow one's self to be sawed asunder, as did St. Simon; or, finally, to have the head shattered by a blow of a club, as was the case with the holy apostle James the Less. All these were indeed glorious and wonderful martyrdoms, from which Christ, the Leader and King, drew more honor and glory the more His holy name was thereby made known and honored throughout the world. Yet these torments and modes of death were not as unusual, nor as cruel and inhuman, nor as protracted as were the sufferings and death of St. Bartholomew. God indeed wished to be honored by the constancy and the blood of all the apostles; yet it seems that He chose Bartholomew in a special manner, in order to show the world, by his invincible courage, what a true disciple and follower of Christ can do and suffer. For him He reserved an extraordinary combat, a most



glorious victory, in which he wished to triumph over the worst efforts of human cruelty and violence.

I will not now dwell on all that this holy apostle did during life for the honor of his Saviour; how he travelled through many vast countries and kingdoms—through Asia Minor, Arabia, India, Morocco, Phrygia, Mesopotamia, Armenia—everywhere preaching and sowing the seed of the Christian faith amid many persecutions. For as Nicetas, an ancient writer, says in his panegyric of St. Bartholomew: “What tongue can narrate the journeyings and wanderings, the dangers, the labors, the flights, the wounds, the prisons, the scourgings, the stonings, the revilings he endured? Who can relate how often he was brought before judges, accused before magistrates, calumniated, insulted, harassed, burnt, flogged, torn, and mangled?”<sup>1</sup> There you have a short sketch of all the torments and trials that Bartholomew had to contend with. Would not almost any one of them have sufficed to gain a glorious crown of martyrdom for him? But all that we have heard hitherto was but a preparation and prelude to the chief combat he had to sustain. Bartholomew was chosen and selected by God for no ordinary martyrdom, for no simple victory, but for an extraordinary and manifold combat. In the town of Hierapolis, in Phrygia, he was nailed to a cross with Philip, his fellow-apostle. If he had then, like Philip, given up his heroic spirit he would have been looked on as a martyr equal to Philip, Peter, and Andrew; but that palm-branch was too small for him; and therefore God so ordained that his tormentors, terrified by a sudden earthquake, took him down from the cross while still living, and thus prolonged his life for further tortures. If Bartholomew had had nothing more to suffer than decapitation, his glorious soul would have ascended to heaven, and he would have shared in the crown of St. James the Great, St. Paul, and St. Matthew; but in that case he would have suffered only in one part of his body, while the will of God was for him to suffer and conquer in his whole body, in every part and member of it. Had he died on the cross he would have endured only one kind of martyrdom, whereas almost countless kinds were ordained for him from above, that, proved and perfected by so many tokens of victory, he might make his heroism clearer, and give greater glory to God in his

For besides suffering persecution and torments like the other apostles,

<sup>1</sup> *Quis circuitus, itinera, pericula, labores, fugas, plagas, carceres, flagellationes, lapidationes, opprobria valeat enumerare? Quis abductiones ad præsidēs, coram magistratibus accusationes, calumnias, convitia, vexationes, ustiones, verbera, lacerationes ac laniatus potest recensere?*

last combat, in which he alone was to fight in the place of many, and by an unheard-of bravery to conquer cruelty itself.

He endured  
a most cruel  
and pro-  
tracted  
martyrdom  
for Christ.

I say cruelty itself; for what could be imagined more inhuman, atrocious, or painful than that barbarous flaying, by which, as all the world knows, he was put to death by the order of the cruel Astyages? What fearful tortures, what intolerable agony is comprised in that one word! Fastidious Christians, what do you say or think of the ideas that word brings to your minds? Ah, the prick of a needle seems too much for you to bear; and if the plaster is taken off a small wound somewhat roughly, how you shriek in agony! And if a small piece of proud flesh has to be cut off a finger, what pain it causes! The mere anticipation of the surgeon's visit to cure you, the bare sight of his instruments makes you tremble and shake with dread! And what is it all compared to what St. Bartholomew had to suffer? For they took the skin away, not from a corrupting limb, but from the whole healthy body, from head to foot, and that, too, without any mercy, but with the utmost ferocity, violence, and hatred. If you can endure it, try to imagine what a terrible sight it must have been for the holy apostle to look at the sharp knives lying there before him, and to see the barbarous executioners, inflamed with diabolical rage, running up to flay him as if he were a dead animal! I dare not paint this picture to you in too vivid colors, because the very idea of it is repugnant to nature; I will content myself with the words of the gifted Louis of Granada: When the executioners had bound the holy man to a post, or, as some will have it, to a cross, in such a manner that he could not move a limb, they fell upon him with the utmost ferocity, and vied with one another in glutting their cruelty on him. "They stripped him," says Louis, "and then, to get through their work more conveniently, they began to cut furrows here and there in his flesh, and opened the way, with their knives, between the skin and the flesh; they then cut in still deeper, pulling off the skin with one hand, and with the other holding the knife pressed so as to separate the skin from the flesh; in this barbarous manner they tore the body of the holy man, lacerating his back and breast, his arms, legs, and thighs;"<sup>1</sup> in a word,

<sup>1</sup> Detrahis vestibus, ut expeditiores essent, sulcare et scindere hinc inde sacratissimum illud corpus incipiunt, et inter cutem carnemque vias ferro aperire; rimari secreta viscerum, et altera quidem manu pellem ad se trahere, altera ferrum stringere, et cutem a carne separare; atque hac immanitate divini viri et terga, et pectora, et brachia, et femora, et crura conscindunt, lacerant atque discerpunt.—Ludov. Granat. Serm. de S. Barth.

they mangled his every limb. Gracious God, who can describe the pain and anguish caused by such an extraordinary, manifold, and protracted martyrdom! As to its being extraordinary, the above quoted author says that such a mode of torment could have been suggested only by the powers of hell to the tyrant Astyages.<sup>1</sup> Of the manifold torment it caused he says: "When Bartholomew offered his skin to the torture, he offered every member of his body, and he suffered as many cruel deaths as there were members to be flayed by the executioners."<sup>2</sup> Finally, I will allow yourselves to judge how protracted his martyrdom must have been; you may know, perhaps, how long it takes to skin a beast that has been slaughtered. Seneca tells us of a Roman tyrant, who, to glut his cruelty, ordered one who had been condemned to death to be executed in such a manner that he might feel death. In the same barbarous fashion did Astyages treat our Saint in condemning him to such a long-continued martyrdom. And indeed not only was Bartholomew flayed alive, but he lived in that state till the next day, and therefore suffered as many martyrdoms in each limb as there were moments in the time during which he lived after the executioners had done their bloody work. So that I can well conclude with the same author: "This mode of death tortured the apostle most cruelly by the agony it caused him, by its extraordinary nature, and by the length of time it took."<sup>3</sup>

And how did the holy man behave under those torments? He did not even change the expression of his face, nor lay aside for a moment his natural cheerfulness and joy of heart, as our author says.<sup>4</sup> Not the least word of complaint escaped his lips, nor did he betray any sign of inward suffering. Instead of complaining, he rejoiced and exulted as if the greatest good fortune had befallen him, or the highest honor he could wish for had been conferred on him. "The divine apostle looked on his bleeding body as a royal garment, and on his executioners as the workmen who were fashioning his crown; he considered his lacerated flesh as a holocaust and living sacrifice pleasing to God; and fixing the eyes of his mind on the picture of his crucified Re-

And with  
the most  
wonderful  
firmness.

<sup>1</sup> Atrocissimum hoc supplicii genus, numquam antea visum, satana instigante excogitavit.

<sup>2</sup> Cum pellem dedit, omnia corporis membra dedit, atque tot mortes acerbissimas pertulit, quot membra carnifici excoirianda dedit.

<sup>3</sup> Hoc supplicii genus acerbitate sua, et novitate, et diuturnitate apostolum immanissime cruciavit.

<sup>4</sup> Semper eodem vultu, et animo lætus et hilaris.

deemer, he triumphed, with an incredible feeling of consolation, at beholding himself approaching more to the resemblance of Christ by the death he was suffering, and giving back his own blood for the blood by which he was redeemed,"<sup>1</sup> and thus made a return to Our Lord as far as he could. Still more wonderful is what St. Vincent writes of him; namely, that after the flaying was completed, he took the skin that had been torn from his body and placed it round his neck, like the stole of a priest, and thus ascended an elevated place, as if it were a pulpit, and there, with even more animation than usual, and in a loud voice, preached Christ and His holy gospel. Be that as it may, I find all authors agreed in this, that after the completion of his martyrdom the holy apostle continued undauntedly to preach the doctrine of Christ; although under the circumstances words were not necessary, since the torrents of blood that flowed from him announced sufficiently the truth of the doctrine he professed, and were in themselves a proof convincing enough for even the hardest hearts. And this very heroic constancy so enraged the tyrant Astyages, that, seeing that martyrdom could not daunt the courage or take away the life of the apostle—nay, that it rather added to his firmness and zeal in preaching Christ, so that many were converted by the spectacle—he ordered him to be beheaded on the following day, that his own cruelty might no longer be defied by the constancy of the apostle,<sup>2</sup> as Peter de Natalibus tells us.

What glory  
was thus  
given to  
Christ!

My dear brethren, if Christ is crowned in the sufferings of all the martyrs, because He is the source of victory to them all, as St. Bruno says,<sup>3</sup> what a glorious crown of honor He must have received from the incomparable triumph of this invincible martyr! What glory accrued therefrom to the name of Christ! what renown to the whole Church! And if every drop of blood shed by the holy martyrs is a seed of new Christians, as we have seen already, who will be surprised to learn that by the copious torrents of blood shed by St. Bartholomew, not only did the Christians of the place receive new courage and strength, but multi-

<sup>1</sup> Divinus apostolus sanguineolentum corpus ut regalem purpuram intuebatur, carnifices autem illos, coronarum ministros atque fabricatores reputabat; corpus lacerum holocaustum et hostiam vivam Deo placentem existimabat; et mentis oculis in crucifixi sui imaginem defixis, incredibili alacritate triumphabat, quod se illi per mortis supplicium similem fieri videbat, et sanguini quo redemptus fuerat, vicem suo sanguini rependebat.

<sup>2</sup> Cumque pelle nudatus, adhuc vivens permansisset et excoriatus Dominum prædicaret, et multos tantum cernentes miraculum, convertisset, Jussu regis decollatus est die sequenti.—Pet. de Natal. l. 7. c. 183.

<sup>3</sup> In singulis sanctis coronatur Christus, quia omnis eorum victoria ipsius est.



tudes of heathens, as we read in his Life, were converted on the spot to the true faith. Thus the cruel bath of blood by which the tyrant hoped to extinguish and destroy the faith was but a means of adding notably to its adherents. Finally, if all the martyrs when they suffer present an agreeable spectacle to heaven and its inhabitants, what joy must they not have felt at seeing this courageous servant and disciple of Christ enduring so bravely and constantly such a dreadful martyrdom! Seneca, considering the patience of a just man under adversity, cries out: "Behold a sight worthy of the attention of God Himself!"<sup>1</sup> With greater reason may I say of the martyrdom of Bartholomew: Behold a sight in which heaven finds joy, and God Himself pleasure and satisfaction! In truth, if Our Lord showed such extraordinary satisfaction at the charity of St. Martin, when the latter divided his cloak with a poor man, as to appear to Martin the following night, and say, as if touched, to a multitude of angels: Martin, while still a catechumen covered Me with this garment, how incomparably greater must not have been the pleasure He felt when Bartholomew, out of sheer love for Him, allowed the skin to be torn off his body, that he might honor Our Lord therewith as with a purple mantle, and as a sign of virtue?

This joy that Christ experienced in the constancy of His servant was the reason of His conferring on him great graces, both during his martyrdom and after his death. Not without reason does the learned Cardinal Baronius express his astonishment and his inability to understand how a man, after suffering so terribly as Bartholomew did in his martyrdom, could still preserve his life; for the intensity of the agony he endured and the loss of blood should have been enough to kill him. Still more amazing is it that the holy apostle of Christ not only endured his torments till the bitter end, but even continued for a whole day after to preach with mangled and bleeding body, and to announce Christ to the heathens, so that the tyrant, finding himself unable to conquer his dauntless spirit by the cruel flaying, was forced to have him decapitated in order to put him to death. Yes, I acknowledge that this is, humanly speaking, impossible; and from that very fact I conclude that God must have had an extraordinary satisfaction in the constancy of Bartholomew, for He prolonged the martyr's life by an evident miracle, partly to in-

How generously Our Lord rewarded the apostle during his martyrdom!

<sup>1</sup> Ecce, spectaculum dignum, ad quod respiciat intentus operi suo Deus!



crease His own glory in the sight of the world, and partly to add to the martyr's merits and his future glory. And for this reason historians are of opinion that in some churches the feast of St. Bartholomew is held on this date—the 24th of this month—and also on the following day—the 25th—as well, so as to celebrate the constancy with which he endured the flaying and also his decapitation, that thus both the combats he sustained might be duly honored in the Christian world. Still more evidently did God reward his firmness, for in miraculously prolonging his life He not only filled the martyr with greater interior consolation but also opened heaven before his eyes, and sent angels to comfort and strengthen him in his torments and to invite him to the eternal glory prepared for him; and when he was beheaded the angels brought his heroic soul into everlasting joys;<sup>1</sup> so writes Nicetas in his panegyric. O happy soul, that formed such a pleasing sight to heaven, go and receive the reward of thy bravery; go to be crowned by Him for whom thou hast fought so valiantly! Thou hast by thy sufferings on earth honored thy Saviour and thy God; rejoice now, happy soul; everlasting shall be the honor and glory that thou shalt receive as a reward in heaven! For all eternity shalt thou see and experience in thyself the truth of the words of the divine promise: “Who-soever shall glorify Me him will I glorify.”<sup>2</sup>

After his  
death.

Not the soul alone of this glorious disciple, but his body also received this reward; for as it had suffered and fought so well for Him, Our Lord endowed it with extraordinary glory in recompense for the torments it endured. I should never come to an end if I were to narrate all the miracles wrought at the apostle's shrine immediately after his death. They were so numerous, and so much honor was shown the sacred body by the surrounding people, that the barbarous heathens could no longer bear to see crowds flocking to and from the shrine, some deformed and crippled, others returning thanks for being healed; and they became so enraged that they took the leaden, or, as others say, stone coffin in which the martyr's remains were interred, and four other coffins, containing the bodies of other

<sup>1</sup> Angeli de cœlo super eum descendentes et ascendentes augustissimum ei parabant ascensum; superne vero apertum eo erat cœlum, omnesque virtutum hierarchiæ se præparabant, quo susciperent ac salutarent dilectissimum Domini discipulum, gloriosissimum Christi martyrem.—Nicet. apud Haglogr. Antusep.

<sup>2</sup> Quicumque glorificaverit me, glorificabo eum.—I. Kings ii. 30.

holy martyrs, and threw them all into the sea, in the hope of thus making the people forget the apostle and cease to show him the honor they had hitherto paid him. But this madness of theirs and their attempt to sink the body only added to the apostle's glory before the world. Hardly had the coffin touched the water when the senseless element seemed as if it wished to let all understand that it appreciated the valuable treasure confided to it, and to the great astonishment of the spectators it received the sacred relic with reverence into its waves, and not only did not allow it to sink into the depths, but even bore it on the surface, heavy as it was, and with the other coffins, two on each side of that of the apostle, as if accompanying their superior, conveyed it from Armenia towards Sicily, to the Lipari islands; as we learn from St. Theodore Studita, St. Gregory of Tours, Nicetas, and others, and as we may read in detail in the Antwerp Lives of the Saints. But this was not an end of the wonders: that the island so favored by the arrival of the sacred relic might realize the value of the treasure it received, a volcano that used to vomit fire was at once removed from the island by an arm of the sea, so that it could do no more harm to the place which the apostle had taken under his protection. O miracle of miracles! cries out Nicetas; O most wonderful of prodigies! Was ever anything like it seen under the sun before?<sup>1</sup> I dare not dwell longer on the miracles wrought at the shrine of this holy apostle, as well in the island of Lipari, where they were of almost daily occurrence, as afterwards in Benevento and Rome, when the sacred relics had been brought thither. Thus did Our Lord honor the faithful servant who had so honored Him by his sufferings.

Now if the lifeless body of the apostle was so gloriously exalted before the world, what glory may he not expect on the day of general judgment, when that body shall be again united to the soul that strengthened it so bravely for the combat? With what beauty and light will it not be adorned above others? For if, according to the teaching of St. Augustine, St. Thomas of Villanova, and other theologians, "as Christ retained the marks of His wounds after His resurrection, so also shall the wounds of the holy martyrs remain for their adornment, honor, and glory; for they shall shine with those wounds as with so many diamonds

What a glorious reward will await him at the last day, and in heaven!

<sup>1</sup> O miraculum miraculorum! prodigium prodigiosissimum! Ubi simile quid unquam sub sole cognitum est?

and precious stones,"<sup>1</sup> as St. Thomas says—how glorious, then, shall not be the body of our most glorious martyr! "What a sight it will be," exclaims St. Augustine in astonishment, "to behold St. Bartholomew, whose whole body was flayed, shining so brilliantly that he will seem to surpass the splendor of the most precious purple!"<sup>2</sup> He will shine like the sun among the stars. "The greater the wounds that brave men bear in their bodies," says Sidonius Apollinaris, "the greater praise is due to them."<sup>3</sup> Is it not an honor and glory for soldiers, when they return from a victory, to be able to point to the wounds they have received for king and country? "They glory in their wounds," says Seneca, "and point to the blood which redounds to their honor; and although they who escaped all wounds may also have performed heroic exploits, yet it is they who have been wounded who attract the most attention."<sup>4</sup> For their wounds are undoubted proof of their valor; and hence they are praised, admired, and honored more than the others. How great, then, must not be the honor due to our Saint, what admiration will he not excite among angels, men, and even demons when he shows the bleeding skin that he allowed to be torn off his body for the name and honor of Christ, his heavenly King! (Fastidious Christians, who now care for your bodies so tenderly, what will you then be able to point to as having been done or suffered by you for your God? Where will you be able to hide your shame when you behold the glorious trophies brought from the combat by St. Bartholomew and other martyrs in honor of Christ, whereas you by your luxurious lives have only dishonored Him?) Now if the honor and glory of this apostle will be so great on the last day when he points to his mangled body as the sign of his victory, how exceedingly rich and copious will not the reward be that he will receive in all eternity! "For," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "if he who gives a cup of cold water for Christ's sake shall receive a reward from God, what glory will not be theirs who shed every drop of their blood, and suffered a most cruel

<sup>1</sup> Sicut Dominus in sua resurrectione cicatrices servavit, ita et in corporibus sanctorum ad decorem, honorem et gloriam remanebunt; quia sacris illis stigmatibus veluti carbunculis et adamantibus decorabuntur.—S. Thom. de Villanova, Conc. 2. de SS. Cosmas et Dam.

<sup>2</sup> Quid erit videre sanctum Bartholomæum, cui pelvis a toto corpore detracta fuit, cernere toto corpore ita illustrem, ut omnem purpuram quantumvis pretiosam superare videatur.—S. Aug. l. xxii. c. 26.

<sup>3</sup> In corpore fortium virorum laus est amplior, amplior cicatrix.

<sup>4</sup> Gloriantur vulneribus, et læti fluentem meliori casu sanguinem ostentant; idem licet fecerint, qui integri revertuntur ex acie, spectatur qui saucius redit.—Sen. de Prov.

death for His sake?"<sup>1</sup> Who can describe, nay, who can understand the joy reserved for those who suffered such pain, and for thee, especially, holy St. Bartholomew, glorious martyr and apostle, who in the flaying thou didst so valorously sustain didst shed, as it were, every drop of thy blood? How great will not be the recompense bestowed on thee by the God of infinite generosity for the bitter torments thou didst suffer for His honor? We congratulate thee with all our hearts, and praise and glorify God, who has prepared for His servants who have endured temporal pain for His sake such an abundant, incomprehensible, endless, and eternal happiness and bliss.

But, my dear brethren, to come to ourselves, what have we to expect after this life? Can we console ourselves with the hope of enjoying in the general resurrection such renown before the divine tribunal, such glory, such a great, eternal reward? Yes, we would indeed desire that; but where are the trophies of the victories we have gained for Christ? Where the wounds we have suffered for Him? Where the instruments of torture that we may point to, like Bartholomew, as the proofs of our sufferings? Yet what do I say of wounds and torture? Many shudder at the bare name of such things. Meanwhile it is and remains true, there is no other way to attain to that reward but the way of suffering; this is what Christ Himself has shown us by His example; this is the way that Bartholomew and all the other apostles and disciples of Christ, nay, all the saints have been obliged to follow. Never shall that divine sentence be convicted of falsehood: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup> Under no other condition is eternal glory bequeathed to us, as we learn from St. Paul: "Heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; yet so if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him."<sup>3</sup> How I pity you, then, weak and luxurious Christians, whose sole care is for your bodily comfort and sensual gratification! You who fear and avoid nothing more than what can hurt the flesh, and desire nothing but what can delight it; who give to your palates all that can please them, to your eyes all liberty to

The contrary is to be dreaded by those who pamper their bodies.

<sup>1</sup> Si enim is qui calicem aquæ frigidæ pro Christo dederit, recipiet a Deo mercedem; qui sanguinem suum totum pro ipso fuderunt, et tam acerbam mortem, laniam sustinuerunt, quanta gloria afficientur?

<sup>2</sup> Per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei.—Acts xiv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Hæredes quidem Dei, cohæredes autem Christi, si tamen compatimur, ut et conglorificemur.—Rom. viii. 17.



look on agreeable objects, to your ears all the delights of hearing, to the smell pleasing perfumes, to the touch all that is soft and luxurious. You who, in a word, seek for bodily pleasures and sensual delights, while you shun with the utmost care all that savors of pain and sorrow as if it were a plague. You may easily judge for yourselves the amount of honor and glory you give the Almighty by your luxurious and easy manner of life, and can from that see what praise you will have from Him on the day of judgment and what reward in eternity. Hear the sentence pronounced by the angel in the Apocalypse on the luxurious city of Babylon: "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her."<sup>1</sup> And this is the meaning of that terrible wo pronounced by Our Lord on the voluptuous in the gospel of St. Luke: "Wo to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Wo to you that are filled, for you shall hunger. Wo to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep."<sup>2</sup>

Exhortation and resolution, after the example of Bartholomew, to honor Christ by self-denial and patience under trials, so as to receive a reward in heaven.

No, Christians; if we wish to share with Bartholomew in his reward and eternal glory we must also share in his sufferings. "The mind," says St. Gregory, "is pleased to think of the greatness of the reward; but it must not be frightened by the struggle of the combat;" if we are pleased at the thought of the exceeding great recompense prepared for the martyrs of Christ by the Lord, we, too, should not allow ourselves to be frightened by the difficulty and labor of the strife. In a word, if we desire to go to heaven we must travel by the road that leads to heaven. But this is, as we have seen, no other than suffering for God and His honor; either suffering from violence, like Bartholomew and other martyrs who were tortured by tyrants, or else by voluntary mortification, penance, and patiently bearing the crosses laid on us by Providence. God be praised that we have not now to combat against raging tyrants, threatening to cut off our heads with the sword, or to take our lives by the wheel or gallows, by fire or sword! (Oh, I fear that such threats would shake the constancy of many of us!) But precisely since God has made things so easy for us we must and should all the more earnestly take the knife in our hands and pierce our own flesh therewith, and all the more zealously restrain our inordinate inclinations,

<sup>1</sup> Quantum glorificavit se, et in deliciis fuit, tantum date illi tormentum et luctum.—Apoc. xviii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Vae vobis divitibus, quia habetis consolationem vestram. Vae vobis qui saturati estis, quia esurietis. Vae vobis qui ridetis nunc, quia lugebitis et flebitis.—Luke vi. 24, 25.



repress our carnal desires, tame and keep in check our outward senses, be our own tormentors by voluntary mortifications, and accept cheerfully from the hands of God sickness, poverty, want, persecution, and whatever other trials we may have to bear. Thus we shall honor Christ like the martyrs by overcoming ourselves, and gain a glorious victory, and when the short combat is at an end we shall receive an eternal, immortal crown of glory in heaven. Yes, my dear brethren, such is our resolution. And what have we to suffer? Nothing, answers the Apostle, but “what is momentary and light;”<sup>1</sup> and even that brings us “an eternal weight of glory.”<sup>2</sup> It is light in comparison with the priceless glory and heavenly joys we may win by it; it is momentary in comparison with the long eternity in which we shall enjoy that bliss. Let others, then, pamper their flesh, and give their senses all freedom, delight, and pleasure; let them eat well, drink well, and sleep well, and laugh and amuse themselves; we will keep all our joy and pleasure for another time—for the time of resurrection and reward; here in our mortal bodies we are willing to suffer, so that hereafter we may receive them incorruptible and rejoice all the more. With this thought we will console ourselves, and say with the suffering Job: “I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God.”<sup>3</sup> Then shall my body be amply and abundantly repaid for what it now has to endure. Even if my skin were to be torn off like St. Bartholomew’s, let it be so: “I shall be clothed again with my skin;” I shall receive it again; nor will that be all, for “in my flesh I shall see my God.” In that flesh which is now mortified and chastened, which is now emaciated by hard work, abstinence, mortification, hunger, and thirst, in that flesh which is now tormented by sickness and pain—in that I shall see my God, and find in Him my everlasting delight and joy. Yes, “this, my hope, is laid up in my bosom.”<sup>4</sup> With this do I console myself; to this I leave myself. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Momentaneum et leve.—II. Cor. iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Eternum gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis.—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Tursum circumdabor pelle mea, et in carne mea videbo Deum meum.—Job xix. 26.  
Reposita est hæc spes mea in sinu meo.—Ibid. 27.

FIFTIETH SERMON.

ON THE HOLY APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST ST. MATTHEW.

Subject.

In his conversion St. Matthew gained a heroic victory over himself.—*Preached on the feast of St. Matthew.*

Text.

*Ait illi: Sequere me. Et surgens secutus est eum.*—Matt. ix. 9.  
“He saith to him: Follow Me. And he arose up and followed Him.”

Introduction.

See what a brave, constant mind, strengthened by the grace of God, can do. Matthew was a public, notorious miser, a rich publican sitting in the toll-house, and actually engaged in usurious practice; the Saviour, passing by, saw him and said only the words: Follow Me; and at once, without hesitation, Matthew gets up, leaves the toll-house, his money, his house and home, and from a rich publican becomes a poor disciple and faithful follower of the poor Jesus: “And he arose up and followed Him.” In truth, when we consider this matter rightly, it is one that deserves our greatest admiration, one that could be the result only of a heroic act of self-denial. For when I consider on the one hand the power of the love of money and of avarice, once it has taken possession of the heart, and how difficult it is to be overcome, and on the other with what quickness and bravery Matthew trampled it under foot, I must give him this great and well-deserved meed of praise, that by so speedily conquering a strong passion he proved himself to be a heroic and brave conqueror of himself. This shall form the subject of this panegyric.

Plan of Discourse.

*In his conversion St. Matthew gained a heroic victory over himself. Such is the whole subject. How, after his example, we are to overcome ourselves shall form the moral lesson.*

That we may resolve to do so, give us Thy powerful grace, Christ Jesus, which we beg of Thee through the merits of Mary,

of our holy guardian angels, and of Thy heroic apostle and follower St. Matthew.

The stronger the enemy we have to fight against, and the greater the difficulty of overcoming him, the greater and more glorious is the victory we gain, and therefore he deserves the praise of heroic valor who not only undauntedly attacks such a foe, but at once overthrows and subdues him. What was it, my dear brethren, that gained for the brave young David such renown in the whole land of Judea? Was it not the ardent courage with which he at once, as soon as he had heard the vile reproaches uttered by the giant Goliath, went to King Saul, and immediately attacked this formidable foe, whom none of the men of Israel had hitherto dared to meet, overcame him at the first onset, cut off his head, and by this sudden victory took away all courage from the Philistines, and infused such vigor into the hands and hearts of his countrymen that they gained victory and freedom? Truly, that was an exploit that deserves the admiration of posterity, and undying praise and renown.

It is a great exploit to overcome a powerful enemy at once.

My dear brethren, it is a point on which the holy Fathers and heathen moralists are agreed that man, as far as the moral life is concerned, has no worse or more powerful foe than himself, especially when, taken up by a violent passion, he allows it to master and govern him. No worse foe, I say, for it is a foe that no one can escape, that one must always have with him; no more powerful foe, because that enemy attacks us with our own arms, and by the help of the self-love innate in all men easily conquers us, and as the combat is an interior one it is all the more difficult. Therefore the Holy Ghost says, by the wise Solomon, that it is not such a great exploit to capture well-fortified cities and strongholds as to hold in restraint one's own desires by overcoming one's self: "He that ruleth his spirit" is better "than he that taketh cities." <sup>1</sup> For, as St. Gregory writes of these words, the victory over cities is less, because what is conquered is outside the man himself; but it is a far greater thing to overcome one's own desires, because by an interior combat the mind is overcome by itself, subjected to itself, and its unrestrained desires made to obey the command of reason. <sup>2</sup> A victory that as it is the most difficult

Morally speaking, man has no worse enemy than himself.

<sup>1</sup> Mellior est qui dominatur animo suo, expugnatore urbium.—Prov. xvi. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Minor est victoria urbium, quia extra sunt qui subiguntur; valde majus est, quia ipse a se animus superatur, et semetipsum sibi subjicit.—S. Greg. p. 3. Past. Admon. 10.

is also the most glorious and excellent, as the heathen philosopher Plato says.<sup>1</sup>

The most powerful of our passions is avarice; it lasts longest, and is most difficult to overcome.

Now of all the desires that sway the heart of man there is none that does it more violence, adheres to it more obstinately, and is more difficult to be overcome than avarice and the desire of money, once it has taken possession of and rules the mind. I acknowledge that anger, desire of revenge, and carnal love are very powerful and mighty foes that conquer many souls and bring them to ruin; yet they are not always equally violent and inflamed; their fire decreases with time, and at last is even extinguished altogether. Take from the angry or vindictive man the object which excites his rage and his wrath is stilled, his fury appeased; when death comes and takes from the unchaste man the object of his unholy love that passion is at an end. And although it is one of the most violent, and often, when deep-rooted, trammels and fetters the mind for years, yet experience teaches that at least on the approach of old age, or on the occurrence of sickness or danger of death it is generally not only lessened, but even extinguished altogether. But, oh, unhappy the heart that once allows itself to be taken up by the love of money! There is hardly any means of overcoming that enemy and getting the better of it; neither gain nor loss nor misfortune can still the fires of avarice; it is always on the increase, always growing stronger. Well has the poet said: "The miser is always in want."<sup>2</sup> For when he has amassed the great treasures he was longing for he is not content with them, and his desires for more gain are all the greater, as St. Gregory says: "Avarice is not extinguished, but increased by the possession of the desired goods; for like a fire it grows, the more fuel is placed upon it, and what seemed to put it out only makes the flame burn fiercer."<sup>3</sup> Nay, even in abundance the avaricious man is poor in his own fancy, as St. Ambrose says.<sup>4</sup> Why? "Because he thinks himself in want of all that others possess."<sup>5</sup> "Everything in the world is wanting to him, because the world itself could not satisfy his cupidity."<sup>6</sup> Protracted and painful illnesses, old age and the approach of

<sup>1</sup> Vincere seipsum, victoriarum omnium prima est et optima.—Plato de Legib.

<sup>2</sup> Semper avarus eget.

<sup>3</sup> Avaritia desideratis rebus non extinguitur, sed augetur; nam more ignis, cum ligna, quæ consumit, acceperit, excrescit, et unde videtur ad momentum flamma comprimi, inde paulo post cernitur dilatari.—S. Greg. l. 15. Mor.

<sup>4</sup> Pauperiorem se judicat omnis abundans.—S. Amb. de Nabothe.

<sup>5</sup> Quia sibi deesse arbitratur quicquid ab aliis possidetur.

<sup>6</sup> Toto mundo eget, cujus non capit mundus cupiditatem.

death—how powerful you are to restrain other passions, or even to extinguish them! But you can do nothing with the avaricious man; his desires increase even during suffering, they are not lessened by any bodily weakness, and therefore they are with just reason called incurable by St. Chrysostom: “The insane desire of riches is an incurable malady.”<sup>1</sup> It grows strong with years, it sticks to a man in his gray old age, and although other passions and inclinations are then wont to weaken and die out, avarice still holds its sway, nay, shows itself even stronger, as St. Jerome says.<sup>2</sup> Hence it is generally the case that they who abandon themselves to this vice do not cease to be avaricious until they cease to live, and although death separates them from their money and riches, their desire for these things accompanies them to the grave. “It is not easy for him who has once been overcome by avarice to overcome avarice.”<sup>3</sup> See, my dear brethren, how mighty, obstinate, and almost invincible a foe is avarice. It is clear, then, that he who has fully overcome it and trampled it under foot deserves justly to be praised and exalted as a most heroic, brave, and valiant champion.

Most glorious apostle Matthew, holy disciple of Christ! thou art he who has gained an illustrious and renowned victory over this strong and mighty foe, when, although at first thou wert under the dominion of the craving for money, as soon as the divine light and the impulse of grace came, at the words of Christ, thou wert at once converted, and didst abandon forever thy wealth and goods, and even the desire for them, and didst resolve to follow the poor Jesus in extreme poverty. My dear brethren, let us consider the circumstances of the conversion of our holy apostle: the state in which he then was, the time and place in which he was addressed and called by Our Lord, the alacrity and generous cheerfulness with which he followed the call of the Saviour by leaving all he possessed. Who was Matthew? What was his business? He tells us himself. When he records the names of the apostles he puts his own along with them, and adds these words: “Matthew the publican.”<sup>4</sup> The same title is given him by St. Luke, who does not mention him by the name he is

Matthew  
conquered  
it, and at a  
time when  
he was fully  
occupied in  
amassing  
money.

<sup>1</sup> *Insana divitiarum cupiditas est morbus insanabilis.*

<sup>2</sup> *Cum cætera vitia senescente homine, senescant, sola avaritia juvenescit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Non facile de avaritia triumphat, de quo semel avaritia triumphavit.—Petres Blesensis, Serm. 14.*

<sup>4</sup> *Matthæus publicanus.—Matt. x. 3.*



usually known by: "He saw a publican named Levi."<sup>1</sup> So that Matthew, according to his own confession, was a publican, that is to say, a public sinner, notorious for avarice and the thirst of lucre, who sought to enrich himself by cheating, usury, robbery, and unjust extortion. For such was the estimation in which publicans were held at the time. "The business of the publicans," says St. Chrysostom, "was full of heartlessness; it was a vile pursuit, nay, a very robbery."<sup>2</sup> And St. Lawrence Justinian testifies that Matthew was also one of this sort: "Matthew was a publican, openly practising usury, ostracized from the society of the good, seeking only for temporal things, and caring little about heavenly goods."<sup>3</sup> Nay, some authors affirm that Matthew had at the time made good profit out of his usurious practices, that he had already amassed a good sum of money and hoped to amass more. So that the satisfaction at the gains he had made already, and the expectation of still greater gains had filled his mind and heart completely. Could any one imagine or reasonably expect that one who was bound to riches by so many chains could ever be converted, and be persuaded to abandon his wealth at the first word of a man whom he had never seen before?

Nay, while he was engaged in usury.

Where, and at what time did Jesus speak to him? If Matthew had accompanied the other publicans who went into the desert to hear the preaching of John the Baptist, if, with other sinners, he had gone after Christ to listen to His teaching and meditate on His holy life, we should not have much reason to wonder that he then turned his heart from riches; in such circumstances he would have had no opportunity of practising usury; the truths preached would have opened his eyes and shown him the deformity of the vice to which he was addicted, and so inspired him with a disgust for his former life. But his greed of gold left him no time to go into the desert to hear the preaching of John and of Our Lord. It kept him chained to the custom-house, fettered to his desk. There he sat as Jesus approached, there he sat when Jesus spoke to him: "Jesus saw a man sitting in the custom-house named Matthew,"<sup>4</sup> as he himself tells us. The Glossa Interlinearis adds that he was then all intent

<sup>1</sup> Vidit publicanum nomine Levi.—Luke v. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Publicanorum studia crudelitatis plena, turpis quædam mercatura, imo rapina.—S. Chrys. Hom. 32. in Matt.

<sup>3</sup> Erat namque Matthæus publicanus, et turpis lucri publice negotiis intentus, a sacrorum segregatus consortio, temporaliaque quærens, parvi pendens cœlestia.

<sup>4</sup> Vidit Jesus hominem sedentem in telonio, Matthæum nomine.—Matt. ix. 9.

on gain.<sup>1</sup> Abulensis goes still farther: "As he was sitting, inflamed with the fires of avarice."<sup>2</sup> And even at the moment when he was fully occupied with the passion that devoured him, actually engaged in usury and the acquisition of money, in the custom-house, where he liked so much to spend his time, Matthew formed the resolution of giving up his occupation, leaving the custom-house and all his wealth, and instead of living in abundance, as he had hitherto done, of leading a poor, necessitous life. And he carried this resolution into effect. What think you of this, my dear brethren? Was there ever before seen in one addicted to the greed of gain such a sudden change, such a heroic conversion, such a complete victory over self?

And what did Jesus say to him? Did He perhaps hold a long discourse with him? Did He sit down and set forth at length the deformity of greed, the abominable sins he had committed publicly as well as privately, as He did on another occasion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well? Did He convince him by force of reasoning? Did He frighten him with the threat of the eternal fire of hell, or attract him by winning words and promises, or gain him over by divine eloquence—means that He frequently used to win the hearts of His hearers? No; He simply passed by: "When Jesus passed." And when He saw Matthew He said to him: "Follow Me"; that was all; that finished the whole discourse. He did not tell Matthew for what purpose he should follow Him, nor whither, nor how long; He promised nothing, said not a word of a reward or recompense that he might expect; He went no farther than the words: "Follow Me"; and they sufficed to make Matthew obey Him at once: "And he arose up and followed Him." Others of the apostles, before resolving definitely to adhere to Christ, remained in His company for a considerable time, and saw the great wonders and glorious deeds He performed; how He expelled the demons from the possessed, healed the sick, cured the dumb, lame, blind, restored hearing to the deaf, and the use of their limbs to the paralytic; and it was no great wonder that, attracted by such signs and miracles, they left all and became His disciples. But, as St. Lawrence Justinian says: "Matthew had seen no sign of salvation, nor heard the exhortations of Christ, nor had he been a familiar friend of Our Lord," perhaps up to that moment he had never

This victory is the more glorious because he followed Christ at a word.

<sup>1</sup> Lucris pertinaciter inhaerentem.

<sup>2</sup> Cum sederet in ardoribus avaritiæ.

laid eyes on Him, "yet the mere word of Christ calling him was enough to fill his heart with contrition, so that he became completely changed in mind, enlightened with the faith, transfixed with the dart of charity, and he at once left money, family, possessions, and self, and submitted to his Master's authority." Mark how he did that at once. Hardly had Jesus called him when he was ready; hardly had he heard the words, "Follow Me," when he arose up at once and obeyed. Truly, that victory over self was all the more heroic the quicker the brave resolution was formed and carried out, and therefore the victory was all the more glorious as it was gained so suddenly.

With the greatest readiness, not delaying in the least.

We read in the Third Book of Kings that when Eliseus, at the command of God, received the prophetic spirit from Elias he at once left his father's field, oxen, and plough, with which he was actually engaged, and followed Elias: "He forthwith left the oxen, and ran after Elias." Yet he begged for a little delay, and asked permission to take leave of his parents: "He said: Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow thee."<sup>1</sup> On another occasion one was called by Our Lord in the same words as Matthew: "Follow Me"; he did not indeed refuse the invitation, and even accepted it: "I will follow Thee, Lord;" but he wished first to take leave of his relatives: "Let me first take my leave of them that are at my house."<sup>2</sup> Matthew was much braver and more generous; without any delay or hesitation, without thinking of taking leave of his family, "without losing a moment of time,"<sup>3</sup> as St. Ambrose says, he got up at the first word of the Lord; "he arose up and followed Him." Doubtless he must have thought that after having carried on business for so long, and having been occupied in the custom-house so successfully he should have arranged matters before leaving, and settled his accounts, or at least disposed of his private property and the wealth he had been so long accumulating, and so forth; but all these thoughts he put out of his head, and, as St. Peter Damian says, "as soon as he heard the command of the Saviour calling him he did not delay, nor ask for time to dispose

<sup>1</sup> *Signa non viderat salutis, non intellexerat monita, nec familiaris Christo extiterat; ad unam vocantis vocem corde compunctus, mente mutatus, irradiatus fide, charitatis jaculo transfixus, repente relictis pecuniis, familia, possessionibus, ac seipso præceptoris obedivit imperio.*

<sup>2</sup> *Statim relictis bobus cucurrit post Ellam. Ait: osculer, oro, patrem meum, et matrem meam, et sic sequar te.—III. Kings xix. 20.*

<sup>3</sup> *Sequar te, Domine: permittite mihi primum renunciare his quæ domi sunt.—Luke ix. 61.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ne momentum quidem temporis differendo.*

of his goods, or to see his friends, but at once despised riches, broke all the bonds of carnal affection, and being thus quite free, cheerfully and with alacrity followed the footsteps of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

But Our Lord did not command him thus completely to renounce everything, and to give up all his goods; he could have simply restored whatever he had gained unjustly; and if he wished to do more than that, he might have divided the half of his possessions among the poor, and kept the remainder for his own wants. Did not Jesus show great satisfaction with that other publican Zachæus, when he came and said: “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of anything I restore him fourfold.”<sup>2</sup> It is true, my dear brethren, but Matthew’s victory over greed and avarice had to be in all points a complete one; he wished to prostrate and trample at once on the passion that had so long had dominion over him. If he had kept back a portion of his goods the love for them would still have remained partially in his heart, and it might have grown again with time and broken out as bad as ever. No, Matthew wished to free himself perfectly from the danger of such a misfortune. Therefore he at once stood up and renounced not only what he had acquired unjustly, not only the half of his lawful goods, but the whole of them at once, thus taking from himself all occasion of avarice, all opportunity of being again tempted by that desire. Doubtless enlightened by divine grace, at the first words of Christ he recognized Him as the true Messiah, was impelled by grace to follow Him, and determined to make the following a perfect one; seeing, therefore, that Jesus was poor and needy, he resolved to be poor, like Him, and to renounce all his possessions; “leaving all things, he arose up and followed Him.” Cardinal Hugo adds: “Leaving all that might keep him back, delay, or hinder him”<sup>3</sup> from following Christ perfectly. And, as Euthemius says, “he kept nothing but a will ready to do everything commanded him by Him who had called him.”<sup>4</sup> Is not that a resolution, my dear brethren,

The victory was complete, for he conquered his avarice once for all by leaving everything.

<sup>1</sup> Mox ut vocantis se salvatoris audivit Imperium, non cunctatus est, non sua disponendi quæsitivæ inducias, non amicorum communicanda consilia, sed illico divitias sprevit, carnalium affectuum nexum abruptit, sicque solutus post Christi vestigia lætus et impiger properavit.—S. Pet. Dam. Serm. 1. de S. Matt.

<sup>2</sup> Ecce dimidium bonorum meorum, Domine, do pauperibus; et si quid aliquem defraudavi, reddo quadruplum.—Luke xix. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Relictis omnibus retrahentibus, retardantibus, retinentibus.

<sup>4</sup> Solum adduxit mentem ad omnia paratam, quæ jussisset is, qui eum vocaverat.—Euthem. in Matt.



which deserves all the more admiration the more difficult it is and the more unexpected in such circumstances? I know well that when St. Luke describes the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John he gives them also this praise, and says that "leaving all things, they followed Him."<sup>1</sup> But what did they leave? A torn net, a poor, worm-eaten fisherman's boat. This was all they had, their whole possessions, so that their hearts were not much trammelled, nor were they in need of great heroism to leave so little. And that act of renunciation they completed on the occasion of the miraculous draught of fishes, when at the word of Christ they launched forth their nets and caught so much that the boat was unable to hold the fishes; so that they who had labored all the night and taken nothing were quite amazed at the occurrence. What! they must have said to themselves, if Jesus can enrich us by one word, as we now see He can, we need not plague ourselves any more with this troublesome work in heat and cold, by day and night, in order to find something to eat; if He has the power to bring the fish out of the deep into our hands, He will certainly not allow those who adhere to Him to suffer want; away, then, with net and boat, we want them no more! we will follow Jesus! Thus there was no special difficulty about their resolution; in fact, they were rather impelled to it by the desire of bettering their poor and laborious mode of life in the train of such a great lord. On the other hand, who was Matthew? A publican, as we have seen already, and a rich publican, nay, as Metaphrastes, quoted by Surius, writes, one of the chiefs of the publicans.<sup>2</sup> He was sunk in money and the desire of making money; he saw, moreover, that Jesus was poor, and consequently that if he followed Him he would have no riches to expect, so that he would not improve his worldly state, but rather impoverish himself, nay, reduce himself to beggary, and be obliged to live on alms. But all this did not deter him; rich as he was before, and greedy to grow richer, he left all and followed Him. In truth, my dear brethren, that is a heroism which seems to me the more wonderful and incomprehensible the more I consider it.

And with  
the greatest  
joy.

There is still another circumstance to reflect on, namely, the state of mind in which he was when this change occurred and he left all he owned. Only too true are the words of St. Augustine:

<sup>1</sup> Relictis omnibus secuti sunt eum.—Luke v. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Princeps publicanorum.



“What is possessed with desire is not lost without sorrow.”<sup>1</sup> Why did that young man of whom we read in the Gospel of St. Mark go away sorrowful and troubled from Jesus? He came up to Our Lord most respectfully, and knelt down before Him, desiring nothing else but to be put on the right way to heaven; he professed to be ready for everything: “What shall I do that I may receive life everlasting?”<sup>2</sup> I have kept, he continues, all the commandments from my youth; what else have I to do? what is still wanting to me? Our Lord seemed particularly pleased with his frankness, and showed a special pleasure in him. “One thing is wanting unto thee,” said Our Lord; “go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.”<sup>3</sup> But when he heard these words he became sad, uneasy, and disturbed; he went away sorrowful: “Who, being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful.” Why so? Had he not come to get good advice from Jesus as to how he was to make sure of heaven? And did he not offer to do all that Our Lord would ask him? Yes, but, alas! he was rich, and his heart was attached to his riches: “For he had great possessions.”<sup>4</sup> Anything else he was ready enough to do; but to leave his beloved goods, to sell them and distribute them to the poor—that was too much for him. Therefore “he went away sorrowful.” Did our Saint perhaps show signs of being sorrowful, disturbed, or sad when he was on the point of leaving at once and forever the money he formerly loved so much? Not by any means; on the contrary, he felt the greatest joy on the occasion, and to prove it he prepared a banquet for Our Lord and invited many publicans and former friends of his, that they might share in his joy: “Levi made Him a great feast in his own house,” as we read in the Gospel of St. Luke; “and there was a great company of publicans and of others that were at table with them.”<sup>5</sup> “A banquet is a sign and symbol of joy,”<sup>6</sup> says a certain author. And therefore Matthew prepared a splendid feast in honor of Our Lord, to show that “he followed Christ, not with regret,

<sup>1</sup> Sine dolore non amittitur, quod cum amore possidetur.

<sup>2</sup> Quid faciam ut vitam æternam percipiam?—Mark x. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Unum tibi deest; vade, vende quæcunque habes, et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in cælo.—Ibid. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Erat enim habens multas possessiones.—Ibid. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Fecit ei Levi convivium magnum in domo sua, et erat turba multa publicanorum et aliorum, qui cum illis erant, discumbentes.—Luke v. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Est convivium gaudii signum et symbolum.—Lucas Brugensis.

but willingly and cheerfully.”<sup>1</sup> Abulensis writes in the same strain: “He prepared a great feast, to show that he renounced the goods of this world with greater joy than another would have in acquiring them.”<sup>2</sup> Such was the power of the first ray of God’s grace in this brave, heroic heart that he now looked on that which had been his idol—gold and worldly goods—as mere chaff, and he proved by his actions the truth of what St. Paul afterwards wrote in his Epistle to the Philippians: “The things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ;” and he adds immediately after: “Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss, . . . and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ.”<sup>3</sup> Truly, that was a great and courageous mind that at the first word of Our Lord, at the first glimmer of interior light, “with ease, quickness, and readiness counted as nothing what it formerly esteemed and valued highly.”<sup>4</sup>

He left himself, too, for he gave his strength and life for Christ.

But all this was not enough for the brave spirit of Matthew. He made this victory over avarice and the greed of gain still more glorious by a new conquest, for when he abandoned all his earthly goods he gave up, so to speak, himself also, his heart, his body and soul—in a word, his whole self without exception, and devoted himself altogether to Christ and His service. “After having given all he had,” says St. Peter Chrysologus, “he gave himself to the Lord;”<sup>5</sup> and that with such a complete emptying of himself “that he reserved not the slightest concern or regard for the things of this life,”<sup>6</sup> as the Venerable Bede says of him, but directed all his thoughts to pleasing Christ, his Lord, to following Him in a perfect manner, and to further His glory by teaching and instructing others. This was the sole gain that he looked for during the remainder of his life, and to make that more copious he strained every nerve and wore out his strength. No labor was great enough for him, no country vast enough to satiate his untiring zeal. His wish was to enlighten the whole world and gain it for Christ. Therefore, in addition to his apos-

<sup>1</sup> Quo testatum faceret, quam non tristi, sed libenti animo ac cum gaudio se adidderet Christi sequelæ.

<sup>2</sup> Magnum convivium fecit, ut ostenderet, se majori jucunditate hujus sæculi divitias deserere, quam alius eas assequeretur.

<sup>3</sup> Quæ mihi fuerunt lucra, hæc arbitratus sum, propter Christum, detrimenta. Veruntamen existimo omnia detrimentum esse . . . et arbitror ut stercora, ut Christum lucrificam.—Philipp. iii. 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Generosus animus, qui sic ea, quæ magna putarat, facile et quasi nulla contempsit.—S. Pet. Chrysol.

<sup>5</sup> Post omnia sua, semetipsum dedit Domino.

<sup>6</sup> Ut nullum prorsus hujus vitæ respectum vel cogitationem sibi reservarit.

tolie labors, acting on the impulse of the Holy Ghost and at the invitation of the other apostles, to whom his zeal was well known, he also undertook the office of Evangelist, in order that the name and doctrine of his divine Master might be spread even after his death to the end of the world, and that the knowledge, adoration, and love of Our Lord might be furthered where the sound of his preaching could not arrive. And this praise is especially due to Matthew, because he was the first to give an account of the advent, the life, the doctrine, the miracles, the passion and death of Christ, and his description of these is the most detailed one. Therefore St. Peter Damian says of him: "He may well be called the Evangelist of evangelists, because he was the leader and general and first of them all. By his example he showed the way to the others, and like a general he carried the standard in front, and aroused others to write. We therefore owe the gospel to him, because he is known to be the first who undertook to write the gospel narrative." Nay, he adds: "I affirm without hesitation that there is no one, after Our Lord, to whom the Church owes so much. For if a properly-ordered life can be led in the world, that is because the light of the gospel has shone on us. Now it is well known that Matthew first of all wrote the gospel in the Hebrew tongue, and thus he first of all made, as it were, a kind of mirror of the faith."<sup>1</sup> This gospel was brought by the holy apostle St. Bartholomew into India through many countries; St. Barnabas copied it with his own hand, and held it in such honor as a great treasure that he kept it always on his breast. Matthew himself preached it first in Judea, then to the Tartars, to the inhabitants of Palestine, of Mesopotamia, of Egypt, and finally to the Moors, until at last he shed his blood and sacrificed his life for the honor of his divine Saviour and in testimony of the truth of what he had written and preached; thus after having by the martyr's death given up his life for Christ, whom he had followed so zealously on earth, he followed Him into eternal glory in heaven. "Leaving all things, he followed Him."

<sup>1</sup> Evangelista evangelistarum non immerito dici potest, quia dux et præcessor, et primus omnium reperitur. Scribendi viam cæteris aperuit, et tanquam dux vexillum sequentibus prætulit, suoque eos exemplo, ut scriberent incitavit. Illi ergo debemus evangelium, quia evangelicæ narrationis constat intulisse principium. Audacter dicam, nemo post Christum esse, cui magis debeat sancta universalis Ecclesia. Nam quod mundus recte vivit, hæc est causa, quia lux nobis evangelica coruscavit. Constat autem quia primus omnium Matthæus Hebraico stylo evangelium scripsit, et sic fidel quoddam quasi speculum scribendum primus iste procuravit.

Hence he is  
a most heroic  
victor  
over him-  
self.

Such was the glorious end by which Matthew confirmed the victory he had gained over himself. Truly, he was a valiant and intrepid champion, whose heroism cannot be sufficiently admired! I leave you to imagine what a glorious triumph in heaven followed his victory. Suffice it to quote the words of St. Peter Damian: "Of all the saints who have brought trophies from the conquered world into eternal glory the blessed Matthew seems to me to be distinguished in a special manner, and to hold, as it were, the chief place."<sup>1</sup> The chief place, I say, because in his conversion he overcame with wonderful strength and promptitude a most powerful, difficult, and intimate enemy; the chief place, because he continued during the remainder of his life to reap the fruits of glorious victory, and continued to the end. We therefore wish thee joy, great apostle, renowned conqueror, holy St. Matthew! We rejoice and exult with thee on account of thy glorious triumph, and much more on account of the eternal crown, the unending happiness thou hast thereby gained in heaven. Valorous indeed and difficult was thy combat, yet it was short; in a little time thou didst fight with and overcome thyself; and everlasting is the reward thou hast reaped therefrom. To follow Christ thou didst give up all thou hadst in the world, yet these things were but earthly and perishable; and instead of them thou hast received heavenly and eternal goods, and a superabundance of bliss. We wish thee joy then, and congratulate thee on thy unending happiness!

Lesson for  
the unjust  
to act like  
Matthew.  
overcome  
themselves  
and make  
restitution.

But, my dear brethren, what conclusion shall we draw from this glorious victory for our own profit? Shall I exhort you, too, to a complete renunciation of all earthly things, after the example of St. Matthew? Ah, in many cases my words would have but little effect if I were to address you in such a style, and instead of finding attentive listeners I should only be treated with scorn. No, such a sacrifice is not required by the Almighty from every one, but only from those whom He has called to serve Him perfectly in the religious state. Therefore I must not ask too much of you. I only say with the gifted Salvianus: "O ye rich of this world, if you cannot be persuaded to be poor here below," like Matthew, "at least so act that you may be rich in eternity."<sup>2</sup> These words are for you in the first place, unjust Christians,

<sup>1</sup> Inter omnes plane sanctos, qui cœlesti gloria de triumphato mundo titulos intulerunt, beatus Matthæus mihi videtur insignis, et quandam inter eos obtinere primatum.

<sup>2</sup> O divites hujus sæculi, si impetrari ab unoquoque vestrum non potest, ut esse in hoc sæculo pauper velit; præstet sibi saltem, ne in æternitate mendicet.



who, like Matthew, when he was avaricious, appropriate wrongfully the goods of others and still retain possession of them. If with the penitent Matthew you do not wish to renounce everything once for all, at least overcome yourselves so far as to restore what does not rightly belong to you, and abandon what you have unlawfully acquired. Pay what thou owest is the divine law that allows no excuse nor exception. Unless you fulfil this law, provided it is in your power to do so, you can never obtain forgiveness of your sins, nor hope to enter heaven. The well-known saying of St. Augustine holds good: "The sin cannot be forgiven unless what is unjustly acquired be restored." <sup>1</sup> At once, then, if with Matthew you have acted dishonestly, like Matthew make due restitution. If this seems difficult to you, then remember that the sacrifice is well warranted by the hope of saving your soul and gaining heaven. It is better to suffer a little loss of what you must some day or other leave in any case, and perhaps soon, much better to be poor on earth, and even beg your bread from door to door than to lose your soul and be deprived of the eternal and infinitely better things of heaven, and suffer want and distress in the torments of hell.

Wealthy and just Christians, whom God has blessed in preference to others with temporal goods and riches! if, I say to you with the writer quoted above, if you cannot and will not overcome yourselves so far as to renounce at once, like Matthew, when called by God, all earthly possessions, that thus you may follow the poor Christ; "if you cannot be satisfied to live without riches, then so act that you may always be rich." <sup>2</sup> Let your riches be to you an incentive to serve God all the more zealously, and by a good use of your wealth and by good works to make your salvation all the more sure. For that is the end and object for which God has made you wealthy. "For this reason does God make men rich in temporal things, that they may become rich in good works; and thus, by using well the things of this world that God has given, may make them turn into everlasting goods." <sup>3</sup> The best means of making one's wealth everlasting is generosity to the poor and needy. Do not imagine that you lose what you give the poor. Never can you make a better investment of your money than by spending it on them. What they receive

For the rich to give alms out of their lawful wealth, and thus lay up treasures in heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Non dimittitur peccatum nisi restituatur ablatum.

<sup>2</sup> Qui sine divitiis omnino esse non acquiescitis, id agite ut divites semper esse possitis.

<sup>3</sup> Deus ad hoc facit homines in substantia locupletes, ut bona operatione sint divites; ut Dei opes, quas habent in hoc sæculo temporarias, bene utendo, faciant sempiternas.



from you through Christian charity they hand over to Heaven; God Himself takes it from them as if it were given to Him, as a capital entrusted to Him, to be one day returned to you with a hundredfold interest, as St. Peter Chrysologus says.<sup>1</sup> Truly, a profitable investment! You receive a hundred for one; and for temporal, trivial, and transitory things, everlasting, heavenly, and priceless treasures! O Christians, if you all knew how to transact business in this style, what great wealth you might amass for eternity! Try it; the infallible words of Christ cannot deceive: "Give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven."

For all to  
detach their  
minds from  
earthly  
goods, and  
fix them on  
God.

But above all, see that temporal wealth be not to you a snare to lead you to eternal perdition. "What," says the oft-quoted Salvianus, "what can be more miserable than to convert present goods into future evils, and to seek eternal death and damnation by those things that were given to help to eternal beatitude?"<sup>2</sup> Therefore I conclude for all in general: at least follow the example of Matthew by leaving in spirit, with him, what you cannot leave in reality. Do not allow your hearts and minds to be trammelled too much with the world and its vain and perishable goods; do not, for the sake of gaining such things, or the fear of losing them, allow yourselves to be misled into doing anything displeasing to God. Often recall to mind that you are created, not to amass or keep temporal goods, but solely to serve God and garner up treasure in heaven. To gain this end the rich should use their wealth and the needy their poverty. Happy ye poor, if by your poverty you attain this end; unhappy and eternally miserable ye rich, if by abusing your wealth you turn away forever from God and your salvation!

To this object, then, should we, like the converted Matthew, direct our hearts and all our thoughts; for the rest of our lives this should be the chief, nay, the only care to occupy us: to gain God and heaven. "Lord," said the holy bishop of Nola, Paulinus, when the town was plundered by the barbarians, "even if I lose all, the loss of gold or silver will be nothing to me, for Thou knowest where I have all my wealth."<sup>3</sup> As if to say: It makes

<sup>1</sup> Quidquid pauper acceperit, Pater cœlestis suscipit; et ubi recondit in cœlo. Et ne forte perdidisse, te doleas usuram, centuplum in cœlesti fœnore recipies, quidquid in cœlum paupere transmiseris perferente.

<sup>2</sup> Quid enim pejus, aut quid miserius, quam si quis præsentia bona in futura mala convertat, et quæ ad hoc data sunt ut pararetur ex eis vitæ beatitudo perpetua, per hoc ipsa quærat mors et damnatio sempiterna?

<sup>3</sup> Domine, non exrucier propter aurum aut argentum; ubi enim omnia mea sunt, ut scis.

little matter whether I be rich or poor in the goods of this world, as long as I possess Thee, my God, my only Good; Thou art to me in the place of all riches. Let us, too, make this resolution, my dear brethren; let no desire of earthly gain, no fear of temporal loss or injury cause us the least disturbance, discontent, or sorrow; for all that we can possess on earth is but transitory and perishable, and sooner or later we must leave it all. Thou, my God, art the only Good that can satisfy us. If I have Thee I have all. Thee alone shall I try to possess by Thy grace here on earth, that I may possess Thee in glory in heaven. Amen.

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*FIFTY-FIRST SERMON.*

**ON THE HOLY APOSTLES SS. SIMON AND JUDE.**

Subject.

The holy apostles Simon and Jude were two true Christian zelators of the glory of God and the salvation of souls.—*Preached on the feast of SS. Simon and Jude.*

Text.

*Simon Zelotes et Judas.*—Acts i. 13.  
“Simon Zelotes and Jude.”

Introduction.

Never has God given to angels or men a special name without having a special mystery concealed under it, signifying thereby either some privilege of grace conferred on a particular individual in preference to others, or some excellence of virtue by which the favored one was to distinguish himself. Thus to the Prince of the angels is given the glorious title of Michael, that is, the strength of God, because he was chosen in preference to all the other angels and archangels to humble the pride of Lucifer and hurl him and all his followers into hell. Thus the name of the holy Patriarch Abram was slightly but most honorably changed into Abraham, that is, the father of the faithful, to the perpetual remembrance and praise of his firm faith, which was to be planted in his children to the end of time. In the same way Our Lord

changed the name of Simon, the Prince of the apostles, and as those Roman generals who had subjected some part of the world to the sway of their fatherland received the surname of Africanus, Asiaticus, Gallicus, to distinguish them, to Simon was given the name Petrus, or Petra, that is, a rock, because as a reward of his glorious confession of the divinity of Christ he was to be made the corner-stone and rock on which the Lord was to build His Church, and which was to protect and defend it against the assaults of heresy and all the might of hell. Who, then, can reasonably doubt that when the Holy Ghost gave to our Simon the name Zelotes, the zealous one (an appellation that, according to St. Jerome, belongs also to St. Jude), as we read in the gospel of St. Luke as well as in the text quoted, He had specially in view the extraordinary zeal of these two apostles, and thereby wished to let us understand that as the other disciples and apostles of Christ excelled each in some particular virtue, on account of which they received special and honorable titles, so also these two shone brighter than all the others in their zeal in spreading and furthering the glory of God in all places? And so they deserve the name of Zelotes by acting strictly in the spirit of their divine Master. This is to be the subject of my panegyric to-day, in which I mean to show that these two holy apostles were true Christians, that is, according to the pattern and exemplar of Christ, Our Lord, perfect and devoted zelators of the divine honor and the salvation of souls.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*The holy apostles Simon and Jude were true and real Christian zelators of the honor of God and the salvation of souls, for they followed in their zeal the example and the spirit of Christ perfectly. Such is the whole subject. That we may imitate their Christian zeal shall be the moral lesson and conclusion.*

Divine Saviour, Christ Jesus, who didst come into the world to inflame it with new zeal, kindle the same in our hearts, that after the example of Thy holy apostles each one of us, according to his state, may become a true zelator of Thy honor and the salvation of souls. This we beg of Thee through the powerful intercession of Thy Mother, Mary, and of the holy angels.

It is one thing to have a zeal for the divine honor and the salvation of souls, and another to have a true and real Christian zeal. For just as not every zeal, though it may have the ap-

pearance of holiness, is really good, praiseworthy, or holy, so, too, not every zeal, good though it be, is at the same time Christian. To be a true Christian zeal, it must be according to the spirit, the teaching, and example of Christ, and hence it must have the two properties of meekness and firmness: firmness in heartily despising all that might deter from the proposed end; meekness in patiently bearing the opposition, persecution, injuries, and all other trials that may come in the way of advancing the divine honor and the salvation of souls, and putting aside all hatred, rancor, and desire of revenge, nay, loving heartily even one's worst enemies. If any of these qualities be wanting, the zeal cannot be looked on as true Christian zeal. Firm indeed was that zeal of the Prophet Elias in his labors to bring back the people of Israel from idolatry to the worship of the true God; firm the zeal of the brave high-priest Mathathias and his sons, the Jewish heroes, namesakes of our holy apostles Simon and Jude, when they so bravely opposed the wicked King Antiochus in defence of the law of God, and exposed their lives in their efforts to keep their brethren in the true faith. But what torrents of blood they shed! Did not Elias, spurred on by the fire of his zeal, fall upon and slay at once four hundred false prophets and servants of the god Baal? a feat of which he boasted afterwards before the Lord: "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts."<sup>1</sup> Mathathias happened to see a Jew sacrificing publicly to the false gods, for the sake of appeasing the tyrant Antiochus, when he became filled with fury and killed the idolator on the spot: "And Mathathias saw," says the Scripture, "and was grieved, and his reins trembled, and his wrath was kindled according to the judgment of the law, and running upon him, he slew him upon the altar."<sup>2</sup> How many cities of the infidels did not Simon and Jude, his sons, take and lay waste with fire and sword? How many thousands of their enemies did they not put to death? All the nations that dared to oppose them were destroyed off the face of the earth. That zeal was indeed heroic, firm, good, and holy, according to the law of the time, but on account of so much bloodshedding and the want of meekness it was far removed and very different from the spirit of Jesus Christ.

not merely  
be firm

<sup>1</sup> Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum.—III. Kings xix. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Vidit Mathathias et doluit, et contremuerunt renes ejus, et accensus est furor ejus, secundum judicium legis, et insillens trucidavit eum super aram.—I. Mach. ii. 24.

But meek  
as well.

Of another sort altogether was the zeal brought by Our Lord into the world, and inculcated by His own example, as well as by the teaching of His apostles and their successors. Just as He Himself was the firmest and bravest of all the children of men, and at the same time the meekest, most affable, and kind, as is proved beyond doubt by His whole life on earth from its beginning to its disgraceful end on the cross, so He wished His disciples to inherit the same spirit from Him, and to unite firmness with meekness, and indomitable bravery with patience, kindness, and love. Hence while He often told them that when there was question of the honor of God and the salvation of souls they should be deterred by no danger, fear no obstacle, dread no tyrant, nor turn back for fear of any persecution at the hands of men, nay, that even death itself should not appal them, "fear ye not them that kill the body,"<sup>1</sup> yet at the same time He expressly commanded them not to forget the meekness of which He gave them the example, and which they were to observe even with regard to their enemies and persecutors: "Learn of Me because I am meek."<sup>2</sup> He sent them forth to conquer the idolatry, the infidelity, the wickedness of the world, to overthrow the empire of Satan, and to make all nations subject to His holy and divine law; but He did not by any means wish them to do as the Machabees did in former times, and to force people by violence to accept this law, or to spread it with fire and sword and bloodshed. No! the same weapons that He made use of were also to be the arms of their zeal, namely, indomitable patience, meekness, and charity; they were never to give way to anger or revenge, never to stain their hands with another's blood. This Our Lord showed clearly to be His will when in the Garden of Gethsemani He reproved the zeal of Peter, and at once told him to put back into the scabbard the sword he had drawn against the rabble crowd of Jews: "Put up thy sword into the scabbard."<sup>3</sup> But did not the zealous disciple mean well towards his divine Master? Or was it wrong to try to save the most innocent and all-holy blood of the God-man by shedding the blood of a wicked wretch? Certainly not; but this was contrary to the spirit of the meek Saviour, who, instead of desiring to revenge Himself by the blood of others, rather wished to shed His own as a sacrifice

<sup>1</sup> Nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus.—Matt. x. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Discite a me quia mitis sum.—Ibid. xi. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Mitte gladium tuum in vaginam.—John xviii. 11.



of atonement and a redemption for us men. Such, too, was the lesson He had before that taught the disciples James and John when they wished Him to punish the gross incivility of the Samaritans, and the insults they had offered their divine Master, by calling down fire from heaven as Elias formerly did: "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" A just and righteous anger indeed; but it was far removed from the innate meekness that was the special characteristic of Our Lord, and therefore He at once sharply reproveth them: "And turning, He rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came, not to destroy souls, but to save."<sup>1</sup> There, my dear brethren, you have the pattern and model of a real, true Christian zeal qualified by meekness and patience. It must be like the thorn-bush on Mount Sinai, which burned but did not consume; or like that pillar in the desert, which went before the Israelites during the night in the form of a burning fire, and during the day in that of a cloud; for, as St. Gregory well remarks, "in the fire there is the terror of judgment, but in the cloud the protection of mercy."<sup>2</sup> That is to say, apostolic zeal must be inflamed with heat, and, as it were, set fire to everything, but in such a manner as not to consume what it enflames, but rather to preserve it by meekness. These pillars of the Church should burn and sparkle with zeal, but in such a manner as to protect and overshadow those entrusted to them, and their faults as well with love, mercy, and mildness as with a cloud.

We have a perfect example of this zeal in our holy apostles Simon and Jude. First, they had a firm and burning zeal, so that they could say with David: "My zeal hath made me pine away."<sup>3</sup> For if the greatness and firmness of the zeal is to be measured by the difficulty and number of the labors undergone, by the brave contempt of all dangers, by the hearty renunciation of all earthly things, then it cannot be denied that these two apostles have proved themselves true heroes and zelators of the divine honor; for neither the multiplicity of labors wearied them, nor did the fear of evil daunt them even in the midst of evident dangers, nor were they turned aside for a moment by the hope

ss. Simon and Jude had that zeal, for they were firm to bearing many hardships.

<sup>1</sup> Domine, vis dicimus, ut ignis descendat de cœlo, et consumat illos? Et conversus increpavit illos, dicens: nescitis cujus spiritus estis. Filius hominis non venit animas perdere, sed salvare.—Luke ix. 54-56.

<sup>2</sup> In igne quippe terror judicii est, in nube autem protectio miserationis.

<sup>3</sup> Tabescere me fecit zelus meus.—Ps. cxviii. 139.

or desire of any earthly good from their task of promoting the glory of their Saviour and bringing the world under His law and sweet yoke. And with regard to their manifold labors, I cannot restrain my wonder at their difficulty and number. "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up,"<sup>1</sup> they might well say with the holy Prophet David, when he was laboring so hard to keep from vice and to bring under the law of God the house of Israel, the chosen people of the Lord entrusted to him. But how much easier it was for him to give expression to his zeal! He was a crowned king, a monarch possessing full power and authority; he had the sword in his hand; he had only to let loose the reins of his holy zeal; and moreover the law of God was already well known to his subjects; he had not the trouble of preaching it to them; they were all well practised in the observance of it. Quite different was it with our holy apostles. Their zeal was opposed by countless obstacles. For, in the first place, they were quite unknown in the greater number of the places in which they labored; in outward appearance they were lowly, despicable men, who had no worldly influence, no weapons or arms, who went about barefoot, "without purse and scrip and shoes,"<sup>2</sup> as their divine Master had commanded them; they did not possess a foot of land in the world, and always lived on alms; so that they could not effect anything by their power or influence. Again, the law they preached was not a whit better known than they themselves; it was quite a new law, of which nothing had been heard till their arrival; a law diametrically opposed to sensuality and carnal inclinations, a law that made happiness consist in poverty, suffering, persecution, crosses, and trials. And of what sort were the people to whom they had to preach this law? Barbarous, uncivilized, cruel, savage, almost bestial men, who had hardly anything human in them except their outward appearance. Their fierce and savage dispositions had then first to be subdued, their brutish and sensual mode of life to be made human before the seed of the word of God could be planted in their hard and rugged hearts! Judge yourselves of the difficulty of a task like this. Is it not often hard enough to bring back to the right path a single family that has fallen into vicious habits through the culpable negligence of the parents? What labor and toil, then, must not have been necessary to introduce evangelical mod-

<sup>1</sup> *Zelus domus tuæ comedit me.*—Ps. lxxviii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Sine sacculo et pera et calceamentis.*—Luke xxii. 35.

esty, humility, purity, godliness, and holiness in whole districts, countries, kingdoms, and cities that were completely sunk in abominable vices, in idolatry itself, and were accustomed to an unrestrained freedom of conduct! Nor was it merely one city, country, or kingdom that these apostolic men visited and watered with the sweat of their toil, but so many were the places they preached in, and so far apart from each other, that without exaggeration we may say that they wandered over half the world and inflamed it with their burning zeal. According to the testimony of Nicephorus and Dorotheus, St. Simon alone brought the light of the faith into Mesopotamia, Egypt, Africa, and Great Britain; Cardinal Baronius adds to this list Arabia, Idumea, and other neighboring countries in which our Saint preached and converted the inhabitants. Nor did St. Jude labor less: he wandered through all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and since his great zeal could not be circumscribed within such narrow limits he went to the vast land of Syria, where, according to the testimony of authors worthy of belief, he brought to the knowledge of the Christian faith and truth King Abgarus and his whole court. But as fire once it begins to ascend cannot be restrained, so the zeal of our two apostles could not be satisfied with those great and, so to speak, superhuman labors. Before ending their toilsome career the fire of their zeal had to be spread in the land of Persia, which constitutes a great part of Asia, and especially in wicked Babylonia, the seat of idolatry and all vice. In this vast kingdom they brought to the faith an almost countless number of people and founded a populous church. Truly, if those glorious followers of Christ had merely wandered through those vast countries they could not have done so without great difficulty, and at the cost of many hard days' travelling, great loss of strength, and countless sufferings. With what unwearied zeal, then, with what incessant labor must they not have worked and worn themselves out to convert vast and barbarous lands into fertile ground in which the seed of the word of God might take root and bring forth rich fruit of virtue pleasing to God! Yes, my dear brethren, the bare idea of such labors is enough to dishearten us; but the burning love of these disciples for their Master, their earnest desire to further the glory of God everywhere, and to make His name known to all nations, their ardent wish to save many souls for their Creator, and rescue them from the thralldom of the devil, gave them courage to undertake all this

with readiness. The inward fire of their zeal lightened everything that was heavy, sweetened all that was bitter, shortened all that was tiresome, in a word, it made pleasing and agreeable to them all that would otherwise be most troublesome and distressing to human nature.

In despising all danger.

And as their zeal was unwearied in undertaking labor, so it was undaunted in despising all dangers and threatened persecutions. They had already given a specimen of their courage in danger, even before their patience and constancy were put to the severest trial, and while the danger was still tolerable; that is to say, while they were still with the Jews, and before they went among the heathens. Were they not in the number of those of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles: "They laid hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison"?<sup>1</sup> Were they not among those who, in spite of the threats and envy of the Jews, went boldly before the high-priest and the whole assembly of the people, and answered them freely: "We ought to obey God rather than men"?<sup>2</sup> To no purpose do you try to close our mouths and forbid us to preach the crucified Jesus; if it cost us our life-blood, if we had to suffer all the tortures in the world, to die by the wheel or the gallows, we would still adhere to our words: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Were they not among the band of heroes, who, after having endured a severe scourging, and suffered many insults and mockeries, came forth from the tribunal rejoicing and exulting: "They went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus"?<sup>3</sup> And in spite of all they had suffered, as St. Luke adds: "Every day they ceased not, in the temple and from house to house, to teach and preach Christ Jesus."<sup>4</sup> If already at that period they gave such glorious proofs of their heroism, what, think you, will they not have done among the heathens and savage people to whom they brought the knowledge of Christ? for of course the persecutions and dangers they then had to undergo must have been far greater, since those people were blind, wicked, lost to all sense of decency, who had not the least sign of meek-

<sup>1</sup> Injecerunt manus in apostolos, et posuerunt eos in custodia publica.—Acts v. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Obedire oportet Deo magis quam hominibus.—Ibid. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii, quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumelliam pati.—Ibid. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Omni autem die non cessabant in templo et circa domos docentes et evangelizantes Christum Jesum.—Ibid. 42.

ness, nay, of anything human in them; who had not seen any of Our Lord's miracles as the Jews had, nor heard of them, and who, moreover, had a natural abhorrence and aversion for the shame of the cross, so that they were at first disposed to jeer and laugh at the idea of a crucified God, as St. Paul says: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness." <sup>1</sup> How could it be possible that under such circumstances they were not daily, nay, hourly exposed to imminent dangers and terrible persecutions, since the idolatrous priests saw that their avarice was likely to be frustrated, and the empire of the demons and superstition, the source of gain to them, overthrown; while kings and princes and others in authority could not help noticing that Christian humility, chastity, and meekness were altogether opposed to their pride and ambition, their carnal and impure pleasures, their tyranny and cruelty? St. Paul complains bitterly in many of his epistles of the cruel persecutions and sufferings he had to endure, by sea and land, from enemies and false brethren for Christ's sake, but, my dear brethren, if we accompany him in thought on his journeys we shall indeed find him among heathens, but they were heathens who had some civilization and culture, such as the Greeks and Romans. Now I leave you to judge what uncommon and extraordinary persecutions the holy apostles Simon and Jude had to endure, for in their many wanderings till their glorious death they met with as many blood-thirsty tyrants as they did men. If Paul had to contend with the subtlety of the philosophers, they had to combat the cruelty of the barbarians; if he had to deal with reasoning beings, they had to do with monsters, who, so to say, went about like wild beasts. From this, then, we may easily see how undaunted and heroic their zeal must have been, since they remained till the end amid those constant and imminent dangers, in circumstances in which we should think it most difficult, nay, even intolerable to live even for a short time.

There is another kind of heroism in which our apostles distinguished themselves, which is all the more to be esteemed the more unknown it was among the heathens of the time and the rarer it is even nowadays among Christians. And what was that, my dear brethren? To say it in a few words: an honest,

In renouncing and despising earthly goods.

<sup>1</sup> Prædicamus Christum crucifixum, Judæis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam.—I. Cor. 1. 23.



unaffected, sincere contempt of all earthly and temporal gain or profit, of all transitory and perishable things. Oh, how many are there not who gloriously overcome great difficulties and hardships, nay, even the danger of death itself, and yet allow themselves to be vanquished by the miserable greed of gain, inasmuch as for the sake of temporal and often uncertain profit they undertake great labors and expose themselves to danger! But such was not the object aimed at by our two apostles. There was nothing selfish in their zeal; its sole object was the honor of God, the glory of their dearest and most beloved Master, and the salvation and eternal welfare of men. This was the only gain they wished to make by their long and difficult journeys, amid dangers and trials that beset them on all sides. On the other hand, earthly and transitory goods seemed to them so vile and contemptible that they regarded them as unworthy of either esteem or desire. Their wealth and riches consisted alone in Jesus Christ crucified, whose image they endeavored to imprint on the hearts of the blind heathens; and from the latter they looked for no other reward than insult and injury, crosses and persecutions, martyrdom and death. When they arrived in Persia and were asked by the inhabitants what was their object in making such a long and dangerous journey to such a distant land they gave no other answer but this: We have come for the sake of your eternal salvation. As if to say: Others come here to trade, to amass money by buying and selling, to enrich, and thus to make themselves great in the eyes of the world. But do not imagine that such a motive has led us hither; long ago we have renounced all earthly things. Our sole object is to spread the glory of God, whom we wish to make known to you, and to save your precious, immortal souls. We do not desire anything of yours for ourselves, but we do wish to gain you for God and heaven.<sup>1</sup> And in fact their whole conduct and manner of life was a living, indubitable proof of their complete renunciation of all earthly gain. That was shown by their ragged, worn-out clothing, by the incipid nourishment they begged from door to door, by their emaciated countenances, by their bodies reduced almost to skeletons by the want of sufficient food, so that they looked more like corpses than living men. It was shown by the generous manner in which they refused all the money and other presents offered them, so that every one must have been convinced that their unselfishness was not at all

<sup>1</sup> Non vestra sed vos.

hypocritical, nor like what the heathens were used to in their philosophers, as they were called, who covered their avarice under poor clothing, and despised riches with the lips only, while they stretched out their hands eagerly for gain when the opportunity offered. No; far more convincing were the proofs given by our apostles of their renunciation of the whole world and its goods. How often were not vast riches offered to St. Jude by Agbar in Syria, by others to St. Simon, and to both together by the king of Persia? And these riches were not merely promised, or shown to them from afar, but, as it were, almost violently forced on them. But their firm contempt of such things was so unchangeable that neither prayers nor entreaties availed to persuade them to accept the least thing. Thus they proved by their actions the truth of their professions, and showed that they had not come to make money, but as apostles of Christ to gain souls and to promote the honor of God. And this unselfishness of theirs helped wonderfully to the object they had in view; for when the heathens saw those servants of Christ thus detached from all earthly things they remarked something heavenly in them, and were all the more willing to hear their teaching and to profit by it. For this contempt of the world preaches much more powerfully than any sound of words, and what the people saw and experienced made a greater impression on them than what they heard. Thus the zeal of these apostles was great, firm, nay, invincible! It was unwearied in the undertaking of great labors and trials, undaunted in the contempt of all dangers and persecutions, unwavering in their disregard for all earthly goods and for everything that is wont to excite the cupidity of men. But it was also, according to the spirit of Christ, characterized by an invincible patience, meekness, and charity, and therefore it was a perfect and true Christian zeal.

If we had no other proof of their patience than the conversion of almost countless savage nations, that in itself should be enough to convince us that as their firmness was invincible, so also were their patience, meekness, and charity. Suppose, my dear brethren, that, like the zealous Peter, they had had recourse to the sword, that, like Elias, they had called down fire from heaven; do you think they would have been so successful with those barbarous people? Would they not thus have poured oil on the flames, and rather excited the wrath and fury of the savages than gained them over to Christ? Were they not obliged,

Their zeal was also meek and kind, as is clear from the conversion of so many savage people.

above all, to try to gain their hearts, to win their love and affection, and thus to find favor with them? But what chains can be found to bind the hearts of men faster than meekness, love, and affability? These are the only means by which a return of love can be assured and the human heart conquered, and hence they are the chief means that an apostolic man must have recourse to in his efforts to convert the heathen. How wonderful, then, must not have been the meekness of SS. Simon and Jude, since they knew how to win over so many barbarous nations, and to subject them to the sweet yoke of Christ, although they were so different in manners and customs, and sunk in vice, cruelty, and wickedness! Was there at the time any land under the sun that showed greater aversion to the Jews and to all strangers from Judea than Egypt? Did not all the people of that country, great and small, nourish a traditional hatred from olden times against the God of the people of Israel, who had drowned their forefathers in the Red Sea; and against Moses, and all whom they thought to be of the same religion, since he had inflicted such grievous plagues on them? What indescribable patience and meekness, then, must not these holy apostles have shown to win the love of such a people, and to persuade them to listen to their preaching, to receive them as well-meaning friends, nay, as teachers of the true law! Again, if we wander in imagination through Africa, Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Persia, and Babylonia, countries bedewed with the sweat of the labors of these apostles, as we have already seen, what rude, uncivilized people we find there, whose manners were more suited to wild beasts than to human beings; whose cities and towns were nothing but sinks of vice! And yet these two holy men alone gained them over to a more human mode of life and to the Christian faith. "By the holy gospel," says St. Isidor, writing of St. Jude, "he tamed wild and savage people, who lived almost like beasts, and brought them under the yoke of the true faith."<sup>1</sup> The Roman Breviary says of them both: "They brought forth innumerable children to Christ,"<sup>2</sup> and made them children of God. But how could that have been possible if meekness had not paved the way to such a great work; if charity and humility had not broken the pride and haughtiness of the barbarians; if patience had not

<sup>1</sup> *Feras et indomitas gentes quasi belluarum naturas, sancto mitigat evangelio, et fidei dominicæ subjugat.*—S. Isid. apud Lipom.

<sup>2</sup> *Innumerabiles filios Christo pepererunt.*

overcome their anger and jealousy; if kindly and friendly manners had not conquered and softened the arrogance and cruelty of the savage people? Truly, their meekness must have been something superhuman, for it had not only to combat hourly with unheard-of rage and wickedness, but also to become master of those passions, and thus to convert countless ravening wolves into so many meek lambs. Remember the Jewish lawgiver, the Prophet Moses; how the holy Fathers and interpreters of Scripture praise him for his meekness, and hold him up as an example of divine and perfect meekness, patience, and charity! Why so, my dear brethren? Because he had such patience in conducting through the desert for so many years such a numerous and at the same time such a stiff-necked and obstinate people, who were always ready to rebel. If Moses really deserved praise on this account, how great must not have been the meekness of those who not only presided as spiritual superiors for so many years over almost a half world full of savage, abominable, superstitious, idolatrous, and vicious men, but also induced them to practise Christian modesty and to lead edifying and virtuous lives!

Still more renowned was their meekness, and indeed it attracted the attention of the heathens, inasmuch as these holy apostles were so mild and forgiving towards their worst enemies. This is a sure sign of the disciple of Christ, and an example of the meekness shown by Our Lord during His whole life even till His death. Among other examples the following is recorded: The general-in-chief of the king of Babylonia, finding the priests and sorcerers of the idols false in their prophecies, while the apostles were true and upright, became so enraged against the former that he was on the point of sentencing them to the cruel death by fire which they had tried to have inflicted on the apostles. But the holy men begged most earnestly that their enemies might be set at liberty, adding that they had come, not to make any one unhappy, but to secure the welfare of all. This great virtue was so admired by the general that he imagined there must be something more than human in the two apostles, and he wished to raise them to the rank of gods. For these blind heathens were of the opinion that the desire of revenge is so deep-seated and innate in our nature that to return good for evil must be something divine. Nor is this opinion of theirs without foundation; for, as St. Chrysostom says: "Nothing

By pardon-  
ing and  
forgiving  
injuries.



makes a man more like to God than to be friendly to his enemies." <sup>1</sup>

Especially by the love they showed their enemies in their martyrdom.

Yet their heroic meekness reached a higher point and attained, as it were, the climax in their martyrdom, if we are to believe the accounts given by St. Antoninus and Denis the Carthusian. These authors tell us that the priests of the idols sought by every possible means to put the apostles out of the way, and were on the point of falling upon them and murdering them, when an angel appeared and gave the holy men the choice either of having their enemies taken off by a sudden death, or of suffering death and martyrdom themselves.<sup>2</sup> What think you of this, my dear brethren? Many a one would not take long to make up his mind in such circumstances, and would at once save his own life and give his enemies over to destruction. But far different were the promptings of the meek charity of these two true disciples and followers of Christ. They had seen how their divine Master gave His life for the enemies whom He could have destroyed in a moment had He chosen to do so, and how, before His death, He prayed for them to His heavenly Father; and they, too, resolved not to seek the death of their persecutors, but rather to obtain for them the grace of conversion by their own death.<sup>3</sup> Thus they both crowned their truly Christian meekness by a death that was violent indeed, but yet in some manner chosen by themselves. It is a general and ancient belief in the Church that St. Simon was sawn in two and St. Jude beheaded with an axe. Finally, then, it is undeniable and evident that these holy apostles have a right and title to the glorious name of Zelotes, that they have deserved it by their lives and deaths, and that in truth they were always true zelators of the honor of God and the salvation of souls; for they conformed their zeal exactly to the spirit, teaching, and example of Christ, uniting firmness with meekness, charity, and kindness, and thus in life and death they were most like their divine Saviour.

Moral lesson: each one, according to his state,

Truly, they have given us a great and glorious example to follow! All of us should be zelators of the divine honor; that is the most important duty incumbent on us all; that is the sole end and object of our creation, namely, the honor of God, which

<sup>1</sup> Nihil ita fecit hominem Deo similem, sicut inimicis esse placabilem.

<sup>2</sup> Apparuit eis angelus dicens: aut horum repentinam interitum, aut vestrum martyrium eligit.

<sup>3</sup> Responderunt apostoli: exoranda est misericordia, ut et istos convertere, et nos ad martyrii palmam perducere dignetur.



we must do our best to further in all our actions. The Lord says of each one of us, by His Prophet Isaias: "I have created him for My glory; I have formed him and made him."<sup>1</sup> And of him who turns away from this end the words may with truth be said: "He hath taken his soul in vain;"<sup>2</sup> to no purpose has he received a reasoning soul; he is more like a dumb beast than a human being. And, moreover, all of us should be zelators of souls as far as our state, duties, and obligations require of us. If we are not all called and chosen by God to be apostles, to spread the gospel throughout the world, at least must each one be an apostle in his own house, and have a care for his domestics, his servants and children, exhort them to devotion and the fear of God, teach them to shun the vanity and folly of the world, instruct them in the truths of Christianity, and show them how to lead godly lives. For as St. Paul says: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."<sup>3</sup> If you are not the head of a family, you are at all events obliged, as far as in you lies, to keep your neighbor from evil, and to advise him to shun bad company and the occasions of sin, to allow of no scandal being given in your presence, much less to give scandal yourself, and if you cannot do better, at least to show by your demeanor that blasphemous, uncharitable, and impure talk is displeasing to you. This duty is one you cannot be excused from; it is founded on the express command of God: "He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor."<sup>4</sup> And He has also commanded us to love our neighbor from our hearts: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If you are determined to satisfy your conscience and your obligation in this respect, you will find abundant occasions of working for the good of souls. God only grant that your zeal may be a true Christian one, that is, firm, so that you may not be blinded by any idle love or fear of men, but at the same time meek, without gall, bitterness, or anger, which would do more harm than good.

should have a zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

But, alas, how few there are who know how to unite these two

A firm zeal is of no use

<sup>1</sup> In gloriam meam creavi eum, formavi eum, et feci eum.—Is. xliii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Acceptit in vano animam suam.—Ps. xxiii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Si quis suorum, et maxime domesticorum curam non habet, fidem negavit, et est infideli deterior.—I. Tim. v. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Mandavit illis unicuique de proximo suo.—Ecclus. xvii. 12.

without  
meekness.

qualities of true zeal! Some indeed have an earnest desire to do their duty; but they deal with their domestics so that the latter must shake and tremble before them; they wish to break what they cannot bend; they have no pity for the weaknesses of others; they wish to have everything according to their own ideas and foolish whims and fancies, and if any resistance is offered them they are ready to smite with thunderbolts. Ah, that is not the zeal of Christ, but a passionate anger, which inspires fear and dread, and fills with shame and confusion every one on whom it falls; therefore it is utterly unable to gain the hearts of men; it only serves to make them distrustful; it is not able to heal the wounds of the soul, and only makes the physician as well as his medicines hateful. If the bridle is pulled too tight, is it any wonder that the horse should rear, become obstinate, and refuse to obey the rider? The free will of man does not allow itself to be forced by such violent and painful means; it wishes to be treated with love and tenderness.

Nor a meek  
one without  
firmness.

Meanwhile there are others who go too far with that tenderness. They wish to be looked on as kind, friendly, and loving, but they forget to have the necessary firmness. They have indeed some zeal for the souls of their domestics, but it is a cold-hearted zeal. Thus many parents wish their children to be well off in this world and in the next, too; now and then they give a word of exhortation or advice, but not always where it is wanted. The rod is shown but not used. Where there is a necessity of supporting the authority of father or mother by a judicious severity, when kindness can be of no avail, then those parents hang back; they do not wish to hurt or displease their children. That is not a Christian zeal. Did not Our Lord Himself grasp the scourge and drive both buyers and sellers out of the temple? Remember the high-priest Heli, of whom we read in the First Book of Kings. What else brought that kind-hearted old man, along with his children, to ruin and death, and plunged all his posterity into the bitterest poverty but the too grievous neglect he showed in chastising the faults of his sons? Did he perhaps not rebuke them at all, or connive at their misdeeds? No; but his reproofs were too lenient; fatherly kindness won the upper hand; his warnings were not earnest enough. In a word, he was wanting in firmness; he contented himself with the bare, cold words: "Why do ye this kind of things which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people? Do not so, my sons, for it

is no good report that I hear.”<sup>1</sup> No wonder that the sons went to destruction, and incurred the anger of God. Zeal, therefore, of this kind is not a whit better than the other for furthering the salvation of souls, for it does not help to amend the lives of others, to lessen the number of their sins, or to extirpate their vices; nay, by too much indulgence it rather strengthens and confirms them in their bad habits.

Therefore no zeal should be admitted by us but that true Christian zeal of which SS. Simon and Jude have given us such a brilliant example; namely, that which is at the same time firm, earnest, and heartfelt, and mild, patient, and meek. An earnest zeal effects nothing unless it is united with mildness; the most kind-hearted zeal is useless if it is not strengthened by firmness and earnestness. Severity shocks men and makes them turn aside from the path of virtue if kindness does not take off its bitter edge. A too great kindness, on the other hand, strengthens the wicked in their vices unless firmness give it power. Hear the beautiful exhortation given by St. Paul to his disciple Timothy: “Preach the word, be instant in season out of season;”<sup>2</sup> be earnest when there is question of the honor of God and of hindering sin, and preventing the eternal loss of souls; be urgent and inexorable, whether they whom it concerns are pleased or not. Do not cease from your efforts until you have done away with all that can be prejudicial to the divine honor and the welfare of souls. But at the same time the holy Apostle admonishes his disciple not to forget meekness and patience: “Reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine;”<sup>3</sup> entreat, if you hope to gain anything by kindness; otherwise reprove, but in all patience. St. Paul wishes his disciple to be firm and earnest with all those entrusted to his care, but at the same time to be affable, meek, and kind. This is the model that all should study who have at heart the honor of God and the welfare of souls. They must have a true Christian zeal, that is, a zeal according to the spirit of Christ; an unwearied, undaunted, constant, but at the same time a kind, an affable, a friendly, and a meek zeal, that insists with firmness on what is right, but does not by any injudicious importunity make the sweet yoke of

Conclusion and exhortation to imitate the Christian zeal of SS. Simon and Jude.

<sup>1</sup> Quare facitis res hujuscemodi, quas ego audio, res pessimas ab omni populo? Nolite, filii, mei; non enim est bona fama, quam ego audio.—I. Kings ii. 23, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Prædica verbum, insta opportune, importune.—II. Tim. iv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Argue, obsecra, increpa in omni patientia et doctrina.—Ibid.

Christ bitter. This is the true zeal by which the holy apostles Simon and Jude furthered the honor of God, spread the name of Christ through so many countries, and brought countless souls to heaven; and by the same zeal we, too, shall further the glory of God, gain the souls entrusted to our care, and along with them attain eternal happiness. God grant that such may be the case. Amen.

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FIFTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON THE HOLY APOSTLE ST. MATTHIAS.

Subject.

1. The exaltation of St. Matthias shows that no one should disturb himself by unnecessary questions regarding his predestination or reprobation, but should endeavor to work out his salvation by a holy life and a careful use of the grace of God. 2. The unhappy fall and reprobation of Judas shows, on the other hand, that in no state of life can we promise ourselves security, but must be always afraid of a fall, and therefore protect ourselves against it with all possible diligence.—*Preached on the feast of St. Matthias.*

Text.

*Annumeratus est cum undecim apostolis.*—Acts i. 26.

“He was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

Introduction.

Wonderful, but just and adorable are the providence and the decrees of the Almighty! Judas at first was most carefully chosen by Our Lord, and placed among the twelve vessels of election whom the Saviour of the world selected out of the whole human race to assist Him in the great work of the redemption; nevertheless he is not found in the number of the blessed apostles in heaven; another received his office and took his place. On the other hand, St. Matthias had not the happiness of being among the apostles during the lifetime of Our Lord, and yet he has the good fortune of enjoying, like the other eleven, the title, rank, and privileges of an apostle in eternal glory. A strange turn for things to take! Did Our Lord perhaps not know beforehand the fall of the one and the merits of the other? God forbid

that we should suspect Eternal Wisdom of such ignorance! But if He knew the one as well as the other, why did He in His choice prefer the unworthy to the worthy, thus entailing, according to our poor way of looking at it, the disagreeable consequence of having His choice, as it were, frustrated? To this I can give no answer except to cry out with the Royal Prophet in the deepest adoration and reverence for the inscrutable judgments of God: "Thy judgments are a great deep."<sup>1</sup> "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right."<sup>2</sup> Thou art just in hurling Judas from his seat, and excluding him from heavenly glory; just in giving to Matthias the place lost by Judas, and the glory of heaven! My dear brethren, instead of venturing on a rash investigation of the inscrutable designs of the Almighty, let us rather endeavor to draw a useful lesson, which may serve partly for our encouragement, and partly to inspire us with a salutary fear that will render us most cautious; let us learn this lesson from the rejection of the one who was called and chosen, and from the elevation to the apostolic dignity of the other, who was not expressly called at first. The choice and exaltation of Matthias may serve to encourage us, inasmuch as we can learn therefrom not to disturb ourselves by useless inquiries into our predestination, but rather seek to work out our salvation and make it certain by leading holy lives; the unhappy fall and eternal reprobation of Judas will serve to make us cautious, and to inspire us with a salutary fear, inasmuch as we shall learn from it that no one, no matter in what state he may be, can promise himself full security, but must be always in dread of a fall, and therefore must be always on his guard. There you have the subject and divisions of this sermon.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*The choice and exaltation of St. Matthias teaches us that no one should disturb himself by useless inquiries into his predestination, but rather seek to work out his salvation by a holy life and a careful use of the grace of God: the first part. On the other hand, the unhappy fall and reprobation of Judas teaches us that no one, no matter what may be his state of life, can promise himself security, but must always fear a fall, and therefore guard himself from it most carefully: the second part. The exaltation of*

<sup>1</sup> *Judicia tua abyssus multa.*—Ps. xxxv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum.*—*Ibid.* cxviii. 137.



*Matthias and the reprobation of Judas are the whole foundation of my sermon; the careful use of divine grace, a salutary fear, and constant watchfulness are the end and object of it.*

To obtain this end we beg Thy powerful grace, O dearest Saviour, Christ Jesus, through the intercession of Thy holy Mother and of the holy angels.

The exaltation of Matthias shows that we should not trouble ourselves about predestination.

Many, even pious Christians, are not a little troubled by the thought: Am I chosen for eternal life or not? How if I am excluded by God from the number of the elect? If such is the case, of what avail will be all my efforts to save my soul? for no matter what I do I shall not be able to change the eternal decrees of the Almighty. To be chosen for eternal life is a grace for which we can never be grateful enough to God; but to be excluded from it is a misfortune that we can never sufficiently deplore. But away with this useless worry and trouble! St. Peter teaches us to lay it aside: "Wherefore, brethren, labor the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election."<sup>1</sup> As if to say: How can it help you to lose your time in such distressing questions? Be on your guard against sin, do good; be zealous in working with the grace that God gives you; then you yourselves can make your election and eternal salvation certain. So it is, my dear brethren. We have a striking example of this truth in the election of our holy patron, St. Matthias the apostle, who, as it were, forced his way into the dignity of the apostolate by the holiness of his life, although he had not been called to that dignity before, and drew to himself by the power of his merits the honor and glory prepared for the apostles in preference to others of the elect, according to the words of Our Lord. The history of this is told in the Acts of the Apostles, and is too well known for me to delay in recounting it to you. But the mysteries concealed therein are perhaps not often considered as deeply as they deserve; and these may well occupy our attention now.

For though he was not called by the Lord with the other apostles, yet he was

As you are aware, by the shameful fall and unhappy death of the traitor Judas a place was made vacant in the college of the apostles, which, according to the prophecy of David, had to be filled up. To this end the disciples of Our Lord met, in order to take counsel about the choice they should make. The question at issue was indeed an important one, for it treated of a very great dignity and a great responsibility which could be conferred on

<sup>1</sup> Fratres, magis satagite, ut per bona opera certam vestram vocationem et electionem faciatis.—II. Pet. i. 10.

only one person. Peter, as the head of the assembly, rose up and said: "Men brethren, the Scripture must needs be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, . . . who was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. . . . For it is written in the Book of Psalms: His bishopric let another take. Wherefore of these men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day wherein He was taken up from us, one of these must be made a witness with us of His resurrection."<sup>1</sup> He must be a man who, like us, has been constantly following Christ, who has heard His sermons and doctrine, and observed His exhortations, so that he may be a good witness to His actions. He must be a man free from faults, who will neither allow himself to be led into evil by an imaginary happiness nor to be deterred from good and from the perfect imitation of Christ by any imaginary evil or fear; lest we should a second time be exposed to the shame caused our holy office before the whole city of Jerusalem—nay, before the whole world—by the disgraceful treachery of Judas. In a word, he must be a man of whose virtue there can be no doubt, and who by his blameless life may atone for the scandal caused by the perjury of the unhappy traitor, which might turn the people away from us and our teaching. My dearest brethren, it is the will of God that you seek out a man of this kind, undaunted in danger, proved in virtue, from among those who are assembled here, in order to associate him in our apostolic labors. Such was the address of the Prince of the apostles; whereupon there was held a general examination of the lives and actions of all present, in which their virtues and merits were strictly investigated, until finally the votes of the assembly were given to Barsabas and Matthias: "And they appointed two: Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias;"<sup>2</sup> and one of these was to be chosen to take the place of the traitor Judas.

named with  
Barsabas  
to take the  
place of  
Judas.

This fact alone, if we knew no more of him, should suffice to give us an extraordinary idea of the holiness and virtue of this

And that,  
too, in pref.

<sup>1</sup> Viri fratres oportet impleri Scripturam, quam prædixit Spiritus Sanctus per os David de Juda . . . qui connumeratus erat in nobis, et sortitus est sortem ministerii hujus. . . . Scriptum est enim in libro psalmodum: Episcopatum ejus accipiat alter. Oportet ergo ex his viris, qui nobiscum sunt congregati in omni tempore, quo intravit et exivit inter nos Dominus Jesus, incipiens a baptisate Joannis usque in diem, qua assumptus est a nobis, testem resurrectionis ejus nobiscum fieri unum ex istis.—Acts i. 16, 17, 20-22.

<sup>2</sup> Et statuerunt duos, Joseph, qui vocabatur Barsabas, qui cognominatus est Justus, et Matthiam.—Ibid. 23.

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many holy  
men who  
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ent.

great man; for the election held by the Christians then assembled was not founded on vain or worldly views, but rather on the merits and sanctity of the individual, as we cannot for a moment doubt. It is clear, then, that Joseph and Matthias were men such as Peter had described in his address—nay, that their virtue shone conspicuous before that of all the others, and therefore that in the whole crowd of Christians they were the most perfect and the best fitted to fill the vacant place. Truly, that is a short and pithy description of the greatest praise that a holy man can receive! Judge yourself if such be not the case. In those days the Church was so filled with the spirit of Christ in all its freshness and vigor that nearly every member of it deserved to be admired as a model of holiness; yet in that shining firmament there were some stars that shone far brighter than others; among them might be reckoned the holy deacon Philip, St. Luke, St. Mark—two evangelists and instruments by whose voice and pen the Holy Ghost was pleased to speak to the nations, to announce the teaching and articles of the faith; besides, there were St. Stephen, St. Barnabas, and many others! What excellent men they were! and what a beautiful example of holiness they gave! What glorious props and pillars they were of the divine edifice, the Church, that the incarnate wisdom of God erected here on earth! We know how laudatory are the terms in which the Holy Scripture speaks of Stephen: “A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost;”<sup>1</sup> and again: “Full of grace and fortitude.”<sup>2</sup> He it was whom even his enemies looked on as an incarnate angel, on account of the innocence and sanctity that shone in his countenance and in all his behavior: “And all that sat in the council looking on him saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel.”<sup>3</sup> He it was who had gone so far in the doctrine of his divine Master that while he was still living he merited to see the heavens opened, and Christ in His glory standing at the right hand of His heavenly Father: “He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”<sup>4</sup> Yet he, and many others like him—excellent men, whose holiness and brilliant virtues the world cannot even now sufficiently admire—had to retire; for after due deliberation the assembly of Christians judged that of all present Mat-

<sup>1</sup> Virum plenum fide et Spiritu Sancto.—Acts vi. 5, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Plenus gratia et fortitudine.—Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Intuentes eum omnes qui sedebant in concilio, viderunt faciem ejus tanquam faciem angeli.—Ibid. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Vidit gloriam Dei, et Jesum stantem a dextris Dei.—Ibid. vii. 55.

thias and Barsabas were the best suited for the office of the apostolate. "They appointed two," says Denis the Carthusian, "because they seemed to be conspicuous for sanctity above the others, and more adapted for the grace of the apostolate."<sup>1</sup>

Now we should do this most wise and holy assembly, in which were the apostles and Mary herself, the Mother of Jesus, a great injustice if we doubted that their choice of Matthias and Barsabas was a perfectly just one and suited to the merits of the persons chosen. But if it was just, and according to sound reason as well as to the divine will, then it is evident that marks of a quite extraordinary and unusual perfection must have been discovered in those two men, on account of which they merited the preference. And as far as our St. Matthias is specially concerned, the holy Fathers, authors, and historians are unanimous in asserting that from his childhood he was a model and mirror of all perfection; "he was illustrious by his purity and innocence of soul,"<sup>2</sup> says St. Bonaventure. Denis the Carthusian writes that he showed a wonderful innocence from his childhood, avoided all vanity and dissipation, and adorned his tender years with a great earnestness of manner.<sup>3</sup> The author of his Life in the Bollandists shows how in his youth he would have nothing to do with the frivolities which belong to a tender age, but occupied himself solely with reading the Holy Scriptures, and studying the law and all the commandments and prohibitions contained in it, and exactly observing them. Whereby under the guidance of Simeon, the high-priest at the time, and his experienced teacher in divine things, he advanced so far as to attain to a perfect knowledge of the law and the prophets; and the author adds: "The blessed man was most pure of body and of mind, most acute in solving the difficulties of the Scriptures, prudent in counsel, elegant and eloquent in speech."<sup>4</sup> It would delay me too long to rehearse all the praises given to the admirable virtues displayed by him both before and after he followed Our Lord, virtues by which he won such great esteem in the assembly of Christians. It is enough for my purpose to say that the Christian community, moved by no other consideration than that of his exceeding great and re-

This he merited by his edifying life.

<sup>1</sup> Statuerunt duos, tanquam præ cæteris sanctitate conspicuos, atque ad gratiam apostolatus, ut videbatur, magis idoneos.

<sup>2</sup> Commendatur a munditia et pudicitia animi.—S. Bonav. Serm. 1. de S. Matt.

<sup>3</sup> Lasciviam devitans, pueriles annos morum gravitate ornavit.

<sup>4</sup> Erat igitur vir beatus corpore mundissimus, animo purus, in solvendis Sacræ Scripturæ quæstionibus acutissimus, in consilio providus, sermone nitidus et expeditus.



markable virtues, presented Matthias, along with Barsabas, to St. Peter.

His inward holiness before God was the reason why the lot fell on him in preference to Barsabas.

But the excellence of his merits is still more evident from the fact that by the infallible judgment and command of God Himself he was preferred even to Barsabas, who was justly so renowned for holiness and perfection. On account of the apparently equal merits of both, the apostles and disciples could not decide which should be raised to the rank of apostle. Therefore, to avoid all mistakes in such a weighty matter, they all had recourse to Heaven in fervent prayer, and begged of the Almighty, who knows the secrets of hearts, to decide which of the two, who seemed outwardly so like each other, should have the preference: "And praying, they said: Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas hath by transgression fallen."<sup>1</sup> "They left to God the decision," says the learned Salmeron, "since He knew which was the better of the two."<sup>2</sup> Then they cast lots, in order to have an outward sign of the divine will: "And they gave them lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." We congratulate thee, holy disciple, and now chosen apostle of Christ, on this fortunate lot! It did not fall on thee by chance, but was directed by the hand of God, whereby thy virtues were made known and exalted before the world much more than by any other species of eulogy. And in fact, my dear brethren, what clearer or better proofs of the great perfection of Matthias could we wish or desire to have than the directing of this lot to him by the eternal Wisdom? For whereas in the estimation of the Christian assembly he was before held only on an equality with Barsabas, he is now exalted above him by the decision and decree of the Almighty. This one circumstance surpasses all other kinds of praise, says Denis, that he was chosen for the high dignity of apostle in preference to one who on account of his great name for virtue was surnamed the Just.<sup>3</sup> This alone is worth more than all else that could be said in his praise; for by a divine decree he was chosen as the holiest

<sup>1</sup> Tu Domine, qui corda nostri omnium, ostende, quem elegeris ex his duobus unum, accipere locum ministerii hujus et apostolatus, de quo prævaricatus est Judas.—Acts i. 24, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Reliquerunt Deo judicium, qui sciret meliorem, ut eligeret quem vellet.

<sup>3</sup> Ei præ omni præconio potest sufficere, quod alio tam justo, in hac parte relicto, ipse ad apostolatus apicem est assumptus.



of all that assembly of holy men; so writes St. Bonaventure.<sup>1</sup>

And in what, my dear brethren, did his sanctity especially appear? How did he merit such a great grace from God, and attain to the rank of apostle? There are, I find, two virtues which all spiritual writers especially recommend in him, namely, a most profound humility and a most zealous love of God. The first of these is the foundation, the latter the perfection of all virtue. It was by means of them that he won the heart of God, and gained His favor and affection. For on the one hand, the Almighty Himself tells us what great pleasure He has in the humble; how He is, so to speak, in love with them, and determined to exalt them. Does not the spirit of God rest on the humble? And it is the foundation of the dispensations of Providence that he who humbles himself shall be exalted.<sup>2</sup> And on the other hand, it is not possible for the Almighty to refuse the marks of His love to one whom He knows to love Him truly. Matthias was not, like the other apostles, a lowly, unlearned man, but, as we have seen, he was unusually well read in the Holy Scriptures, and so experienced in spiritual matters that he might justly have been considered as one of the lights of his age. Now when a man has great learning he usually extols himself above others in his own mind, and indulges in a kind of vanity and self-complacency, as St. Paul says: “Knowledge puffeth up;”<sup>3</sup> but, according to the testimony of all who have written his life, Matthias, in spite of his learning, was as retiring and kept himself as hidden from the world as if he were the least and most ignorant of all. And hence some are of the opinion that the name Matthias—“the little one of God”—was given him by Divine Providence to signify his humility to the whole world. In the history of his life in the Bollandists I read the following words: “Although he was most learned, he was not at all puffed-up; but, according to the meaning of his name, endeavored in all things to show himself truly lowly and humble, remembering the words of the Wise Man: ‘The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things.’”<sup>4</sup> Oh, that we could have seen how, when Peter offered the prayer for success in their choice of an apostle, St. Matthias,

His profound humility and zealous love made him specially dear to God.

<sup>1</sup> Ex tanta multitudine est electus, tanquam Deo inspirante sanctissimus.

<sup>2</sup> Qui se humiliat exaltabitur.—Luke xiv. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Scientia inflat.—I. Cor. viii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Licet eruditissimus esset, nullatenus extollebatur, sed juxta nominis sui etymologiam se vere parvum et humilem exhibere nitentur, illud sapientis sæpe commemorans: **Quantus magnus es, humilia te in omnibus.**—Eccles. iii. 20.

like the public sinner in the temple, who did not dare to lift up his eyes, retiring into a corner of the supper-room, where the assembly was held, and with downcast eyes but with heart raised to God begged of the Almighty to choose the most worthy, never dreaming in the least that the choice would fall on himself! And this very humility was the cause that Heaven cast its eyes on him alone and no other. "To whom shall I have respect," says the Lord, by the Prophet Isaias, "but to him that is poor and little?"<sup>1</sup> So that we may with reason say, "the lot fell upon Matthias," that is, grace on the humble. For according to the testimony of the Holy Ghost, God is wont to bestow His special favors on the humble: "God giveth grace to the humble."<sup>2</sup> Such, too, seems to be the reason why the Church has chosen as the gospel of the Mass of this feast that part which speaks of the humility of the followers of Christ, and in both Mass and Office she applies to St. Matthias the words of Our Lord: "I confess to Thee, O Father, . . . because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."<sup>3</sup> And with regard to his burning love of God, it is evident from the fact that he was appointed to the apostolate by Him who requires this love as a special mark of His disciples: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love."<sup>4</sup> Now if that is the characteristic of Our Lord's disciples, how wonderful must not that love have been in Matthias, since Our Lord chose him in preference to all the other disciples to take the place of the traitor Judas! Denis the Carthusian says, in a word, that he was filled with love.<sup>5</sup> Not with a vain and fruitless love, but with one that was true and perfect; one that impelled him to use all the powers of his soul and body for the glory of God and the salvation of others.<sup>6</sup> St. Bonaventure considers St. Matthias' love of God as a virtue in which he specially excelled all the others.<sup>7</sup>

By which  
virtues he  
kept the  
grace of

Glorious indeed was that union in the one soul of two such excellent virtues—a profound humility and a burning charity! These were the virtues which raised Matthias to the dignity of

<sup>1</sup> Ad quem respiciam, nisi ad pauperculum?—Is. lxi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Humilibus dat gratiam.—James iv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Confiteor tibi Pater . . . quia abscondisti hæc a sapientibus et prudentibus, et revelasti ea parvulis.—Matt. xi. 25.

<sup>4</sup> In hoc cognoscent omnes, quod discipuli mei estis, si dilectionem habueritis.—John xiii. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Charitate repletus.

<sup>6</sup> Pro Deo et proximorum salute se totum impendit.

<sup>7</sup> Commendatur ab excellentia amoris eximii.

apostle, preserved him in it, and finally brought him to eternal glory in heaven. These were the spurs that always urged him on in the way of perfection, and impelled him to study unceasingly the sanctification of his soul. Humility caused him to ascend daily higher and higher in charity, through fear lest he might grow cold therein, and, like Judas, lose his place and his soul; charity, on the other hand, caused him always to think little of himself, and to sink deeper in his own estimation, lest if he should extol himself he might be separated from Our Lord, and sink deeper into the abyss. As we read in the Lives of the Fathers, his favorite saying was: "If pride ascends to heaven it shall be cast down to hell; so if humility descends to hell it shall be raised up to heaven."<sup>1</sup> Humility and charity together filled him with an insatiable zeal for converting souls and spreading everywhere the name and glory of Christ, and although he had converted many Jews and heathens, endured many hardships, labors, and persecutions, and wrought many miracles, yet this humble and loving apostle thought he had done nothing, and looked on himself as an unprofitable servant, according to the words of his Saviour: "When you shall have done all these things . . . say: We are unprofitable servants."<sup>2</sup> He had already preached in Judea, Palestine, and Morocco "with great success and profit to souls,"<sup>3</sup> as we read in his Life; but not content with this he returned to Judea, to begin anew, as it were, his apostolic labors. This he did with such zeal that he was taken by the Jews, condemned to death, and by a twofold martyrdom—stoning and decapitation—sent to receive the eternal crown of glory that Judas lost, and that he won by his humility and charity. "O truly lowly and truly great man," I must here exclaim in the words of Authbert, in his panegyric on St. Matthias, quoted by the Bollandists; "who wert great, not because thou wert exalted but rather because thou didst become humble;"<sup>4</sup> and because he united such an ardent charity with humility, therefore he is now exalted forever in heaven.

Let us reflect on this a little, my dear brethren. As we have seen, St. Matthias seems to have been disregarded and passed

the apostolate, and gained eternal glory.

Hence it is clear that

<sup>1</sup> Si superbia ascenderit usque in cœlum, usque ad inferos detrudetur; ita humilitas, si descenderit usque in infernum, usque ad cœlum extolletur.

<sup>2</sup> Cum feceritis hæc omnia . . . dicite: Servi inutiles sumus.—Luke xvii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Cum magno animarum lucro atque profectu.

<sup>4</sup> O vere parvum, vere magnum, qui non ideo magnus, quia elatus, sed ideo magnus, quoniam humilis factus.

whoever  
wishes to  
make a  
good use of  
the grace of  
God can  
save his  
soul.

over by Our Lord in the first calling of the apostles; he was a true follower and disciple of Christ, but was not reckoned among the twelve chosen preachers of the gospel. Nevertheless by his holiness, innocence, humility, and charity he brought things to such a pass that first, by the unanimous vote of the assembled Christians, he was presented, with Barsabas, who alone seemed to be equal to him in sanctity, as a candidate for the apostolate in the place of Judas, and then, by the infallible decision of God, was preferred to Barsabas. My dear brethren, what conclusion are we to draw from this? If St. Matthias was able to offer the Almighty, as it were, a pleasing violence, and to force from Him what was at first denied him, and thus by his own merits to ascend to a throne of glory in heaven that the mere generosity of God would otherwise not have given him without extraordinary co-operation on his part, then there is no doubt that they are wrong who say that our salvation or reprobation depends alone on deliberate choice or rejection on the part of God, and that man by his own works can neither further the one nor prevent the other. Foolish people who imagine such things or allow such thoughts to disturb them! Every one knows that we must distinguish between those works that indeed concern us, but that God alone accomplishes without our co-operation, and those for the accomplishment of which we have indeed need of divine grace, but which nevertheless, after this grace has been freely offered, are left to our own will. With regard to the first, it would be useless for us to trouble about them, for in such cases we should leave ourselves altogether to Divine Providence; therefore Our Lord in the gospel reproves with good reason those who torment themselves with useless cares: "Which of you," no matter how learned, rich, or powerful he may be, "by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?"<sup>1</sup> But with regard to the other class of works, which God has left to our own free will, it would be clearly a great folly not to set about them ourselves, but to leave them altogether to God. For if our diligence or carelessness in this respect had no influence, they would not be works of our free will, but would depend solely on God. A work of this kind, my dear brethren, as every true believer acknowledges, is our salvation or damnation, our holiness or wickedness, our advance in perfection or our falling away therefrom. So says the Wise Man expressly: "God made man from the beginning, and

<sup>1</sup> *Quis vestrum cogitans potest adjicere ad staturam suam cubitum unum?*—Matt. vi. 27.



left him in the hand of his own counsel. He added His commandments and precepts. If thou wilt keep the commandments . . . they shall preserve thee. He hath set water and fire before thee; stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him.”<sup>1</sup> God has made the sun and moon, the heavens and the earth, not only without our co-operation, but even without the least consent on our part; in the same way He has placed one in preference to another in a Catholic land, caused him to be born of Catholic parents, to be brought up in the Catholic faith (a happiness for which he to whom it is granted cannot be grateful enough to God for all eternity); but that he saves his soul in preference to another, or gains a higher place than another in heaven—that is a work for which God indeed gives His help generously to every one, but the success or failure of it He has so left in our hands that the failure can in no wise be attributed to Him, but rather to the sloth and carelessness of the individual. “He who created you without you,” are the well-known words of St. Augustine, “will not save you without you.”<sup>2</sup> He has created you out of sheer goodness, and will not reject you without fault on your part. Therefore when the young man came to Christ, as we read in the gospel, and said to Him, “good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?” Our Lord did not tell him that he should not trouble himself about the matter, and leave the care of it to God, but: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”<sup>3</sup> It depends on yourself, on your own free will. And when the young man aspired higher, and seemed not to be content with ordinary holiness and glory in heaven, for the second time Our Lord did not refer him to the will of God, but to his own will: “If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.”<sup>4</sup> Happy mortals, in whose power it is to make themselves sure of heavenly bliss—nay, to ascend as high in heaven as they please! On the other hand, how culpable the

<sup>1</sup> Deus ab initio constituit hominem, et reliquit illum in manu consilii sui; adiecit mandata et præcepta sua. Si volueris mandata servare, conservabunt te. Apposuit tibi aquam et ignem; ad quod volueris, porrige manum tuam. Ante hominem vita et mors, bonum et malum; quod placuerit ei, dabitur illi.—Ecclesi. xv. 14-18.

<sup>2</sup> Qui creavit te sine te, non salvabit te sine te.

<sup>3</sup> Magister bone, quid boni faciam, ut habeam vitam æternam? Si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva mandata.—Matt. xix. 16, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende quæ habes, et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in cælo.—Ibid. 21.



carelessness of those who do not profit by their privilege, and who squander the good fortune they have in their hands! Let no one dare to say to me again, with heretics or cold-hearted Catholics, who seek to palliate their sloth and indifference by laying the blame on others—let no one say that it depends on the generosity of God, and on the greater grace given to one rather than to another, that one should be chosen for eternal life and another excluded from it; that one should be called to extraordinary sanctity, while another is left among the common crowd.

And can also, according to the measure of his merits, add to his glory in heaven.

If God has not through sheer generosity given you great graces, such as He has bestowed on others, do not despair on that account! A diligent workman often earns as much in time as would be given to a good friend out of sheer love. And what God has given to others as a gratuitous gift He is ready to give you as a reward for your labor. We have convincing proof of that in our St. Matthias, who certainly must not be less esteemed than the other apostles because he was not at first chosen for that state by Our Lord, without any merits of his own. But as among soldiers they who rise from the ranks by their knowledge of and experience in war are generally more esteemed than those who become officers by money or on account of their noble birth, without having given any special proofs of bravery, so to any one with sound reason it must redound to the greater praise of this apostle that he attained that high position by his own efforts, to which the others were elevated by mere generosity. Take courage, my dear brethren!—you who think that God has not bestowed such great gifts on you as on many others whose holiness and perfection you admire. The graces that the divine generosity has not hitherto given you God will not refuse you, according to His most faithful and unfailing fidelity to His promises, if you try to make yourselves worthy of them by your merits. Even those high places of honor which the cherubim and seraphim occupied shortly after their creation are open to us if by constant co-operation with divine grace we only endeavor always to make a step in advance. In a word, we shall be as perfect in holiness and as high in heaven as we ourselves wish, for there is no want in the earnest will of God in this respect. On the other hand, no matter how high the favor and grace bestowed by God on man, the latter will certainly fall into shameful ruin unless he works with grace, and thus seeks to keep himself safe in his state. This is the second part of my sermon, and it is proved especially

by the sad fall of Judas, whose place in the apostolate our St. Matthias occupied.

### Second Part.

Who could have believed it possible that out of the twelve whom Christ had selected by a most wise choice to be the foundation and corner-stone of His Church one would shamefully fall away and make, as it were, a fissure in the spiritual edifice? Who can think, without trembling, that one of those whom Christ treated as His dearest friends, who were always with Him, to whom, before all others, He opened His heart, to whom He revealed the highest secrets of His heavenly kingdom: "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God;"<sup>1</sup> who can think, I say, without trembling, that one of those, in spite of long-continued friendship with Christ, should at last die as the enemy of God, and be condemned to the everlasting fire of hell prepared for God's enemies? O God of goodness! who would not shudder at the thought? One of the apostles chosen by Our Lord Himself in the fire of hell! A teacher of truth, a pillar of the Church, an instrument of the divine omnipotence, who, as the holy Fathers say, worked miracles as well as the other apostles; who had healed the sick, expelled demons, and by his instructions and sermons brought many to the light of truth—he falls at last into the power and under the yoke of the devil, so that he is now tortured forever by those whom he once commanded!

That Judas lost the apostolate, to which he was called by Christ, and was excluded from eternal glory.

Whence, in God's name, came such a terrible fall, such a sad ending, after so noble a beginning? Did Our Lord perhaps make a mistake when He first called Judas to the apostolate, and think him better than he was in reality? Or had He perhaps no earnest will to raise him to that dignity, and to confer on him in heaven the glory of an apostle? No; we dare not, without blasphemy, form such a suspicion, either of the uprightness or of the omniscience of the incarnate God. Not only had Christ an earnest will to maintain Judas in his dignity on earth, and to give him the same glory with the other apostles in heaven, but also when the traitor had separated himself from the chosen number, and by his unheard-of wickedness made himself unworthy of the grace conferred on him, Our Lord offered to receive him again into His friendship if he only wished to return to Him. Such is the interpretation given by many of the holy Fathers to the words:

Was caused by his own negligence and disregard of divine grace.

<sup>1</sup> *Vobis datum est nosse mysterium regni Dei.*—Luke viii. 10.

“Friend, whereto art thou come?”<sup>1</sup> As if Christ wished to say: Art thou come to beg pardon for thy sin, and to renew thy friendship with Me? If such is the case, I shall not be wanting; I hereby declare thee My friend and apostle, as thou wert before. Was there perhaps something in the life led by Judas, either before or after his calling to the apostolate, which caused him to lose that place of honor? No; for the holy Fathers testify that he was a holy and just man. “At first,” says Tertullian, “he was not only holy, but by the zeal of his preaching he was the means of sanctifying others.”<sup>2</sup> Whence, then, in God’s name, that terrible fall, unexampled since the fall of our first parents? The only cause of it is that Judas did not try, by his own co-operation, to retain the graces and favors which Christ had most generously bestowed on him. Our Lord did not wait for merits on the part of that unhappy man to raise him so high, and give him so many graces; of His own accord, without any help on the part of Judas, He showed him more love, kindness, and favor than he could have merited, nay, hoped for. But, according to a just ordination of Divine Providence, it depended on Judas’ own co-operation and merits to remain to the end in that happy state, to die as an apostle beloved by God, and to attain to the high degree of glory in heaven given to an apostle. And since Judas neglected his duty in this respect, and was not careful of the graces conferred on him, he suffered a terrible fall and eternal misery.

And it was the neglect of small things that caused his eternal ruin.

Unhappy man! what blinded you to such an extent that you squandered away such a great good fortune? What wonderful good attracted you, or what great evil terrified you, so that the love of the one or the fear of the other induced you to leave your divine Master, to deliver Him over to His enemies, to rob yourself of eternal goods, and to hurl yourself into the abyss of hell? There was neither a great good nor a great evil, my dear brethren. We do not read of the Jews having terrified Judas by threats, or used other forms of violence to persuade him to betray Christ. His malice was so great that of his own accord he went to the high-priests and offered to render them that disgraceful service: “He went . . . to the chief priests, and said to them: What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amice, ad quid venisti?—Matt. xxvi. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Fuit ergo primitus ipse non solum sanctus, sed et zelo prædicationis suæ sanctificans alios.

<sup>3</sup> Ablit . . . ad principes sacerdotum, et ait illis: Quid vultis mihi dare, et ego vobis eum tradam?—Matt. xxvi. 14, 15.

Thirty pieces of silver were not of such value as to induce one of an honorable mind to commit such a deed of shame, if there was not some other hidden reason which prepared the way for so great a crime. "No one becomes very wicked all at once," says the old proverb; <sup>1</sup> a holy man does not at once fall into the depths of depravity. These violent changes are generally the work of small things, that grow gradually greater in time, so that at last they prepare the way for a ruinous fall. So it was with Judas; he was certainly a holy man, since he had been called to the apostolate; for a time he kept all right in that state; finally, when he was appointed to keep the purse which contained the alms given by pious people to Our Lord, who was voluntarily poor, for the needy, and to supply His own wants, Judas began at first to be economical, and as he kept the purse always, to have a love for the gold that passed through his hands; thus he began to wish that the alms might increase daily, under the pretext of being better able to help the poor. In time he began to look on as his own property the purse that was entrusted to his care; here and there he extorted a trifle, and became a thief. The gospel tells us that he was a thief, <sup>2</sup> because he imagined he had sustained a loss when St. Mary Magdalene poured the precious ointment on Our Lord's head at the feast in the house of the Pharisee. This loss he was determined to make good in some way or other, and as no other opportunity presented itself, his cursed greed of gold brought him so far that he offered to sell Jesus Christ, his Lord and Master, to His sworn enemies, the most innocent Lamb to those ravening wolves, that he might regain by the blood of Our Lord the gold he had lost. Thus did a once holy apostle of Christ by such a small beginning come to such a sad end, and sink to the lowest depths of wickedness.

Christian souls, even you who think you have made no small progress in virtue! is not this sad fall enough to make the blood freeze with horror in your veins? If Judas in the school of Christ, under the teaching of that divine Master, and after having wrought many great miracles, was not confirmed in grace, or assured of his salvation, which of us can promise himself security in his state of life? If this apostle, so richly endowed with graces by Christ, from a small beginning, and through what was at first

A consideration that should deter even pious souls from apparently small faults

<sup>1</sup> Nemo repente fit turpissimus.

<sup>2</sup> Fur erat.—John xii. 6.



not a sinful but a somewhat inordinate love of the alms entrusted to him, fell into such an abyss of wickedness, what sin, what fault, what imperfection, no matter how trifling it seems, can we have reason to despise, or to regard without the fear of suffering a similar fall? "Behold," says St. Ambrose, "if such men as the traitor Judas was fall, even the most heroic saints must tremble,"<sup>1</sup> and dread to fall in a similar manner. "He that thinketh himself to stand let him take heed lest he fall,"<sup>2</sup> says St. Paul, no doubt terrified by the fall of Judas, which had occurred shortly before; let him who believes himself in the grace of God guard himself carefully on all sides, lest he should lose that grace. Even a slight stumble, a trifling carelessness in the divine service may be the occasion of everlasting ruin. And no one need wonder at this who considers the frailty of our corrupt nature as it ought to be considered. For since it lost after sin the inclinations to good imprinted on it by our Creator, and by a sort of natural gravitation became inclined to all kinds of evil, it seems to me like a heavy stone that is hurled from the top of a high mountain into the valley beneath. A slight push is enough to start it, and its own weight will then hurry it downwards with increasing impetuosity, so that neither hedge nor ditch nor other impediment is able to stop its way. Sad experience, with how many and terrible examples dost thou not convince us of this truth! I will not refer to them now, because the case of Judas, since it is confirmed by the indubitable testimony of the gospel, is much more convincing than any other.

For such faults can easily lead us into grave offences.

But you, thoughtless souls, who after some consolation experienced in prayer, or after having made some imaginary or real progress in virtue, not only do not fear a similar fall, but promise yourselves full security, and disregard apparently small faults, think seriously of the danger that threatens you, and how quickly from a small beginning you may fall into the depths of vice! For instance (to keep to the subject in hand that the fall of Judas supplies us with), how often does it not happen that even in just dealings with our neighbor we are too exact, and insist strictly on all our rights? Is that a sin? No, my dear brethren, not by any means; but it is a beginning, from which a great change may easily spring. For a too great exactness in this respect can

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce cadentibus hujusmodi viris, qualis fuit proditor Judas . . . etiam fortes viri trepidabunt.*

<sup>2</sup> *Qui se existimat stare, videat ne cadat.—I. Cor. x. 12.*



easily influence the mind, so that blinded by self-love we seek all sorts of pretexts for exacting something small over what is our due when occasion offers. The injustice is still small, but it is on the increase, and these small things will bye-and-bye become great, and at last we go to receive Holy Communion with our souls filled with sacrilege and profanation of the holy sacraments, as our coffers are filled with unjustly-acquired gain. There we have a real Judas, who betrays Christ for the love of money, and, as St. Paul says, crucifies Him again. So it is with other things, too; a small disorder may be the cause of a great misfortune, and of final ruin. A vain thought not driven away at once, a careless look, a too confidential conversation with a person of the other sex, a chagrin taken too much to heart on account of some real or imaginary injury—oh, how often have not such things been the beginning of the eternal loss of many a pious soul that now bewails its ruin with ineffectual tears! These things at first are mere trifles, small evils, but they soon grow to be great ones, and end in everlasting destruction. In the time of Elias the heavens were closed, so that no rain fell for the space of three years, and the earth could not produce any fruit on account of the long-continued drought. Suddenly, when King Achab was in the field, Elias warned him to ascend his chariot and save himself from the rain. What had the Prophet seen to be able to predict such a storm? The heavens were as clear as before; only that there appeared ascending from the sea a little cloud.<sup>1</sup> But how quickly that small cloud became a great one, from which the rain poured down in torrents! “And while he turned himself this way and that, behold the heavens grew dark with clouds and wind, and there fell a great rain.”<sup>2</sup> Who could have expected such a change in so short a time? Be not surprised, my dear brethren; that cloud came out of the sea,<sup>3</sup> where there is no lack of water; it drew to itself and spread abroad, while the wind helped it, until several clouds united together, and a heavy fall of rain was the result. That slight dissipation, that too great familiarity, that resentment of the supposed injury—oh, they were indeed trifling at first, and hardly worth notice; little clouds! But (reflect on this, my dear brethren) what wicked inclinations and desires attach themselves to

<sup>1</sup> Nubecula parva.—III. Kings xviii. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Cumque se verteret huc atque illuc, ecce cœli contenebrati sunt, et nubes et ventus, et facta est pluvia grandis.—Ibid. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Ascendebat de mari.—Ibid. 44.

those small things in time! What a dangerous wind of diabolical suggestions seizes these clouds, and drives them about, with the fogs ascending from the heart, until at last the storm breaks; and how does it break? You, alas, know best! How often has not the heart been inundated with impure love, incontinence, implacable hatred, anger, and desire of revenge, and similar vices from such small beginnings!

Exhortation  
to guard  
against  
small faults,  
and to  
make salva-  
tion sure by  
zealously  
working  
with grace.

Ah, Christians, never let yourselves be so blinded as to think little of any carelessness or other fault, no matter how small it may appear in itself; never despise those small things, for it should be enough to deter us from them to remember that even those trifles can have such disastrous results, as was the case with Judas and so many others, and to us they may also be the occasion of eternal ruin. Therefore I conclude with the words of St. Paul: "See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly."<sup>1</sup> Let us with all possible diligence see that we do not begin with small vices, like the traitor, and then we shall not have grave evils to dread. Unhappy Judas, if you had only used the same care and watchfulness to keep Christ in your heart that you recommended to the Jews who brought Him before the high-priest, "lay hold on Him, and lead Him away carefully,"<sup>2</sup> thou wouldst never have lost the grace of Christ, nor thy apostolic dignity and eternal glory, nor wouldst thou have come to that misfortune in which thou now eternally bewailest thy carelessness. But why should I say any more of the fall and eternal reprobation of this accursed traitor, since there is no longer any remedy for them? You, Christian souls, who by sanctifying grace bear Christ about with you, ah, "lay hold on Him, and lead Him carefully"! Do not go into any dangerous occasion of losing His grace, no matter how remote the danger may seem. Avoid even the least negligence in the divine service; be on your guard against even the least faults, as far as you can, for although the grace of God may exist with them, yet they may interrupt the order of graces appointed for you by God, and thus be the cause of great sins, which will separate you from God and God from you forever. Often recall to mind that warning of Our Lord in the Apocalypse of St. John: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man may take thy crown,"<sup>3</sup> as Judas lost his, which was given to

<sup>1</sup> Videte itaque, fratres, quomodo caute ambuletis.—Eph. v. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Tenete eum et ducite caute.—Mark xiv. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Tene quod habes, ut nemo accipiat coronam tuam.—Apoc. iii. 11.

Matthias. Judas lost it by his carelessness and contempt for little faults. Matthias received it by his zealous co-operation with and use of the graces bestowed on him, assured himself of it by his watchfulness, and now glories in it forever in heaven. Let us use a like zeal, my dear brethren, and try with equal carefulness to ensure our salvation, and we shall have a similar exaltation in heaven with Matthias, and rejoice with him in glory. Amen.

# ON THE HOLY MARTYRS.

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## FIFTY-THIRD SERMON.

### ON LOVING OUR ENEMIES AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF ST. STEPHEN.

#### Subject.

After the example of St. Stephen we are bound: 1. To bear patiently with our enemies, that is, not to return evil for evil; 2. To love our enemies, that is, to return good for evil.—*Preached on the feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr.*

#### Text.

*Positis autem genibus, clamavit voce magna, dicens: Domine, ne statuas illis hoc peccatum.*—Acts vii. 59.

“And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

#### Introduction.

False judgments and deceitful rules and laws of the world, how you are put to shame in these days! How happy that man is who is so rich, who is held in such high esteem, who is so beloved, who leads such a comfortable and pleasant life! Such is your opinion! Christ, the infallible and infinite wisdom, showed us the contrary yesterday by His example. The great Son of God, as a poor little Child, sheltered by a stable against the cold winter weather, places poverty, humiliation, crosses, and sufferings on the throne. The laws of the world say that we must not submit to injustice; we must defend ourselves as well as we can; it is not possible to love those who hate and persecute us; Stephen, a servant of Christ, teaches us the contrary to-day by his example: “Falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” So that we must bear patiently with our enemies? And we must even

love our enemies from our hearts? Truly, my dear brethren, the laws of the world say no to this; but the law of Christ and of His servants says expressly yes; this is no work of supererogation, left to our own free choice; it is an obligation, binding under sin, as I shall now show.

### Plan of Discourse.

*After the example of St. Stephen we are bound to bear patiently with our enemies, that is, not to return evil for evil: the first part. After the example of St. Stephen we are bound to love our enemies, that is, to return good for evil: the second part.*

Christ Jesus! I beg of Thee to grant what I have already prayed for in the holy Mass, and which the Church commands us to pray for; grant us, by the intercession of Thy dearest Mother and of our holy guardian angels, such an upright, Christian heart “that we may learn to love our enemies because we celebrate the natal day of him who knew how to pray for his enemies.”

I should not be surprised to find that many think this subject a not very useful one; for most people, especially the pious, who try to serve God to the best of their ability, say or think to themselves: I have neither hatred nor enmity towards any one; I have no enemies to trouble me; or, if any one injures me, I do not treat him as an enemy. Would to God, my dear brethren—would to God, I say, that this were really the case, that we still lived in the golden age of the primitive Christians, when, as the Acts of the Apostles tell us: “The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.”<sup>1</sup> Would to God that this sermon of mine concerned not a soul in this congregation, and served for no other purpose but to console the hearts of my hearers in the thought that they are free from all discord, and to encourage them to remain always united with each other in the bonds of charity! But I fear that what I have to say will be a matter of deep concern to only too many. For under the name of enemies who do us harm I understand not only all those who from an inveterate and implacable hatred conspire, as it were, against us, and publicly and privately try to injure us in our honor and property, or plot against our lives, although the name, properly speaking, belongs to those persons, but I mean also all who in any way cause us trouble or annoyance, for instance, those towards whom we

Whom we are to understand as enemies.

<sup>1</sup> Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una.—Acts iv. 32.



have a natural aversion and repugnance, whose manner of acting is disagreeable to us, and with whom we are obliged to have daily intercourse; I mean also those who now and then speak roughly to us, or refuse some request; who excite us to impatience by contradiction, sour looks, disobedience, or who in any other way act contrary to our will, whether the injury done us be great or small. Such enemies we often find among our acquaintances, neighbors, superiors, inferiors, masters, servants; such an enemy is often the husband to the wife, the wife to the husband, the children to the parents, the parents to the children. Injuries of the kind are to be met with everywhere; daily and hourly some one does to us what is displeasing and annoying. And I say that if we have no worse enemies we are bound to love all such people who thus annoy us with every outward mark and inward feeling of sincere love, and with a perfect and beneficent love.

St. Stephen sought no revenge on his enemies, although he might have had it.

Let us study the example of St. Stephen on this point. The Holy Scriptures tell us of the Jews, when they heard him preach: "Hearing these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed with their teeth at him."<sup>1</sup> They stopped their ears, fell upon him in a body, hurried him out of the city, and stoned him to death. Is not that a grievous injury? And how did Stephen act? Did he grind his teeth at them? Did he repay revenge for revenge, anger for anger, stoning for stoning? Oh, you will say, how could he think of such a thing? He was alone in the midst of the crowd of Jews, who were all embittered against him; he was a lamb in the midst of so many wolves, and what could he do to defend himself? True. But why should he not have been able to do something? What did not the prophets do in similar circumstances? They asked for help from Heaven and received it. On two occasions in succession Elias was surrounded by a band of fifty soldiers, whom the king of Israel had sent to take him prisoner; what did he do to defend himself against so many? "Let fire come down from heaven," he cried out, filled with zeal for the honor of God, "and consume thee and thy fifty."<sup>2</sup> The Prophet Eliseus was once surrounded by the whole Syrian army; what did he do to defend himself? He prayed to God, saying: "Strike, I beseech Thee, this people with blindness. And the Lord struck them with

<sup>1</sup> *Dissecabantur cordibus suis, et stridebant dentibus in eum.*—Acts vii. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Descendat ignis de cœlo et devoret te, et quinquaginta tuos.*—IV. Kings i. 10.

blindness, according to the word of Eliseus.”<sup>1</sup> Why should not the prayer of the first martyr have the same efficacy as that of the prophets? Did he not serve the same almighty God as they? Could he not have found equally valid reasons for demanding vengeance from God, and saving himself from the hands of his enemies? Could he not have been moved to adopt this course by the shame that the cross was to the Jews, by the thought of the weakness of the first Christians, who might have been greatly helped by some visible manifestation of the divine protection, as was the case in the days of the prophets of old? Oh, truly, there are many who would not require such cogent reasons to induce them to take revenge! But, as St. Gregory says, Stephen had a different and a Christian spirit. He was not a disciple of the zealous Elias or Eliseus, but was brought up in the school of the most meek Saviour; “like a disciple of Christ, he prayed for those who were stoning him.”<sup>2</sup> He had learned from Christ to heal the sick, and to command fire, water, and the other elements; but at the same time he had learned not to return evil for evil, to bear injuries with patience, and to be meek and gentle with those who used him despitely; “like a disciple of Christ, he prayed for those who were stoning him.”

Where are ye now, ye vindictive, rancorous Christians, even—and I do not hesitate to say it—even you who have the outward appearance of piety? Where are your patience and charity in this respect? No one has as yet made an attack on your persons, no one has gnashed his teeth at you, or taken up stones to throw at you; no one has inflicted a grievous wound on you; but a single sour look, a biting word, a displeasing action is quite enough to inspire you with the desire of revenge. Some one happens unwittingly to tread on your corns, to say a disagreeable word in some trifling matter; your servants or children do not run at once when you tell them; and immediately there is an outburst of impatience, anger, rancor, quarrelling, and strife; with Elias, but not with the same holy zeal, you call down fire from heaven, and summon the demons from hell, and your first prayer for your enemies is murmuring, invective, abuse, cursing, swearing. If my honor is attacked I dare not forgive; if I have suffered bodily injury I must have eye for eye, and tooth for

We seek revenge in every possible way.

<sup>1</sup> Percute, obsecro, gentem hanc, cæcitate. Percussitque eos Dominus ne viderent, juxta verbum Elisæi.—IV. Kings vi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Pro lapidantibus orabat, ut Christi discipulus.

tooth, blow for blow, wound for wound; I must pay back in the same coin!

Especially  
when there  
is question  
of worldly  
goods.

And if there is question of mine and thine, as St. Chrysostom says, "that cold word—mine and thine;"<sup>1</sup> if one's property is attacked, what a noise there is about it, even amongst Christians, even among those who would otherwise be the best of friends, nay, even among brothers and sisters, and that for a trifling sum of money! On account of an insulting word lawsuits are often commenced which in most cases are motived only by the wish to cause harm to others, and are thus the expression of bitterness, hatred, envy, vindictiveness; neither part will yield to the other, because when the passions are inflamed the mind cannot be induced to look calmly at the matter; the suit is often continued so long that both parties are brought to irretrievable ruin; and when nothing more is left the contending parties seek consolation in the thought that the opponent has suffered too. Meanwhile, what evils spring from this spirit of revenge! What various forms of rash judgments, evil thoughts, wicked interpretations, plans of vengeance that are brooded on night and day! How many false testimonies, uncharitable conversations, calumnies, detractions in company are not indulged in by both parties! And what grievous scandal is thus given to a whole street, a whole town, or district! Oftentimes the enmity thus aroused becomes so deep-rooted that it can be healed only by death. What do I say? By death? Nay, it is often left as a legacy to children and children's children. The children and domestics are entertained with frequent accounts of the injury supposed to have been received from such-and-such a person. He, they are told, is a sworn enemy of our family; he is only waiting an opportunity to do us harm; he is the cause of my ruin! Let none of you dare to set foot inside that man's house, or to associate with any of his acquaintances! Thus the poor children, who are like wax, capable of receiving any impression, are from their tenderest years impressed with the same hatred and enmity that is nourished by their parents, and enmity and hatred are made, as it were, immortal, and handed down from generation to generation. Such is the manner in which many treat their enemies—the idea they have of forgiving injuries!

Though  
that is for-

But is that right? Is it Christian, nay, is it human? If such a mode of action were allowable, and every one were at liberty

<sup>1</sup> Meum et tuum, frigidum illud verbum.

to take revenge, to return evil for evil, injury for injury, harm for harm, what would become of natural, civil, and religious law and order? And if all the laws of nature, of the world, of your own reason cried out to you: You are allowed and commanded to take vengeance on those who have done you harm, yet there is another who tells you quite the contrary, and whose law and will must be preferred to those of the whole world, namely, your God, who is almighty, and the supreme and sovereign Lord. His will is that you must not be angry even with your worst enemy. He says to you, by His apostle Paul: "To no man rendering evil for evil. Not revenging ourselves, my dearly beloved, but giving place unto wrath; for it is written: Revenge to Me; I will repay, saith the Lord."<sup>1</sup> He says to you: "But I say to you: Love your enemies."<sup>2</sup> He says to you: "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other;"<sup>3</sup> you must not return the blow, but even be ready to bear another patiently. He says to you: "Forgive, if you have aught against any man, that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your sins. But if you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven forgive you your sins."<sup>4</sup> Now if you do not obey His command He will reject you; if you return evil for evil He will also revenge Himself on you, and that, too, for eternity.

bidden by  
God.

But, you say, this or that person is always troubling me; am I to put up with that? Must I say nothing about it, and let him do as he likes? I am not a stock or a stone. Nevertheless you must listen to what the Almighty tells you: "I say to you: Love your enemies"; you must treat that person with charity, and not return evil for evil. There are lawful means of getting rid of the annoyance without allowing yourself to be influenced by passion or the desire of revenge; but to seek for satisfaction on your own authority is forbidden by the law of God. But the injury is a most grievous one; he has assaulted me in the presence of others, and publicly; he persecutes me contrary to all right and justice, so that I am obliged to show him that I am not a simpleton! No matter! Be the injury public or private,

No matter  
what ex-  
cuses we  
may al-  
lege.

<sup>1</sup> Nulli malum pro malo reddentes. Non vosmetipsos defendentes, charissimi; sed date locum iræ. Scriptum est enim: Mihi vindicta; ego retribuam, dicit Dominus.—Rom. xii. 17, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ego autem dico vobis: Diligite inimicos vestros.—Matt. v. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Si quis te percusserit in dexteram maxillam, præbe illi et alteram.—Ibid. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Dimittite, si quid habetis adversus aliquem; ut et Pater vester, qui in cœlis est, dimittat vobis peccata vestra. Quod si vos non dimiseritis, nec Pater vester, qui in cœlis est, dimittet vobis peccata vestra.—Mark xi. 25, 26.



great or small, hear what God says to you: "I say to you: Love your enemies"; in spite of all you must love that enemy of yours. But he is known to be a bad character, a mischievous man; he is not worthy of my forgiveness! Be he good or bad, you must be as God wishes to have you: "I say to you: Love your enemies." If the man is unworthy of your kindness, at all events God deserves that you should obey Him. But if I leave this unavenged he will become worse, and torment me still more! Let him do as he pleases; you are not therefore allowed to revenge yourself. "I say to you: Love your enemies." Oh, but that is impossible! What will people think of me? They will look on me as a nincompoop, who has not a word to say for himself! They will make a laughing-stock of me! I cannot forgive; my honor and position will not allow it. What! must your honor suffer if you do not take revenge? Not at all, as I have already shown on another occasion. And if any one tells you that it is honorable to seek revenge you may tell him straight out that he has not an honest, Christian heart, nor a sound, Catholic mind and understanding. It is an honor to do what God requires of you. But for the present I will grant that your honor is concerned in taking revenge; and even then, are you excused from the obligation of obeying the Christian law? If God could and did lay commands on you with the obligation of losing goods and property, and even life itself, rather than transgress one of them, has He not also the power of obliging you to sacrifice your honor and the esteem of the world rather than incur His anger? Is He not Lord of your honor as well as of your life? You say: My honor requires me to take revenge. Granted again; but the honor of God requires you to forgive and to obey Him. Is your honor of more account than His? Must you sacrifice the honor of God for the sake of yours? And do you think such an excuse will serve your turn when you stand before the judgment-seat? My honor was concerned in it, you will say; and He will answer: But Mine was concerned also. I was offended first, you will reply; was that a reason for offending Me? He will answer. I have acted like other men of the world, like other men in my position, among whom I was obliged to live. But was that a reason for not living according to My law? I have acted as any man of honor would before the world. But you have acted like a bad and wicked Christian before the eyes of heaven! Have I not forbidden you plainly enough to seek revenge? You



should have observed this command of Mine: "I say to you: Love your enemies."

But, dearest Lord, with all Thy exhortations Thou canst do nothing with those in whose hearts rancor and hatred have once taken root! (There are many other customs and usages in the world that Thou hast forbidden, and yet men pay no attention to Thee!) Their honor and property have more influence with them than all Thy entreaties and exhortations. The words Thou hast spoken by the Prophet Jeremias are still true, and are daily verified: "Behold, the word of the Lord is become unto them a reproach, and they will not receive it."<sup>1</sup> I am sure that if any person—the woman, the young maiden whom they adore as if she were a goddess, whose least sign they are willing to obey, whose favor they are most anxious to retain—if she, a mere mortal though she be, were to ask them to pardon their enemies, and do them no harm, they would at once grant the request; but Thou mayest beg and entreat, and cry out a hundred times: "I say to you: Love your enemies," and they cannot and will not do what Thou commandest; they must have revenge! What a shame on the name of Christian and Catholic! My dear brethren, I do not believe that among those here present there are any who are guilty in this respect, and therefore I go on to the higher degree of charity that God requires from us; that we must, namely, love our enemies, and return good for evil. This we shall see in the

But few observe this law of God.

### Second Part.

You confess, then, that it is not right to take or seek revenge on him who has injured you; and therefore you are determined not to harm him in any way, nor to show any outward sign of hating him. But is that enough to fulfil completely the divine law? Is that enough for a Christian? If so, then even heathens, Turks, thieves, and robbers, and the most wicked and abandoned of men can be looked on as true Christians so far. Nothing is more common among such people than to hide their feelings, to restrain their wrath, to give each other the hand outwardly, and even to embrace each other, either through worldly politeness, or because they are unable to revenge themselves, or through the hope of some good, or the fear of incurring a greater loss, or

It is not enough not to be revenged on our enemies.

<sup>1</sup> Ecce verbum Domini factum est eis in opprobrium, et non suscipient illud.—Jer. vi. 10.

through respect for those who are in a high position in the world, or through love of friends who advise them to take that course, or for some other human motive. But is this outward pardon the virtue of charity? Do you by it satisfy the requirements of the gospel? Is that the way in which Christ commanded you to forgive?

St. Stephen  
did good  
to them.

Was it in this way alone that St. Stephen showed his love for his enemies who were stoning him? He was not satisfied with merely refraining from returning evil for evil, hatred for hatred; but, according to the teaching of Him whom he publicly confessed, he returned a heartfelt and sincere love for hatred and the evil done him by every benefit it was in his power to confer. He prayed for those who were stoning him: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." What better treasure could he bequeath them than his prayer and the ardent desire of their welfare which he sent up to the throne of God? He prayed on bended knees: "Falling on his knees"; he did not do that for himself, so that it seemed as if the salvation of his enemies was a more important matter in his eyes than his own. He prayed for them in a loud voice: "He cried with a loud voice," that the sincerity of his love might not be doubted. He prayed for them to his last breath: "And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord," that his last sigh might have more influence and efficacy with God. See to what perfection the Christian law binds us! Not only does it forbid all outward attempts at revenge, all hostile actions; not only does it forbid all cursing and detraction with the tongue, but it even prohibits all, even the most secret, movements of the heart in the direction of revenge, and all uncharitable recollections of the injury suffered: "If you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."<sup>1</sup> And that to such an extent that if the bare remembrance of the injury be accompanied with hatred and anger it is enough to keep us from the altar, from the divine sacrifice. But this is not yet enough; for the same prohibition was given to the Jews: "Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens."<sup>2</sup> If you go no farther than merely not hating your enemy, and not seeking revenge on him, you cannot escape the sentence of Christ: "Unless your justice abound more than that

<sup>1</sup> Si non remisistis unusquisque fratri suo de cordibus vestris.—Matt. xviii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Non quæras ultionem, ne memor eris injuriæ civium tuorum.—Lev. xix. 18.

of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

And what more does Christ require of us? "Love your enemies." Hatred must be turned into love. Into what kind of love? Not an ordinary one, but a perfect, beneficent love, which proves itself by works: "Do good to them that hate you;" and if you have not the means nor the opportunity of doing them good, then you must let your prayers take the place of it: "Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."<sup>2</sup> Oh, where can I now find a voice and words powerful enough to declaim against the deceitfulness of the world, and to root out of the hearts of men the errors regarding this point that have been so deeply ingrafted in them! Oh, how many there are who indeed seem to be friends outwardly, and yet have their hearts filled with hatred and rancor! Of those David says: "Who speak peace with their neighbor, but evils are in their hearts."<sup>3</sup> How many there are who do no harm to their neighbor because they cannot or dare not, and meanwhile do not lay aside their bitterness and secret desire of revenge! Thus, although they are not murderers in reality, yet they are so in will and desire, which is just as bad almost in the sight of God. Their rancorous feelings show best how their hearts are disposed with regard to Christian charity and the love of their neighbor. I do not envy him any good fortune, they say; but if they hear of some unusual good luck falling to the lot of those whom they should forgive from their hearts they are ready to burst with envy. I do not wish him any harm, they say of their enemy; but if a misfortune happens him they are full of joy. I do not wish to say any evil of him, they say; but they are pleased to hear others speak ill of him, and make known his faults. I do not hate him, yet I cannot forget the harm he has done me. I am ready to forget the harm, but I do not wish to have anything to do with him. I cannot bear the sight of him; his very presence is enough to upset me; my blood begins to boil; if I meet him anywhere I cannot say a civil word to him; if I am obliged to answer him my gall rises, and I can hardly control myself; and if I endeavor to meet him in a friendly way he must not ex-

After his example, we should love our enemies: few do that.

<sup>1</sup> Nisi abundaverit justitia vestra plus quam scribarum et Phariseorum, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum.—Matt. v. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Benefacite his qui oderunt vos, et orate pro persequentibus et calumniis vobis.—Ibid. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Loquuntur pacem cum proximo suo; mala autem in cordibus eorum.—Ps. xxvii. 3.

pect that when he is in want of me I shall be ready to do him a service. But is that the way to love your enemy, to pardon him, as Christ commands? Say what you like, I still maintain that you do not obey the law of God. The seeds of enmity are still in you; they lie concealed in your heart, like smouldering embers, or, as St. Ephrem says, like burning coals, that are still able to kindle the fire of enmity.

That love is possible.

And if these are not extinguished, if you still adhere to your secret hostility, then you cannot hope that God will forgive you, and therefore you have no claim to eternal happiness. What! you say; that is hard indeed! And dare I not expect heaven unless I have a love and affection for him who hates and tries to injure me? That is not in the power of my free will; the thought of the injury suffered, the displeasure caused me thereby, comes into my mind unbidden; I cannot prevent it; it is impossible. Eh? Take your time and consider the matter leisurely! It is indeed natural to have a dislike to one who has done you harm, and to have that thought in the mind; this happens whether you will or no, and it is not in this that hatred consists, for with that you can still love your enemy truly. But to wish deliberately to entertain this hatred and desire of revenge, without striving against it, and to shun the society of another on account of it; to be troubled at his prosperity, rejoiced at his misfortunes, to refuse without cause, or danger of loss, or difficulty any service, benefit, or prayer that you would otherwise think your friend entitled to—that is a sign of inward hatred, and that is forbidden. Now do you think the law impossible of fulfilment? Why, then, has God so expressly enjoined it on you? Does He wish, nay, can He order you to do an impossibility? Did St. Stephen and so many others do what was beyond their strength? And why should you not do for God's sake what you often do perhaps for human respect? Sometimes, out of worldly prudence, or to avoid losing the favor of some man, you have to swallow many a bitter morsel without a word of complaint or a sign of displeasure; do you say on such occasions: I cannot do it? If in spite of the many reasons you have for giving way to your anger you still bear patiently and with cheerful countenance what is displeasing to you, that you may not make an enemy of this or that one, do you then say: I cannot do it? When for the sake of accomplishing some business or making an agreement you have to forget the past altogether, do you then say: I cannot do it? Why, then,



can you not treat with kindness and love your fancied enemy when the Almighty God wishes you to do so? There is no doubt the matter is easy enough if only you have an earnest will; and you must do it if you wish to please God.

Once for all the words are to be remembered: I say to you: Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. "I," who am thy sovereign Lord; "I," at whose nod the heavens and the earth, the angels and demons, the winds and the elements obey; "I," who hold life and death in My hands; "I," who reward eternally those who obey Me, and reject eternally those who disobey: "I say to you: Love your enemies." Let them treat you as unjustly as they will; be it hard or easy for you; still you must love them, do good to them, pray for them. But, you will say, by way of a last objection, that is a counsel of spiritual perfection, not a command under pain of sin. Is it only a counsel? Why, then, does God utter it so emphatically: "But I say to you"? Does that mean: I beg of you; I recommend you? Does He not in the same place command us in the same words not to swear, not to have the desire of committing adultery, and so forth? These things are certainly not mere counsels, but commands, binding under pain of sin. And if it be only a counsel to love our enemies, and do good to them, why does He add: "For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this?"<sup>1</sup> Is that a mere counsel? Why, then, does He threaten those who disobey with the loss of heaven: "You shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"? And if it were only a counsel, would you even then be unwilling to observe it? Do you not daily pray in the Our Father: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us? Would you be satisfied if God forgave you only in the way in which you forgive, according to your imperfect idea of charity? Oh, wo to you, poor mortal, if Christ only abstains from doing evil to you! And wo to you if He forgives you only in outward show! Wo to you if He persecutes you with an implacable hatred, although He shows it not outwardly! Wo to you if He

And com-  
manded by  
God under  
pain of sin.

<sup>1</sup> Si enim diligitis eos qui vos diligunt, quam mercedem habebitis? Nonne et publicani hoc faciunt? Et si salutaveritis fratres vestros tantum; quid amplius facitis? Nonne et Ethnici hoc faciunt?—Matt. v. 46, 47.



does not love you! Wo to you if He does not good to you! Wo to you if He does not pray to His heavenly Father for you!

Exhortation  
to love our  
enemies.

Come, then, my dear brethren, let us without further hesitation and with blind obedience follow the voice of Christ, and love in outward deed, love sincerely, and from the bottom of the heart, and with all possible meekness and beneficence, such as we are bound to show to others—let us love, I say, even those who cause us trouble, love even those who are our sworn enemies. He, the Lord, has said it, and that should suffice for us. Whatever may happen, let our answer be that of the paralytic man at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. The Pharisees reproached him for having taken up his bed on the Sabbath and walked away with it; what reply did he make them? Nothing but what you, too, should answer: “He that made me whole, He said to me.”<sup>1</sup> Say what you will about the impossibility of doing it: “He said to me.” Love your enemy, therefore, as God has told you to love him; the law of the flesh will offer opposition, and tell you to return evil for evil; your answer must be: “He said to me;” God does not wish me to harbor thoughts of revenge. The law of reason will say that it is enough to return good for good. But no: “He said to me.” The law of the world will cry out that it is enough not to show enmity outwardly, although the poison remains hidden in the heart; your answer must be: “He said to me” the contrary. But most people act otherwise; you must do as they do, and not try to appear wiser than they. No matter: “He said to me” that I must do good to my enemy. You will be laughed at as a coward. No matter: “He said to me.” Your enemy will become more daring. Let him do what he pleases: “He said to me.” Your honor is involved. “He said to me.” It is a hard thing to do. “He said to me.” It is His will, and I must obey.

Conclusion  
and resolve  
to love our  
enemies.

Yes, my sovereign Lord and God, Thou hast said it; Thou, who alone hast to command me, hast laid this law on me; if I had no reward to expect, no punishment to fear from Thee; if I were not in need of Thy grace and pardon—which, alas! is so necessary to me on account of the many sins and offences I have committed against Thee from my youth upwards—Thy mere will and word: “I say to you: Love your enemies,” should be to me reason enough for loving them from my heart; and it should be my greatest glory to obey Thee most humbly in this particular.

<sup>1</sup> Qui me sanum fecit, ille mihi dixit.—John v. 11.

O Lord, I will do so, and do it at once! It will indeed cost me something to overcome myself; I must trample on all my natural inclinations, and tear myself out of myself, as it were, in order to bear patiently with that man who has caused me such annoyance, and to meet with meekness and kindness him who always contradicts and thwarts me; to renounce that revenge, which I might so easily take; to render that service, which he has not deserved from me; to take this step, or speak that word for his sake, or to give him this fresh sign of friendship; to be the first to propose this reconciliation, this mutual agreement; this, I say, appears hard and difficult, and even contrary to my nature; yet, my God, I am ready for it, because it is Thy will! Come all of you who have looked on me as your enemy, or whom I have considered as my foes; come all whom I have hitherto not been able to bear on account of injuries done me; before that God who sees our hearts I forgive you from my heart! Let us all prostrate ourselves at His feet, and bury in eternal oblivion everything we have done to displease each other! Yes, at Thy feet, O Lord, we now lay all the injuries we have hitherto suffered, and that we have still to bear; to Thee do we sacrifice our anger, hatred, desire of revenge as an offering we owe Thee, our sovereign Lord; we will love each other as Thou wishest us, Thy children, to love; that is, sincerely, from our hearts, in all circumstances, in all places, until the end of our lives. Do Thou, O God, help us by Thy grace in this resolution and now earnest will, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. Amen.

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FIFTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON ST. LAWRENCE.

Subject.

1. Lawrence proved himself, while undergoing pains and torments, a prodigy of virtue and of the love of God; 2. Our love of God and our virtue, to be sincere, must be tried by adversity and contradictions.—*Preached on the feast of St. Lawrence.*

Text.

*Tanquam aurum in fornace probavit illos.*—Wis. iii. 6.  
 “As gold in the furnace He hath proved them.”

## Introduction.

What St. Chrysostom said of the great St. Paul I may well apply to-day to him in whose honor we are now assembled here, the great martyr St. Lawrence. "If you wonder at the exploits of Paul when you consider him calling the dead to life, much more do I wonder at him when I behold him manacled and confined in a gloomy prison." Such are the words of the holy Father. And I say in turn: If the city of Rome wondered long ago at the virtue of Lawrence when she beheld him leading a life of chastity in the bloom of youth, giving all his treasures to the poor, fighting so zealously for the glory of God, and restoring the blind to sight by the mere sign of the cross, much more do I wonder at Lawrence lying bound on the glowing coals, and suffering the most atrocious torments. For miracles and exterior works of devotion are not infallible tests of true virtue and holiness; but crosses, sufferings, persecution, adversity—these are the furnace in which God tries the true love of men, like gold in the fire, and makes His saints glorious and admirable before the world, as He has shown in a special manner in Lawrence, and as I, to his honor and glory, now mean to prove in detail.

## Plan of Discourse.

*Lawrence proved himself, while undergoing pains and torments, a prodigy of virtue and of the love of God; the first part of this panegyric. Our virtue and love of God, to be sincere, must be tried and preserved by adversity and contradictions; the second part, for our instruction.*

Give us, O Lord, Thy light and grace, through the intercession of the Queen of angels and martyrs, and of Thy admirable martyr Lawrence, who is now triumphant in glory with Thee! Amen.

It is a rare virtue to bear great pain with joy and desire.

To bear great pain and sorrow without murmuring, readily and patiently, is in itself a sure sign of a no small degree of virtue in a man in this world. To accept great pain and sorrow with thankfulness, to bear it with joy and exultation requires an uncommon and extraordinary virtue from a man in this world. To sigh for still greater pain and sorrow, and to desire and wish for it as a joyous and agreeable thing must indeed be the result of a surprising virtue in a man in this world. How

seldom nowadays do we find, even among Christians, men of the first class, who bear trials with patience and constancy! How very rare to find any of the second class, who rejoice in their trials! And where is there one to be found who may honestly take his place in the third class, as one who longs for more trials?

This feast presents us with a prodigy of the kind in St. Lawrence. No miser ever stretched out his hand for gold, no ambitious man ever strove for the honors of the world, no voluptuary ever longed for pleasures and delights so eagerly as Lawrence longed for and exulted in pains and torments. His eager desires in this direction cannot be expressed fully by any one except himself, or else St. Ambrose, who has handed down to us the following well-known words of his, in which he uttered a bitter complaint to Pope Sixtus: "Where, O father, dost thou go without thy son? Whither, O holy priest, dost thou hasten without a deacon? Thou art wont never to offer sacrifice without a minister; have I displeased thee, father? Hast thou found me unworthy to attend on thee? Now thou art going, and leavest me here! What fault have I committed? Hast thou found anything displeasing or unbecoming in my conduct that thou wilt no longer admit me to be thy companion? Try me and see if I shall not be thy true servant in all places, at all times." Where was Sixtus going, my dear brethren? If he had been setting forth on a party of pleasure or to a banquet, could Lawrence have been more pressing in his entreaties to be taken with him? And to our minds his complaints would have then been more seasonable. But the journey was for a far different purpose; Sixtus was surrounded by fierce soldiers, laden with chains, and was being dragged to the place of public execution, to be beheaded by the sword, as we learn from the Roman Martyrology, or, as Prudentius says, to be hung on a gibbet. This was the aim of the ardent desires of Lawrence; he complained at being excluded from a similar death.

And therefore he ran after the Pope, crying out with tears in his eyes: "Take me with you, O father, and see whether he to whom thou hast entrusted the dispensation of the flesh and blood of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, be not ready to offer up his own flesh and blood for his faith and for God's sake. If thou hast pity on me as thy disciple, then remember that Abraham was prepared to slay even his only son, that Peter sent Stephen to a

St. Lawrence longed eagerly for pain and torment.

And would not be comforted till he obtained them.

most painful death. Do this now with me, too. All the treasures thou hast entrusted to me are already distributed to the poor; I have nothing left but my life; be not so cruel as to prevent me from offering that up to my God." Be of good heart, Lawrence, thy wish will soon be fulfilled! Thy thirst for suffering for the love of Christ will soon be satiated! "Grieve not, my son," was the answer of St. Sixtus to his sighs, "I do not desert thee! Thou shalt follow me after three days; thou hast a greater combat to sustain." What a wonderful consolation! exclaims St. Augustine; who ever heard that a man should comfort and console himself at the thought of coming torments? "He does not say: Do not grieve, my son; the persecution will soon cease, and thy life will be safe; but: Do not grieve; thou shalt come after me where I am going;"<sup>1</sup> the news of his being freed from suffering would rather have saddened him all the more, and therefore the holy Pope said: Grieve not, for greater torments await thee.

He rejoiced  
in suffering.

And so it happened in reality. I do not mean to describe at length the atrocious torments inflicted on him by the Emperor Valerian, nor to dwell on the rods and scourges that tore and wounded his whole body from head to foot; on the hot iron plates that burnt him while he was hanging in mid-air; on the clubs and whips, loaded with lead, wherewith he was so mangled that, as we read in his Life, his flesh looked as if it had been pounded in a mortar; on the cruel rack on which, since all former efforts to make him renounce his faith had proved fruitless, his torn body was stretched out by the hands and feet, and then hacked with hooks and pincers until the flesh fell off his bones in pieces. Reflect on this, my dear brethren; was it not enough to quell the courage of even the bravest hero, and to reduce him to a humble silence? But how was it with Lawrence in his torments? Was his hunger for suffering stilled? Not by any means; what he was suffering seemed to him, as it were, mere rods fit for children, not torments to try the virtue of a true servant of God, whose heart was inflamed with charity. With cheerful mien and smiling face he turned to his tormentors, and actually laughed at them: "He cried out and said: I worship my God, and therefore I do not fear your torments." Do what you wish; do not leave off; if I might beg a favor from you it

<sup>1</sup> Non ait: noli mœrere filii, desinet persecutio et salvus eris; sed noli mœrere, quo ego præcedo, tu sequeris.



would be that you do not spare me, but rather torture this body of mine as long as you can; "I do not fear your torments." Therefore, O tyrant, since such is his wish, grant it; exhaust on him the resources of your cruelty; show what you can do, that he may at last learn to fear you!

Finally the wrathful emperor, to glut his fury, thought of a new species of torture which had never before been heard of, and could only have been imagined in hell itself. This was the gridiron, on which the torn and mangled body of Lawrence was laid, to be slowly roasted to death. The mere imagination of this makes me shudder, although it did not inspire the least sentiment of horror in him who suffered it. What a torment it is, my dear brethren, to burn in fire! What an incomprehensible, terrible torment to be thus roasted in fire! Fire is the greatest, most severe, and searching of all tortures that can be inflicted on man. Steel and iron, rocks and stones are not hard enough to withstand its action. Try how long you can hold your finger in the flame of a candle. Even a drop of heated wax falling on your hand causes great pain, so that you shake it off at once. Yet there is this advantage, that if the pain caused by fire is sharp it cannot be long continued; for its power is too great, its action too violent and penetrating; it destroys the sufferer in a brief space, takes away his life speedily, and so puts an end to his torments.

He was  
roasted  
alive.

But when an inventive cruelty knows how to tame the power of the flames and restrain it, so that it burns indeed the unhappy man, but only slowly, then there are two circumstances to be considered, which make the torment almost intolerable and unconquerable; that is, to have to suffer pain, and to have to suffer it for a long time. Such was the case with Lawrence, that his admirable virtue might be made manifest to the whole world, and proved beyond a doubt. He was not burned at the stake, as is done to poor wretched criminals nowadays when they are burnt alive, and who are smothered by the smoke and flames, and reduced to ashes before they have time to feel the sharpness of the fire. No; far different was the cruelty practised on the servant of Christ; so speedy a death seemed too mild for him. "For," as St. Augustine says of our holy martyr, "he was not slain at once, but was tortured by fire, and compelled to die slowly."<sup>1</sup> And how could it be otherwise? He lay on the gridiron, over

And that by  
a slow fire.

<sup>1</sup> Neque enim occisus est cito; sed cruciatus est igne, et tarde morti compulsus est.

the coals, which burned a long way under him; he had to see his own skin crackling and shrivelling up with the heat, to feel his nerves and sinews drawing together, the marrow in his bones, the blood in his veins, the entrails in his body simmering and boiling and falling in drops on the fire, hissing and spitting when they came in contact with the burning coals; and in the midst of these long-drawn torments he had to feel the slow approach of death that was to put an end to them. My God, what a terrible torment to have to suffer by that slow fire!

No other form of martyrdom can be compared to that.

Heroic martyrs who have suffered so much for the honor of Jesus Christ, I admire your patience under torments when I consider the racks on which you were flayed alive, the ice-cold water in which you were drowned, the arrows and spears with which you were pierced, the swords and axes with which you were beheaded, the crosses and wheels on which you were fixed, the lions and tigers whose teeth mangled and tore you; and I ask myself in amazement: How is it possible for weak flesh and blood in such a frail nature to bear all this so bravely, and to overcome it with patience and joy? Yet forgive me if I say, without the least wish to lessen your glory, that your torments, no matter how glorious your triumph over them was, were only small and trifling compared to what Lawrence had to suffer. Water, arrows, spears, crosses, swords, wheels, lions, tigers were merely the instruments that quickly placed on your heads the crown of martyrdom; the combat lasted only a few minutes; the victory was speedily won; but the fiery bed of Lawrence protracted his combat and pains, so that every moment he had, as it were, to die a new death, and thus to gain, not a single, but a manifold victory. For, as St. Cyprian says: "He conquers but once who suffers quickly,"<sup>1</sup> and by a speedy death soon puts an end to his torments, while he who has to sustain long and severe pains wins many crowns.

Even that he bore cheerfully and laughingly.

And what dost thou say now, O great Saint, on thy bed of torture? Is thy courage quelled at last? Hast thou not yet begun to moan, to sigh, to scream, and beg for mercy? for the mere sight of thy scorched and roasted body should of itself move the hearts of thy tormentors. Hear his cries to the tyrant; they were nothing but the laughter with which he mocked him: "I am roasted on the one side; turn me over and eat!" and still your cruel thirst for blood. Turn me over, so that

<sup>1</sup> Semel vincit, qui statim patitur.

the other side may be roasted too! See what I care for thy fire: "Learn, wretched man, that thy coals seem to me a refreshment," although you think you are torturing me by them! Hear his sighs to heaven, which were nothing but sheer songs of joy and thanksgiving for the grace the good God had bestowed on him in thus allowing him to suffer for the glory of His name: "I thank Thee, O Lord, that I have merited to enter Thy gates." Eternal praise to Thee, since by these coals Thou hast deigned to prepare the way for me to enter into everlasting joys. "Receive, O Lord, this sacrifice in the odor of sweetness." What I am, what I have I have received from Thee; behold, it is all now to be consumed in this fire for Thy honor and glory! Who is it who speaks thus, my dear brethren? Is it an angel without feeling and senses, or a mortal man with sensitive flesh? Or is it a man who has lost all feeling? Oh, no! Well could he have said, with Job: "My strength is not the strength of stones, nor is my flesh of brass."<sup>1</sup> Truly, he felt the pain; but, as St. Ambrose says, the inward flame of the love of God burned his soul with a greater desire of suffering more than the material flame consumed his flesh.<sup>2</sup> The inward joy that came from that divine fire of love caused him to find only pleasure in the outward flames, and to congratulate himself on being allowed to be thus burned and tormented. And hence St. Augustine says: "In comparison with the flame that consumed his heart, the material flame of the persecutors seemed cold."<sup>3</sup> Truly, Lawrence, thou art a prodigy of virtue! And if thou hadst given no other proof of it, the fire alone would have sufficed. But the more glorious thy victory over pains and torments, the more we are put to shame by it. We shall consider this, my dear brethren, in the

### Second Part.

Our virtue must be proved by fire—by the fire of the crosses and trials of this life—to see whether it be a true virtue, a true love of God. "The furnace trieth the potter's vessels," says the Holy Ghost by Ecclesiasticus, "and the trial of affliction just men."<sup>4</sup> Such was the beautiful answer given by that hero-

Our virtue and love of God must be tried in the fire of tribulation.

<sup>1</sup> Nec fortitudo lapidum fortitudo mea, nec caro mea ænea est.—Job vi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ardebat extrinsecus martyr tyranni sævientis incenditis; sed major illum intrinsecus Christi amoris flamma torquebat.—S. Amb. in Luc. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> In comparatione fervoris quo pectus ejus ardebat, exterior persecutorum flamma frigeat.—S. Aug. Serm. 37. de Diversit.

<sup>4</sup> Vasa figuli probat fornax, et homines justos tentatio tribulationis.—Ecclus. xxvii. 6.

ic champion of the faith, Minucius Felix, to the infidel heathens and idolaters of his time, when they upbraided him with the many hardships and cruel persecutions that the Christians had to suffer everywhere. Their idea was that the God of the Christians had no power or strength, since He could not help His servants, or no mercy, since He did not wish to help them. Truly, you are altogether in the wrong, said he: "The God whom we adore is wanting neither in the power nor the will to help us." But how does He act? "He tries us all by adversity; He examines our hearts; He looks into the nature of the life of each one."<sup>1</sup> By what means? By adversity; by sending us trials, crosses, and contradictions; by depriving us of worldly goods; by weakness and sickness and other calamities; as if the Lord wished to say to each just man: Show what you are; let Me see what you can do; hitherto I have not been able to form a right idea of your worth; I must learn from yourself how I am to value you. As long as everything prospered with you, and you lived in peace, plenty, and pleasure, you said to Me a thousand times that you wished to serve Me, to love Me, to be and to remain Mine; but I may not trust too much to these bare words of yours; in prosperity you yourself cannot say whether you love Me or yourself most; whether you do not serve Me more for My gifts than for Myself; whether you are not still a mere child in virtue, that must be fed with milk, or a man who can digest solid food. But now when I send you the bitterness of life to taste, now in sickness, in poverty, in misfortune, in that loss occasioned by death, in that trouble that I have prepared for you; now that you think all the evils of the world are pressing on your shoulders, now is the time in which you can give Me the surest proof of your faithfulness and love. If while you are in that state I see that you are as constant as ever in My service; if I hear you praying daily with as much fervor as before; if you appear before My altar to praise, adore, and thank Me as before—then I will believe you without hesitation, and will know for certain that you mean honestly by Me; then I will know that you have a true love and sincere virtue. "He scrutinizes the life of man." Thus it is by adversity that God sees what we are made of.

Just as the  
virtue of  
Oct 725.

And truly, my dear brethren, what opinion should we form of the bravery of the soldier who always boasts of his valor, and

<sup>1</sup> Deus ille noster, quem colimus, nec non potest subvenire, nec despicit; in adversis unquamque explorat, vitam hominis sciscitatur.

yet is never seen facing the enemy outside the walls of the fortress? What great merit is there in being virtuous if the virtue is not subject to any opposition? How can any one prove his strength if there is no enemy to overcome? Is there any great merit in being meek if no one opposes you? in being patient when you have nothing to suffer? in praising and thanking God when He gives you all you can wish for, and heaps good things into your hands? If a man of that kind tried to boast to me of his virtue and piety I would give him the same answer that Satan gave to the Lord in a contemptuous manner about Job. Thou speakest to me wonders of the virtue of Thy servant Job; he fears and loves and honors Thee, that is true indeed; but is there anything to wonder at therein? "Hast Thou not made a fence for him and his house, and all his substance round about, and blessed the works of his hands, and his possession hath increased on the earth?" Thou showest him nothing but favor and grace: "Doth Job fear God in vain?" Not without reason does he honor, fear, and love Thee; he is a hypocrite, who deceives Thee; he is a mercenary, who serves Thee for a daily wage; Thou canst find thousands like him in the world, who will praise and serve Thee at the same rate. But show Thyself otherwise to him; turn Thy back on him for a time, and then Thou wilt no longer have reason to praise him: "Stretch forth Thy hand a little, and touch all that he hath;" take the rod in Thy hand, and let him feel the weight of it; strike boldly, and then Thou shalt see what becomes of his virtue: "And see if he blesseth Thee not to Thy face."<sup>1</sup> Then he will show whether his service was only an outward one or not. So that not even the foul spirit would believe in the reality of the virtue of Job, although there was none like him on earth, unless it was first tried in the furnace of tribulation, and that, too, by the severe trials that he afterwards showed such patience in bearing. Job's love of God and his virtue, says St. Chrysostom, did not shine so brightly when he was opening his palace gates to receive strangers and the poor as when he saw all his houses and possessions destroyed, and still remained constant in his love of God; it was not so evident when he daily offered sacrifice to God for his children as when he sought for their bodies under the ruins of their homes,

<sup>1</sup> Nonne tu vallasti eum, ac domum ejus universamque substantiam per circuitum; operibus manuum ejus benedixisti, et possessio ejus crevit in terram? Numquid Job frustra timet Deum? Extende paululum manum tuam, et tange cuncta quæ possidet; nisi in faciem benedixerit tibi.—Job i. 10, 9, <sup>11</sup>.



and with patient, quiet content, and praising God, committed them to earth; his merits were not so clear when he was an eye to the blind, a foot to the lame, a refuge of the afflicted, a protector of the innocent as when, suffering the most violent pain, robbed of everything, abandoned by all, poor, naked, and needy, overrun with sores and ulcers, and seated on the dunghill, he raised his eyes to heaven, and said: Blessed be the name of the Lord. Then the devil, in spite of his hatred and envy, was forced against his will to acknowledge that Job was justly praised, that the Lord had reason to extol the sanctity of His servant, and he had to confess with shame that he was indeed a holy and virtuous man. Truly, then, it is necessary that the gold of the love of God be tried, proved, and verified in the furnace of tribulation.

We may  
not endure  
a severe  
martyrdom.

From this, my dear brethren, we may see of what kind is our virtue and love of God, and whether our heart is of lead or gold in His sight. Are we in the same dispositions as St. Lawrence, whose feast we celebrate to-day? Are we, too, prepared to shed our blood, to give our lives for Christ? Do we find in us a desire to suffer more and more for His sake, and to bear even a part of the torments in which Lawrence so joyfully conquered? Alas, I must not press that question; the bare thought of such sufferings makes me shudder. Eternal thanks and praise be to Thee, O God of mercy, that Thou hast changed the times now, and that the persecution of Thy Church has come to an end in this land; that there is no Valerian to torture us for our faith! For if he came amongst us, and treated us as he did the martyrs long ago, we have great reason to fear that many of us Christians would renounce our faith through terror. For how could they bear to give up all they have for the sake of the faith who can hardly bring themselves to give an alms to a poor man? How could they undertake any such thing who knowingly possess the property of others, which they have acquired by unjust means? How could they deliver up their bodies to the rods, the scorpions, the loaded clubs, the iron hooks, to be flayed and torn, who pamper their weak and luxurious flesh until they cannot bear the prick of a needle; to whom a fast-day, early rising, an hour's kneeling in the church seems difficult? How could they bear to writhe and twist on a glowing gridiron whom a hard or an ill-made bed robs of sleep? How could they rejoice in suffering, and sigh and long for greater pains, who fear the cross as if it

were the foul fiend himself, who moan and murmur in the least pain, who curse and swear and storm at the least contradiction? Eternal thanks and praise be again to Thee, O God of goodness, that Thou hast not exposed us to such grievous temptations, to which many of us would succumb, under which many of us would become renegades instead of martyrs!

Oh, no! we do not want any Valerian or Diocletian to come against us with fire and sword, with glowing gridirons, and similar instruments of torture, to prove our faith, our virtue, our love of God! Of sorrow, trouble, pain, and difficulties we find more than enough daily, more than we wish for, indeed, to prove our virtue, if we only bore them with patience and resignation for Thy sake! We have opportunities enough to mortify our eyes, ears, tongue, senses, and inclinations every hour and moment; but even this is often too much of a martyrdom for us, and our dread of that mortification, without any tyrant to compel us, is frequently enough to deter us from keeping the commandments of God. A slight chagrin, a word of opposition is often all that is required to upset our patience, to turn it into anger and discontent! O great martyr St. Lawrence, what a vast difference there is between thy virtue and love of God and ours! Good reason have we to mingle our tears with thy praises when we think that what has served for thy undying renown only puts us to greater shame, since we who admire thy exalted virtue find so little of it in ourselves!

For we cannot bear patiently slight contradictions: a sign of a weak virtue.

What remains for us, my dear brethren, but to humbly acknowledge that we are still far from true devotion and from the virtues of the saints, and to resolve to follow them in some degree, at least, making this earnest resolution: If I find no desire in myself to suffer much for God's sake, as St. Lawrence had; if I am not so far advanced in virtue as to fervently pray to God for pains and crosses, in order to prove my love for Him, then at least I will bear for His sake whatever crosses, trials, and difficulties occur daily in my state and profession, and whatever may in future be ordained for me. If my love of God is not so strong as to enable me to bear with spiritual joy and gladness the contradictions that I must suffer and cannot avoid, then at least I will bear them with patience, resignation to the will of God, and with a good intention. If my corrupt nature now and then shows signs of murmuring and obstinacy, against my natural will I shall always think: Blessed be the name of the Lord; and I

Conclusion and resolution to bear our daily trials with patience for God's sake.

shall say, with the Prophet David: "Prove me, O Lord, and try me."<sup>1</sup> Only continue to preserve me with the proofs with which Thou art wont to try Thy elect; that is, with crosses and trials. But grant me patience at the same time, that I may one day make a worthy appearance in that place where the gold Thou hast here tried in the furnace will shine forever. Help us herein, holy St. Lawrence. Amen.

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FIFTY-FIFTH SERMON.

ON ST. SEBASTIAN, THE HEALER OF ALL DISEASES.

Subject.

St. Sebastian is a general and wonder-working physician for all diseases, therefore there is just reason for holding him in high honor.—*Preached on the feast of St. Sebastian.*

Text.

*Virtus de illo exibat, et sanabat omnes.*—Luke vi. 19.  
 "Virtue went out from Him, and healed all."

Introduction.

The words of my text are indeed applied by the Evangelist to Christ, Our Lord, who, while on this earth, was constantly surrounded by a crowd of sick and infirm persons, whose diseases He healed; yet the same words may with truth be used of some of the saints, as Our Lord Himself said of His servants in the Gospel of St. John: "Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in Me, the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do."<sup>2</sup> My dear brethren, among all the saints who are renowned for their power of healing, I dare say, without hesitation, that the most illustrious and greatest is he whose feast we celebrate to-day, namely, the holy martyr St. Sebastian. Not without reason has the Church appointed to be read on this day that part of the gospel which says: "All the multitude sought to touch Him; for virtue went out from Him, and healed all." All the world knows the power of St. Sebastian's intercession in the case of pestilence, and I need dwell no longer on

<sup>1</sup> Proba me, Domine, et tenta me.—Ps. xxv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Amen, amen dico vobis, qui credit in me, opera quæ ego facio, et ipse faciet, et majora horum faciet.—John xiv. 12.

an explanation of it. But his power is not confined to this; he healed all. I may call him a helper and physician in all imaginable maladies, no matter what their names may be, as I now proceed to show.

### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Sebastian is a general and wonder-working physician for all diseases, therefore there is just reason for holding him in high honor. Such is the subject of this sermon, to the eternal praise of this Saint, and to encourage and increase our devotion and confidence in the confraternity dedicated to his name.*

Let us ask this grace from him, and expect it through the hands of Mary and of the holy angels.

Of all the goods of this world, there is none better and more desirable, none that we seek so eagerly, none that we long for and desire more than health. Nor are we wrong in this. For of what good is it to me to be rich, and, as it were, buried in gold up to the ears, if I am sick and cannot enjoy my wealth? Of what good is it to me to be a great lord, to rule over lands and people, if I am blind, deaf, lame, deformed, and dare not show myself in public? What use can I make of the most delicate food, the most agreeable company, the most pleasant conversation, if my body is writhing in pain, if sickness gives me a disgust for everything? No; a healthy man with his piece of dry bread is far better off, and leads a far more pleasant life, than a sick man seated at a royal table groaning under the costliest viands. In a word, in this mortal life health is more valuable than anything else.

And hence men are always so careful about their health. How cautious people are about entering a house in which there is some one suffering from a contagious disease! No one will go near the place, unless compelled by necessity, for fear of inhaling the poisoned air, and bringing away the sickness with him. How many people are afraid even to go to church, or to venture outside the door in the raw, wintry air, lest they should catch cold or catarrh! How many seek for a dispensation in Lent, that they may be allowed to eat meat, lest fish should upset their stomachs and make them ill! And it is when health begins to fail that we know what a great treasure we possessed. And then what complaints, moans, and sighs are indulged in! Nothing is heard but:

Health is the best wealth.

And we are ready to sacrifice all else for its sake.

Oh, I wish I were strong again! No money is spared, no matter how hard to come at, to buy medicines in the hope of their contributing to the restoration of health. Then we learn to depend on the doctor, to desire and beg of him to come and see us, to honor and love him, even though we may have never seen or thought of him before. Nay, we often send for a doctor to a far-off land. And how uneasy we are till he comes, how anxious for his arrival, that we may explain our case! No matter of what standing the doctor may be, noble or plebeian, if he only knows his business and can help he is the best friend we have, and if he gives us hope of a speedy recovery, although there may be no truth in what he says, we already feel consoled and rejoiced, as if everything were right again. If the sick man finds himself somewhat better after the medicine, oh, what confidence he has in the doctor, what a love he feels for him! No medicine is too bitter or insipid for him to take, in spite of any natural disgust he may experience. He does not refuse to be bled, to suffer hunger, to be cut and scarified, to be cauterized even, if necessary; he is ready for all, and even thanks and pays richly the doctor who caused him the pain. Why? Because he wishes to regain his health.

Hence  
physicians  
are held in  
high es-  
teem.

And if the patient recovers fully from a grievous and dangerous illness, what honor and praise are given to the doctor whose skill brought about the happy result, although he has already been paid for his work! The patient is bound in honor never to forget the benefit as long as he lives; and whenever he mentions the doctor's name it is always with the most profound thankfulness; that, he will say, is the man who cured me and saved me from the jaws of death; to him, under God, I owe my life and health. Even those who have never been ill are wont to hold in high honor and esteem one whom they know by experience to be very successful in his cures; and the city or community that can count such a man among its inhabitants may think itself lucky. Why so, for healthy people are not in want of a doctor? True, but any one may get sick, and if that happens people can comfort themselves with the thought that help will not be wanting them in their necessity. This is the meaning of the exhortation of the Wise Man: "Honor the physician for the need thou hast of him,"<sup>1</sup> for the time may come when you will be in want of his services.

<sup>1</sup> Honora medicum propter necessitatem.—Ecclus. xxxviii. 1.



Now, my dear brethren, if there were in the world a doctor who knew a sure remedy for all diseases, who could heal all the afflicted, even the most desperate cases, at once, and without putting them to any pain, what a great reputation would he not enjoy! What crowds of people would not come to him from all parts! And how would it be if one could address him easily in any place? How, if he consented to perform his cures without money or reward, and solely at the humble petition of those in need of his aid? Would not such a man be almost idolized? Would not every one try to be his friend? But to no purpose should we look for a man of that kind among mortals on earth; nowhere in the world is such an experienced, kind, and generous physician to be found. We must look for him in heaven. And, you think, it is God who can best cure in that manner. Truly, there is no doubt of that; but He does not do everything that He can do immediately and by Himself; His will is to make His servants illustrious before the world by endowing them with the power of working such miraculous cures.

If there were one who could at once cure all diseases, he would be specially honored.

Among all the saints who are renowned for the grace of healing, the most admirable and illustrious is St. Sebastian; he is the doctor whom I have described. Nor can I prove this in any other way than by referring to the many wonderful cures wrought by him on different occasions, just as we show the skill of a clever physician by our knowledge of his success in his profession. Come, now, all of ye on whom St. Sebastian has laid his healing hand, give testimony and show in what he has helped you! But still, why do I appeal to all whom he has assisted? It would require the whole day, nay, a whole year to hear them all; so that we must take their depositions by a thousand at a time. How many souls were numbered in the city of Rome in the year 680? How many in the year 1381 in the cities of Prague in Bohemia, Vienna in Austria, Breslau in Schleswig, Raab in Hungary? How many in the year 1466 in Paris; in the year 1500 in Milan; in the year 1000 and 1002 in almost the whole of Europe? For so many witnesses have we who, if they could rise from their graves, would acknowledge that they were then healed of or preserved from the plague by the intercession and help of St. Sebastian. In the year 826, when his relics were carried through Piacenza and brought to Soissons, in these places alone so many were healed by merely honoring the sacred remains that the number of them could not possibly be counted; so we read in his Life in the Bol-

Such is St. Sebastian: shown by examples.

landists:<sup>1</sup> “But the different manners of cures operated, and their circumstances would seem incredible, unless to those who know that nothing is impossible to the divine will.”<sup>2</sup> The fields round about were on one side filled with the sick, and on the other with those who, having been made whole, were returning to their homes.

He has  
cured blind-  
ness.

Let us now, my dear brethren, take one or other kind of infirmity, and let them be such as are looked on as incurable or most difficult to cure, such as Our Lord has reserved the healing of to Himself, or to a few of His saints, and which are therefore called evangelical diseases. One of these, according to the testimony of physicians, is incurable. And that is blindness from birth. “From the beginning of the world it hath not been heard that any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind,”<sup>3</sup> such were the words of the blind man in the Gospel of St. John when his eyes were opened by Our Lord; and he concluded that the man who restored him to sight must be from God. In former times, to be cured of an infirmity of the kind it was merely necessary to enter a church dedicated to St. Sebastian, or to honor with confidence a cloth that had touched his relics. Amongst other innumerable cases of the kind, there was a child in the neighborhood of Piacenza who was born blind; its parents had placed it for a whole night before the altar in a church; in the morning, when the procession of the relics of the Saint was passing by, accompanied by a vast crowd of people, the child heard the noise, and crawling and groping its way as well as it could, it managed to reach the shrine and to touch it. In a moment its eyes were opened, and it cried out in a loud voice: He who is in the coffin has cured me! Now I can see who have never seen in my life before! After this child came five blind men and women, who were also healed by the intercession of the Saint.

Deafness,  
dumbness,  
lameness.

Dumbness and deafness are also reckoned among the evangelical diseases; Sebastian is the physician for them, too. One instance alone, since time does not suffer me to bring forward more, must suffice as a proof of this. A man of the common people was at the same time deaf, dumb, and lame; for three

<sup>1</sup> Tanta virtutum vis in omni genere sanitarum in nomine ejusdem beatissimi martyris emicuit, ut multitudo numeros excedat.

<sup>2</sup> Porro qualitas fidem superat, nisi eis auribus credatur, quibus persuasum est, nihil repugnare divinæ jussioni.

<sup>3</sup> A sæculo non est auditum, quia quis aperuit oculos cæci nati.—John ix. 32.

days consecutively he had sat at the grave of St. Sebastian, and commended himself to him with great confidence; on the fourth day he suddenly recovered the use of ears, tongue, and limbs, and praised his benefactor with public rendering of thanks. Of the pool at Bethsaida the Evangelist St. John says, that at it "lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the moving of the water."<sup>1</sup> I imagine I see a pool of the kind whenever I behold an altar or church in which relics of St. Sebastian are honored, but with this difference, that at the pool of Bethsaida only one was healed at a time after the angel had come and stirred the water, while hardly one who has confidence in him goes away from the altar of our Saint without relief. A woman who was so deformed that her chin almost touched her knees had hardly set foot in the church when, in the presence of all the people, she suddenly stood up straight, and walked as if nothing had ever been the matter with her. Immediately afterwards the same beneficent power was experienced by a man whose legs were bent and crooked in the form of a cross; by a girl who had been a cripple in both legs from childhood; by another whose hands and feet were withered, and in the space of an hour eight persons similarly deformed were healed in an instant, and enabled to walk straight.

What happened to the woman in the gospel who was cured by touching the hem of Our Lord's garment occurred to another woman who implored the intercession of St. Sebastian. "There was a certain woman," says St. Luke, "having an issue of blood twelve years, who had bestowed all her substance on physicians, and could not be healed by any."<sup>2</sup> She approached Our Lord, and touched the hem of His garment, and was at once made whole. We read in the life of St. Sebastian that a woman similarly affected for eight years unceasingly, so that she had no longer any strength left, stood at the door of the church, for she dared not enter, and there sent forth her prayers to the Saint; and behold, within an hour she was completely cured.

We know from the gospel how the evil spirits howled and raged in the bodies of the possessed when they saw Our Lord approaching, for they knew well that He had the power to expel them.

Those who suffered from an issue of blood.

The possessed and the insane.

<sup>1</sup> *Jacebat multitudo magna languentium, cœcorum, claudorum, aridorum, expectantium aquæ motum.*—John v. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Mulier quedam erat, in fluxu sanguinis ab annis duodecim, quæ in medicos erogaverat omnem substantiam suam, nec ab ullo potuit curari.*—Luke viii. 43.

Similar cries were heard on all sides from the demons in the bodies of possessed persons, and from evil spirits in houses, when the relics of our Saint were brought there or carried past; for the demons cannot resist that Saint, and are compelled to give way to him. Although Our Lord cured all kinds of diseases, we do not read of His having restored any insane person to the use of reason; that He did afterwards by His servant Sebastian. Amongst other cases recorded in his Life, there was a poor, wretched, unhappy woman who was totally deprived of reason, and like a dumb beast; she used to run mad and raving through the streets, and could hardly be restrained by chains and ropes. Her friends, sadly troubled about her miserable condition, brought her by force to the church of St. Sebastian, and begged and prayed of him to take pity on her. Nor were their prayers in vain. Not only did she recover the use of reason, but ever after was remarkable for her sound sense and prudence.

And all  
other kinds  
of disease.

I must cut my sermon short, and say nothing of the lepers, of those suffering from different other diseases, of the sick whose bodies were already half putrid and dead, who, with little trouble to themselves, were cured by St. Sebastian. Of those whom I have mentioned, not one, but twenty at a time were healed, as it were, at the same moment; so that in one day, at the same place, sometimes twenty-two, sometimes more blind, deaf, dumb, lame, possessed, paralytic, and lepers were made whole; in one evening, as the Emperor Louis saw with his own eyes at Soissons, eighteen were counted who recovered their sight; and one thousand one hundred and seventeen miraculous cures were reckoned to have occurred in that town alone through the intercession of our Saint. Do not imagine, my dear brethren, that I am saying this without due authority; if you doubt my words you can read all about it for yourselves in the Bollandists' Life of the Saint. There you will find far more examples and in greater detail than time will suffer me to dwell on to-day. And who can count all the wonderful cures performed by this heavenly physician in latter times down to the present day? For, as I have often said, there is hardly a town in Christendom in which there is not to be found an altar or an image of this Saint set up as a token of gratitude for help already received, or as a sign of his present protection against sickness. St. Ambrose, in his day, experienced another sort of cure worked by this Saint, namely, the

being preserved from a sudden and unprovided death.<sup>1</sup> Whenever a thunder-storm came on, or severe weather threatened, St. Thomas of Aquin used to go down on his knees, and say: "Through the merits of St. Sebastian, deliver us, O Lord!"<sup>2</sup> What I should now think and say I know not, unless to cry out to Thee, O God, in wonder and admiration, with Thy Prophet David: "God is wonderful in His saints."<sup>3</sup> If there were no other proof of the Catholic faith but that given by the miracles of St. Sebastian, they alone would be enough to convince me that that religion comes from God, and therefore cannot be false.

See now, my dear brethren, and you especially, sodalists of this confraternity, what a great, excellent, useful, salutary, and wonderful holy patron you honor on this altar! Mark with what good reason the members of the sodality assemble here every Wednesday to hear holy Mass in honor of their protector, and learn, too, why you should in future come in still greater numbers and with greater zeal to do him honor. There are still diseases and sicknesses enough for which we require help. There are at all events dangerous diseases still, which should induce us to hold in high honor such an excellent physician. But, you think perhaps, in former times St. Sebastian used to work cures of the kind; now we hear little of them. What! Are we to believe that the power of this Saint has decreased? He who healed so many thousands of all classes, who saved so many cities and countries from ruin—is he now unable to help those who in similar difficulties implore his aid? No! What the Prophet Isaias said of the Lord I may now say of St. Sebastian: "The hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."<sup>4</sup> We do not nowadays see so many striking miracles; that I grant, and may I venture to assign the reason for it, as it seems to me? Either the devotion and honor we show this Saint has grown cold, or we have not as much confidence in him as people had in olden times; and it is to this confidence especially that the Lord has promised His extraordinary help. If you desire any favors, He says, "believe that you

We have reason, then, to honor him, for he has the same power still.

<sup>1</sup> A morte subitanea et improvisa, meritis et precibus Sancti Sebastiani confidimus liberari.

<sup>2</sup> Per merita Sancti Sebastiani, libera nos, Domine!

<sup>3</sup> Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis.—Ps. lxxvii. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Non est abbreviata manus Domini, ut salvare nequeat; neque aggravata est auris ejus, ut non exaudiat.—Is. lix. 1.



shall receive, and they shall come unto you.”<sup>1</sup> “Thy faith hath made thee whole,”<sup>2</sup> was Our Lord’s usual expression when He healed the sick. If we had a strong faith, a lively confidence, we also should be heard, provided that good health and strength were not prejudicial to our salvation.

It should suffice for us to have been saved by him from pestilence.

And is it not a great blessing that city and country have been preserved so long from pestilence? The ancient Romans, as Giraldus writes, used every year to hold a solemn feast on the Quirinal hill to obtain good health; and here we must remark that they never implored the help of their false gods during a pestilence, but only when it began to decrease or had fully ceased. I will not stop to examine what their motive was in this. This we all know from the true gospel, that Our Lord warns us: “Make unto you friends.” When? At what time? When we are actually in need of them? No, long before; “that when you shall fail they may receive you.”<sup>3</sup> He deserves neither friendship nor help who puts off appealing for it until he is forced by necessity.

Hence we should not honor him the less because we are not in actual want of his help: shown by an example.

I at all events would not advise any one to think little of devotion to St. Sebastian, either because he is not now in want of that Saint’s help, or because he has seen no miracle worked by him. I will show this by an example: About the year 826, in the neighborhood of Soissons, there was a peasant who, as we read in the Bollandists, yoked his oxen on a day held sacred in honor of St. Sebastian by the people, and went into the field to work. One of his neighbors met him, and said: Where are you going? Do you not know that this is a holy day? Go back at once, and go to church with the others to honor St. Sebastian on his feast day. What! replied the peasant; we are not obliged to keep the feast; I must earn my bread by my work; I owe the Saint nothing; he has never done good or evil to me; and he went on with his oxen. But it was not long before he repented! That same night, as he was about to fall asleep, he was seized with such a violent pain that every member of his body seemed to be torn asunder; his limbs were drawn up in agony, and his whole body racked with pain; and as a punishment of his irreverence his mouth was drawn together in the form of a cross, so that he was a lamentable sight to witness. In this miserable

<sup>1</sup> *Credite quia accipietis, et evenient vobis.*—Mark xi. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Fides tua te salvam fecit.*—Luke viii. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Facite vobis amicos; ut cum defeceritis, recipiant vos.*—Ibid. xvi. 9.

condition he lay for three days, doing nothing but shouting and crying for mercy, and acknowledging his guilt. On the third night, while he was still howling, he saw a beautiful man, surrounded with light, standing before him, who asked him the cause of his sufferings, and whether he was minded to amend in future. Oh, yes! replied the wretched man; for the remainder of my life I will honor St. Sebastian, and never profane his feast day again. Get up, then, said the other, and go at once to the church, thank the Saint for having restored you to health, and tell the people publicly what has happened to you. At these words the man's body, that had been rolled together like a ball, was straightened out again and resumed its former appearance; full of health and strength, he ran to the church and told the people what had happened him, and exhorted them to hold that great Saint in special honor. Thus does the admirable servant of God know how to punish those who despise him! And thus, too, does that compassionate physician know how to heal when the fault is repented of, and to turn sorrow into joy!

Let us learn from this, my dear brethren, how God wishes us to honor and esteem this holy friend of His, and at the same time to continue with renewed zeal the devotion we show him in this confraternity, attending its meetings regularly every week, and endeavoring to spread it more and more. If we are now healthy, and do not want the Saint's help, we have still reason enough for honoring him, and making a friend of him, for the time may come when it will please God to chastise us with a private or public calamity. And if we have no other request to make of him, let us at least beg of him to preserve us from the worst of all maladies, namely, from sin, the malady of the soul. And this is what we beg of thee, O great and wonderful Saint, and what we, assembled before thy altar, shall beg of thee every week; take, as thou hast hitherto done—take this city and land of ours under thy powerful protection, but especially obtain from the Almighty, by thy intercession, that the souls of the inhabitants may be kept in the state of sanctifying grace; that we may always, till the end of our lives, serve uprightly, with pure hearts, the God who has done so many wonderful things by thee, that we may carefully avoid all sin and vice, and so one day be worthy to praise Him with thee in eternity. Amen.

Exhortation  
and resolution  
to honor  
him devoutly.

## FIFTY-SIXTH SERMON.

## ON ST. SEBASTIAN AS A PROTECTOR AGAINST THE PLAGUE

## Subject.

St. Sebastian was always surrounded by the plague, but was never touched by it.—*Preached on the feast of St. Sebastian, Martyr.*

## Text.

*In cathedra pestilentiae non sedit.*—Ps. i. 1.  
“Nor sat in the chair of pestilence.”

## Introduction.

What is the reason that of all the saints of God and intercessors in heaven St. Sebastian is especially appealed to and honored as a patron and protector against pestilence? If I could take in the whole world at a glance, I should need but one look to be able to say with truth: The whole Christian world honors and praises St. Sebastian. Most countries of Europe seem to have vied with each other to obtain a portion of his relics. The chief cities, such as Malaga, Seville, Compostella in Spain; Rome, Milan, Capua in Italy; Paris, Soissons, Toulouse, and countless other places in France; Antwerp, Brussels, Dornick, Utrecht in the Netherlands; Munich, Ebersberg, Brunswick, Wesel, Cologne in Germany, and this ancient city of ours, Treves, boast of possessing a part of his relics, which they regard as an invaluable treasure. In most parts of Christendom, as the Bollandists say, this day is held as a feast, and not profaned by servile works. Nay, there is hardly a Catholic town in the world in which there is not a church, an altar, a chapel, or an image dedicated to St. Sebastian, and placed as a sign of public devotion, either through gratitude for having been freed from pestilence through his intercession, or through a devout confidence of future help from him if required. Whence, I ask, comes this so general devotion to and trust in this Saint? Some attribute the reason to his martyrdom, and say that God has appointed him as a special patron against the plague because he was shot through with arrows, and, generally speaking, in the Holy Scriptures by arrows are understood pestilences and contagious diseases, according to the

threat uttered by the Lord: "Except you will be converted, He will brandish His sword; He hath bent His bow, and made it ready, and in it He hath prepared the instruments of death; He hath made ready His arrows for them that burn."<sup>1</sup> My dear brethren, when I consider the life of St. Sebastian I seem to behold that wonderful man whom David praises so highly, and calls blessed, in the first psalm: "Blessed is the man who hath not sat in the chair of pestilence." Blessed is the man who, though always in the very midst of the plague, yet was never affected by it, so that now he is able to save others from it even after his own death. This is what I now mean to show in this brief panegyric, to his honor and for the increase of the confraternity established under his patronage.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Sebastian was always surrounded by the plague, but was never harmed by it; such is the whole subject.*

O God, who art wonderful in Thy saints, while we admire Thy great servant Sebastian, strengthen us with Thy grace, that we may imitate him as far as we can, and keep ourselves unharmed by any plague, especially that most dangerous plague of the soul! This we ask of Thee through the intercession of St. Sebastian, and through that of Mary, the Queen of martyrs, and of all the holy angels. Amen.

To touch pitch and not be defiled; to live in the midst of sin, and yet remain free from sin, on the one hand, and on the other, to live in the midst of a pestilence, and not be harmed by it, are both wonderful things. And, according to the words of my text, the Prophet does not make any distinction between them: "Blessed is the man," he says, "who hath not walked in the council of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence." For as the plague, once it has fixed itself anywhere, poisons the surrounding air which is breathed by those who trust themselves too close to it, so that in the time of pestilence houses are generally closed, and those who have already caught the sickness are, as it were, buried alive, and not allowed to hold any communication with others, so we learn by sad experience that the wicked, especially when by their numbers they have no punishment to fear in a community, nor shame to deter

There is great danger of defilement in the company of the wicked.

<sup>1</sup> Nisi conversi fueritis, gladium suum vibrabit; arcum suum tetendit et paravit illum. Et in eo paravit vasa mortis; sagittas suas ardentibus effectit. — Ps. vii. 13, 14.

them—the wicked spread abroad the poison of their vices on all who come too near to them. “With the perverse thou wilt be perverted,”<sup>1</sup> says God by the Psalmist; and with the sinner thou wilt become a sinner. Therefore the Wise Man often and emphatically warns us against bad company: “My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them,” he says in the Proverbs; “my son, walk not thou with them; restrain thy foot from their paths.”<sup>2</sup> For he who touches pitch will be defiled by it; he who associates with the wicked will put on wickedness as a garment. This is the reason of that great and never to be sufficiently praised care of good parents, who are concerned for the eternal salvation of their children, and who use every effort to keep them from bad and dangerous company, lest they should learn evil, and be corrupted by the wickedness of others. Unhappy souls who put themselves into such danger without necessity!

Hence they are to be admired who live piously among the wicked.

Lamentable the state of those who have to live with the wicked! Yet at the same time wonderful the power of divine grace, which can keep the servant of God innocent, holy, and pure in the midst of vice! Tobias was holy, but his holiness is all the more admirable because he was the only one among all his fellow-captives who remained faithful to the true God. “When all went to the golden calves . . . he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem, to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel.”<sup>3</sup> Job was holy and a miracle of holiness; there was not his equal to be found in the whole world, as the Almighty said of him. But why? Hear his own answer: “I was the brother of dragons, and companion of ostriches.”<sup>4</sup> How so? Was Job obliged to live among wild animals? No; by the dragons and ostriches he means the wicked whom he had to associate with, as the Glossa says: “He was good among the wicked;”<sup>5</sup> he was pious among sinners, which is as rare as it is admirable.

St. Sebastian led a holy life.

My dear brethren, do you wish to know what a great saint I speak of when I name St. Sebastian? Do you wish to have a short sketch of the life he led before his martyrdom? Then I

<sup>1</sup> Cum perverso perverteris.—Ps. xvii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Fili mi, si te lactaverint peccatores, ne acquiescas eis. Fili mi, ne ambules cum eis, prohi-  
bete pedem tuum a semitis eorum.—Prov. i. 10, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Cum irent omnes ad vitulos aureos . . . hic solus fugiebat consortia omnium; pergebat  
in Jerusalem ad templum Domini, et ibi adorabat Dominum Deum Israel.—Tob. i. 5, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Frater fui draconum, et socius struthionum.—Job xxx. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Erat bonus inter malos.



will allow St. Ambrose, who has written of him at length, to speak in my place. "Sebastian," he says, "was a most perfect Christian; a true worshipper of God; a man of God; a man of great prudence; true in his words, just in his judgments. He was conspicuous for his goodness. He was illustrious in all things for the gravity of his manners. He was a light in darkness."<sup>1</sup> Such are the praises given to our Saint by the Doctor of the Church. He was seen, surrounded by heavenly light, and accompanied by seven angels, when once trying to confirm the tottering faith of some Christians. A dumb man to whom he restored the gift of speech said to him: "Thou art blessed, and blessed is the word of thy mouth."<sup>2</sup> The heathens whom he converted knelt before him in admiration of his sanctity. Pope Caius gave him the glorious title of Defender of the Church. Thus far St. Ambrose, as we read in the Bollandists.

Glorious praise indeed, my dear brethren! But you will be much more surprised when you hear in what part of the world, what time, under what circumstances, amongst what people Sebastian won that name for holiness. Oh, ye saintly confessors, hermits, founders of Orders! the whole world stands justly amazed at and is filled with reverence for you and the lives you led when it considers the deep humility with which you thought yourselves unworthy of living on earth, and looked on and publicly professed yourselves as deserving to be thought the worst of sinners; it wonders when it considers your voluntary poverty, which induced you to leave all—house and home—for the sake of God and heaven; your chastity, which made you like angels rather than men; your patience in bearing so many injuries and trials, and in desiring and praying for more and more crosses, as if they were so many joys and delights; your temperance, which barely permitted you to take enough food and drink to preserve your lives; your constant mortification and self-denial, with which you tortured and chastised yourselves; the rods and scourges with which you punished your bodies; the hot tears that the love of God drew from your eyes amid unceasing watching, prayer, and meditation! True it is you were great saints, whom we are too weak and feeble to imitate, so that we can only praise the Almighty who is so wonderful in His saints! Yet it was in

Not like  
other saints,  
in cloisters  
and deserts.

<sup>1</sup> Vir per omnia Christianissimus, verus Dei cultor; vir Dei; vir totius prudentiæ, in sermone verax, in iudicio justus. In bonitate conspicuus. In universa morum honestate præclarus. Lumen in tenebris.

<sup>2</sup> Beatus es tu, et benedictus sermo oris tui.

the gloomy forest, in the caves of the mountains, in the holes of the earth, in the hidden corners and cells of convents that you led such lives,—places closed to most of the dangers and occasions of sin; places that help virtue and holiness. It is no great wonder that a beautiful garden should bring forth rare and splendid flowers, and form an agreeable object for the eye to rest on; but to see a rare exotic growing in stony, neglected ground not only excites our admiration, but our surprise as well. What a wonderful effect then, O God, Thy powerful grace had in and on Thy servant Sebastian!

But in an  
imperial  
court.

Where, my dear brethren, did he become holy, and indeed so holy? At court—I say it again, at court he led that holy life. If I said at the court of a Christian king you would still perhaps have reason enough to be surprised; for who is ever sent to court to learn to practise the Christian virtues? What care and diligence are not required to preserve those virtues there, no matter how well grounded in them one may be! Truly, it is a rare virtue not to be proud in the midst of honors, and to remain small and lowly in one's own eyes; to keep the heart pure and untainted amongst all sorts of pleasures and delights of the senses, and in the midst of a thousand dangerous objects and allurements; to avoid avarice in the midst of riches; to live temperately in the midst of abundance; not to offend Christian charity by even an unkind thought, and never to utter a word of detraction in the midst of envious rivals; not to lose the freedom of the children of God in the midst of the freedom of a vain life; to watch day and night for the favor of a man, and still not to neglect the service of God; that, I say, requires a rare and well-founded virtue. “Who was with the princes of the people, and did the justices of the Lord;”<sup>1</sup> such was the greatest praise that Moses, when at the point of death, gave to Gad. Meanwhile I do not and cannot deny that pious and zealous servants of God have been found in Christian courts. And if we could see everything, we should in our own days have to admire many a beautiful and wonderful virtue amongst courtiers that they show not by outward sign; and under many a silken garment, embroidered with gold, we should find a hair-shirt. So true it is that in every state of life one can live in a Christian, holy, and edifying manner.

In a court  
and was

But what was the court in which Sebastian attained to such a high degree of sanctity? It was one that was sunk in the poison-

<sup>1</sup> Fuit cum principibus populi, et fecit iustitias Domini.—Deut. xxxiii. 21.

ous filth of all wickedness, a cesspool of vice, where idolatry, <sup>heathenish</sup> bestial impurity, cruelty, witchcraft showed themselves publicly, <sup>and god-</sup> namely, in the court of a heathen emperor, the bloodthirsty ty- <sup>less,</sup> rant Diocletian. There, among the enemies of Christ, Sebastian reached the summit of Christian perfection, and, what is still more surprising, he was in the same place raised above others in a profession, a state of life that brought him constantly under the emperor's eyes, so that he had to hide his faith and conceal his virtues from his imperial master; for he was appointed captain of the imperial guards, according to the words of St. Ambrose: "The soldiers revered him as a father, and all the chief men of the palace held him in the highest esteem."<sup>1</sup> And when Diocletian found out that Sebastian was a Christian, he complained to him in the following words: "I have always placed you among the chief men of my court; and you, to the shame of the gods, have always kept concealed till now what you really are."<sup>2</sup> Truly, my dear brethren, it was a wonderful thing in such circumstances and for so many years to be able to conceal his faith and holiness of life, so that he escaped the observation of the soldiers, the courtiers, and even of the emperor himself!

If he might have dared to acknowledge his religion publicly, we might have less difficulty in understanding how he, tolerated in the midst of idolaters, rendered such faithful and constant service to the true God. But as things were, this holiness of life had to contend with unceasing contradictions. He had to seem outwardly different to what he really was inwardly. Who would not have sworn that Sebastian, the intimate friend of Diocletian, was consequently of the same turn of mind as his master; that he was a defender of false gods, an enemy and persecutor of the true faith? He was always with the emperor; he assisted at the imperial banquets, at the shows in the amphitheatre, at the public dances, at the chase in the fields, at the gladiatorial combats, at the torturing of the Christians, nay, at the hellish sacrifices in the temples of the gods, without ever giving the least sign of outward adoration, which he could not do in conscience, and without ever detaching his heart for a moment from the true God in heaven. He held daily intercourse with heathens, and at the

Where he did not dare to show that he was a Christian.

<sup>1</sup> Diocletiano ita charus fuit, ut principatum ei primæ cohortis traderet, et suo eum conspectui juberet semper adstare; hunc milites ac patrem venerabantur; hunc universi, qui præerant palatio, carissimo venerabantur affectur.

<sup>2</sup> Ego te inter primos palatii mei semper habui; et tu in injuriam deorum hactenus latuisti.

same time encouraged and strengthened by his help and advice the hidden Christians who were entrusted to his care.

And had to  
hide his  
sanctity un-  
der the ap-  
pearance of  
being a  
heathen.

With what secret art he used to carry on two such offices that were diametrically opposed to each other I cannot understand. I imagine I see in him that holy man of the Old Testament, Abdias the Prophet, of whom we read in the Third Book of Kings. Achab, that most wicked king, persecuted with the utmost fury the Prophet Elias and all other Israelites who adhered to the worship of the true God. The governor of this king's house was Abdias, of whom the Scripture says: "Abdias feared the Lord very much."<sup>1</sup> While the persecution lasted he went to the caves in which the prophets, a hundred in number, were hidden, and brought them food every day with his own hand: "When Jezabel killed the prophets of the Lord, he took a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty and fifty in caves, and fed them with bread and water."<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile Achab thought he had no better helper in his wicked designs, no more earnest persecutor of the prophets than the same Abdias. Sebastian used the same art at the court of Diocletian. His sole reason for serving so faithfully a heathen master was that he might be able to encourage others in the worship and service of the true God. It was not the dread of torments, nor the fear of losing his office, his liberty, or his life that induced him to conceal for such a long time his name of Christian under the garb of a courtier and captain; for he afterwards heroically gave proof to the contrary; but it was rather the desire to gain many souls to Christ that by divine inspiration led him to adopt that career, as the author of his Life says: "That he might strengthen the minds of those Christians whom he saw about to give way under torture, and might give to God the souls that the devil was trying to take from him."<sup>3</sup> The favor he enjoyed with the emperor and the facility of approaching him at any moment served Sebastian as a sure means of detecting his plans and unveiling his craft, so that he had time to warn the Christians either to hide, or to fly elsewhere, or to prepare for martyrdom. The money and rich salary he received yearly went to found a house of refuge for poor and needy Christians; his diligent attendance at court every day served to con-

<sup>1</sup> Abdia autem timebat Dominum valde.—III. Kings xviii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cum interficeret Jezabel prophetas Domini, tulit ille centum prophetas, et abscondit eos quinquagenos et quinquagenos in speluncis, et pavit eos pane et aqua.—Ibid. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ut Christianorum animos, quos inter tormenta videbat deficere, confortaret, et Deo redderet animas, quas diabolus conabatur auferre.



ceal the employment in which he spent his nights, attending on the sick, visiting prisoners, consoling the afflicted, and comforting the wavering. I wish I had a little of the eloquence with which he described the shortness of life, the vanity of the world, the pains of hell, the joys of heaven, in order to keep firm in the faith those who were beginning to vacillate through fear of torture. His exhortations and sermons may be read in the Bollandists by any one who wishes.

“Nor sat in the chair of pestilence.” Thus Sebastian lived in the midst of the plague, nay, at the very fountain-head of it, and yet was not hurt by the poison; he lived in the midst of vice and danger, and yet knew how to lead a holy and pious life; until at last he betrayed himself, openly confessed what he was, and who the master was whom he served under the pretext of attending on an earthly lord, and, unmoved by the threats, promises, and caresses of the emperor who loved him so much, he was shot with arrows by his own soldiers, and at last beaten to death with clubs, thus gaining the crown of martyrdom.

Thus, in the midst of a spiritual plague, he remained free from contagion.

Hadst thou lived in his time, Moses, what wouldst thou have thought of a prodigy that seemed impossible to thee? When King Pharaoh said to thee, “Go, and sacrifice to your God in this land,” no, thou didst answer at once: “It cannot be so;” that cannot be done in this country, in the midst of idolaters. Why can it not be done? Behold the man who was able to do that wonderful thing! See Sebastian, in the midst of a people far worse than the Egyptians of old, worshipping the true God, offering Him sacrifice, and serving Him faithfully! “If we kill those things which the Egyptians worship in their presence, they will stone us;”<sup>1</sup> this was the excuse thou madest to Pharaoh. Such a thought does not disturb Sebastian in the least. Let who will cast stones or shoot arrows at him, he still offers sacrifice in the midst of Egyptians, boldly and confidently adoring the true God, offering to Him his freedom, comfort, honor, and high position, the favor and good will of the emperor, his property, his life, and everything the heathens adored as their gods. What wonder, then, that Sebastian now enjoys in heaven such great and mighty power, especially as a patron and protector against pestilence, who while he was on earth remained free from all

He is therefore worthy of great admiration.

<sup>1</sup> *Ite et sacrificare Deo vestro in terra hac. Non potest ita fieri; si mactaverimus ea, quæ colunt Egyptii coram eis, lapidibus nos obruent.—Exod. viii. 25, 26.*



contagion in the midst of the most dangerous of all pestilences, that is, who became a saint in the midst of sinners!

Exhortation  
to imitate  
St. Sebastian by  
leading holy  
lives.

But, my dear brethren, have we assembled here to-day only to wonder at the extraordinary holiness of our Saint? Or is that altar set up in the church, and do the members of the sodality come here every Wednesday only to honor their patron with the hope of being freed from sickness and other temporal calamities by his intercession? It is true that this intention and custom are holy, and may eternal joy be the lot of those who commenced it! Happiness and salvation to all who try to further the sodality and spread it more and more! But of what advantage will it be to the honor and glory of Sebastian if we are only admirers of his holy life? And what will it help ourselves if, freed from temporal pestilence by his prayers, we are infected with a spiritual poison, and live in sin? No; it is a great error to imagine that saints are appointed protectors of a town only to free the inhabitants from temporal evils! The chief object of Our Lord in giving us such patrons is that we may imitate their lives, their virtues and holiness, and thus make ourselves more worthy of their patronage.

And to arm  
ourselves  
with the  
fear of God  
in those  
dangers of  
the soul we  
cannot  
shun.

Must we, then, live like St. Sebastian in the midst of dangers and occasions of sin? Oh, no! such is not my meaning. Let him venture to do that who has a well-grounded virtue, a zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of souls, and an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, like Sebastian, and who is moreover situated in similar circumstances. Ah, would to God that in the midst of the clear light of the truth, where there is no persecution to fear, no plans to be secretly cogitated in order to enable us to practise our religion and do good; where we have so many examples of piety to encourage us—would to God that we were not often cold and tepid in the divine service, that we did not live as heathens in the midst of Christians! “Flee ye from the midst of Babylon,” says the Lord to us by the Prophet, “and let every one save his own life.”<sup>1</sup> Fly, as well as you can, the occasions of sin, and let every one use all diligence to save his precious, his only, his immortal soul! And if we cannot always avoid all dangers (truly, there are enough of them in every state of life!), then at least we should not deliberately seek them. Let us take the shield with which Sebastian defended himself in the midst of the wicked, namely, the fear and zealous love of

<sup>1</sup> Fugite de medio Babylonis, et salvet unusquisque animam suam.—Jer. li. 6.

God; let us dread sin above all things as we should the plague, and love God always above all; then we shall be able to appear before the altar of our Saint with greater devotion, explain to him our wants with more confidence, and more surely expect his help if we not only admire his holy life, but try to imitate it as far as we can. Amen.

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FIFTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

ON ZEAL IN THE SODALITY OF ST. SEBASTIAN.

Subject.

Precisely because we seem to be free from the pestilence, and the danger of it, our devotion, respect, confidence, and love for St. Sebastian as our protector should not only maintain their first fervor, but should even increase and grow greater.—*Preached on the feast of St. Sebastian, Martyr.*

Text.

*Non accedat ad te malum, et flagellum non appropinquabit tabernaculo tuo.*—Ps. xc. 10.

“There shall no evil come to thee, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling.”

Introduction.

Great and comforting promise! “There shall no evil come to thee, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling.” What evil? What scourge? “The scourge of temporal punishment,”<sup>1</sup> says Raynerius. And, amongst temporal punishment, is there any greater than the plague and contagious maladies? That these are specially meant by the word “scourge” is evident from the prayer of the Church against pestilence and famine: “That the hearts of men may know that such scourges come from Thy just anger.”<sup>2</sup> This scourge will not come to thee; such is the promise of God by the Prophet David. Why? “For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee.”<sup>3</sup> O city of Treves, could one assure thee also of this promise that the scourge of pestilence will never approach thee? Truly, for He

<sup>1</sup> *Flagellum temporalis poenæ.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ut mortallum corda cognoscant, te indignante, talla flagella prodire.*

<sup>3</sup> *Quoniam angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te.*—Ps. xc. 11.

has commanded His saints to protect thee therefrom. What saints? To say nothing of thy many other patrons, He has specially commended thee to the saint in whose honor we hold this solemnity to-day, whose image is carried about in procession followed by numbers of people—the wonderful and holy martyr St. Sebastian. Our well-founded confidence in him induced us long ago to select him as the patron and protector of this city, and that is the end and object of the honor we show him weekly in the sodality dedicated to him. We have with thankful hearts seen our hopes verified for many years now, and the help granted us by that Saint has given a great impulse to our love and devotion to him. I will keep in mind to-day this laudable object of the sodality, firmly believing that I will do all the more service to St. Sebastian the more I endeavor to excite your devotion to him. It might be with some as with sailors, who during a storm at sea pray and cry for mercy, but when the danger is over laugh and joke and think no more of it; in the same way, now that there seems to be no danger of pestilence, some of you might be inclined to grow cold and tepid in your devotion, and neglect the prayers of the sodality. To prevent this is the object of my sermon to-day.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*There shall no evil come to thee, O city of Treves, nor shall the scourge of pestilence come near thy dwellings (let us suppose this to be the case; at all events, we have no reason to dread the plague at present; there seems to be no immediate danger of it; and may God keep it far from us!); and since thou art freed from this danger, thou shouldst not only maintain thy devotion, respect, confidence, and love for St. Sebastian in their first fervor, but shouldst rather increase and add to them all the more. Such is the end I aim at in this sermon.*

O sovereign God, who art pleased to be honored in Thy saints, grant us by the intercession of Thy holy Mother and of the holy angels such confidence, love, and veneration for Thy servant that we may merit to have him fulfil the promise: “There shall come no evil to thee, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling”!

The greater  
the evil,  
the more

The greater the evil that actually afflicts or threatens you, so much the greater are the esteem, honor, and love you have for the benefactor who frees you from it, and with all the more care,

diligence, and confidence do you have recourse to his help. This is an undoubted truth that is not in need of proof. Consider the state of the sick man who is suffering from some unusual kind of fever. How eagerly he looks forward to the visit of the doctor! He spares neither diligence nor enquiries nor money, nor any other means that may enable him to procure the services of an experienced and skilful physician as soon as possible, if such a one can be had.

honor is due  
to him who  
frees us  
from it.

What is the plague, my dear brethren? The very name of it shocks both our ears and minds, and is in itself enough to convince us that the plague must be an unusually terrible evil. It is called a scourge, as a sign that it comes from the anger of a chastising God. On one occasion Our Lord took a scourge into His hands during His life on earth; when? on what occasion? It was when, to the great astonishment of the disciples, the otherwise most meek Jesus was inflamed with a holy zeal and anger on account of the profanation of the temple, as we read in the second chapter of the Gospel of St. John. Many a time did God threaten His people with the rod of chastisement of which we are now speaking; but it was only when He was grievously incensed, and meant to punish the wicked without mercy. Thus He said to Moses: "How long will this people detract Me? How long will they not believe Me, for all the signs that I have wrought before them?" I can no longer bear with them; things have come to an extremity at last! "I will strike them therefore with pestilence, and will consume them."<sup>1</sup> In the same way He said to the Prophet Ezechiel: "I will send into her pestilence and blood in her streets; and they shall know that I am the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Of all the evils and terrible chastisements that the Lord threatened the Israelites with if they did not give up sin, pestilence was the worst: "I will send the pestilence in the midst of you."<sup>3</sup> As if among all temporal calamities there was none as bad as this.

The plague  
is one of  
the greatest  
evils with  
which God  
punishes  
the world.

And indeed such is the case; may God grant that we may never know it by experience! All the other sicknesses and miseries that assail the human body in countless ways are indeed painful and grievous evils, but they are nothing in comparison to this

No other  
sickness  
causes such  
misery as  
the plague.

<sup>1</sup> *Usquequo detrahēt mihi populus iste? Quousque non erēdēt mihi, in omnibus signis, quę feci coram eis? Feriam igitur eos pestilentia, atque consumam.*—Num. xiv. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Immittam ei pestilentiam, et sanguinem in platēis ejus; et scient quia ego Dominus.*—Ezech. xxviii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Mittam pestilentiam in medio vestri.*—Lev. xxvi. 25.

scourge. They attack one part or other of the body; but the plague, once it strikes in, carries off the whole man in a short time; the former bring a few dozen people to the grave in the year in a community; the latter slays in one street hundreds in a day! In the case of ordinary sicknesses, people still frequent each other's company; when the plague comes it puts an end to all business, trade, friendship, and acquaintance; it turns the houses into hospitals, the streets into graveyards, the towns into charnel-houses, the country into a desert. Gates and doors are closed; no one is seen to enter or go out, unless those who drive the dead-cart, full of corpses. Nothing is heard but wailings and lamentations, sighs and moans from those who have still enough life left to make known their misery. All help and assistance are cut off; the father is abandoned by the son, the son by the father, one friend by the other. Each one shuns his neighbor as if he did not know him, through fear of contagion. Many a one would wish to confess his sins even in public, but cannot find a priest to absolve him; often in bolted and barred houses the dead lie in heaps on top of each other, through want of some one to bury them. In a word, it is a calamity in which there is neither counsel, help, comfort, nor remedy.

Shown from  
history.

How great must not have been that calamity that forced from King David those words in which he expressed his wish to be destroyed himself, if by his death he could put an end to the unspeakable misery of his people! And indeed it must have been a sad sight to witness, when in three days seventy thousand of the Israelites were carried off by the plague, as we read in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of Kings. I will say nothing now of the many cities and countries in Europe which God visited by the plague, and which could give testimony of the misery it caused. Has not our own city of Treves often had sad experience of it? Not to go back to very ancient times, in the year 1313 the plague carried off in this one town not less than 13,000 people; take that number from the present population, and see how many will remain. The famine which resulted from the plague, in consequence of the interruption of all intercourse, brought them to such extremities that mothers were known to have eaten their own dead or living children. In the last century, in the year 1605, the pestilence that had been committing its ravages for three whole years would have carried off all the inhabitants of this city if God had not been at last ap-



peased by the prayers and penance of the people, so that the scourge ceased, as it were, miraculously and at once. To come nearer to our own times, in the year 1636 the plague caused such misery that in the neighboring villages hardly twenty people were left alive out of six hundred; in our college alone not less than fourteen persons in the bloom of youth perished in a short time; and from that we may easily calculate the amount of injury done in the town itself. Through scarcity of provisions in the same year two hundred dogs were eaten as delicacies; cats, mice, and other such animals were sought for as food, and again there was a case of a woman who cut up the fruit of her own womb and ate it. Brower and Masenius describe all this in the history of Treves. But I will say nothing more on such a sad subject.

See, my dear brethren, what a great and calamitous scourge the plague is. Imagine now that it has again come to us, and that it is already in our city (I see that the bare idea of it is enough to make you tremble); but I will not go so far as that; imagine that there is only a report of the neighboring cities and countries being infected with it, so that it is on the way to us; imagine, also, that after all necessary precautions have been taken there is nothing left for us to do but to fly for refuge to our holy patron St. Sebastian, who is well known as a powerful protector in such circumstances, and a mighty helper in time of pestilence—so well known, indeed, that it would be a loss of time to wait to prove it, for his fame in this respect has gone far and wide. Rome and all Italy can testify to this; for in the time of Pope Agatho an altar was erected to this holy martyr by divine inspiration, and when his intercession was implored the plague ceased at once. France can testify to this; for it preserves the relics of the Saint with great veneration, and has often experienced the benefit of his help. All Germany can testify to this; for the people have always had great confidence in the intercession of our Saint, and this confidence is increasing daily. I have heard that there are people still living who know that a similar experience fell to the lot of the town of Cochem on the Moselle; and their assertion is proved by the magnificent altar erected to St. Sebastian, and the homage paid to his statue; while the city of Treves unanimously acknowledges before his image that it has often been freed from the plague by him, and therefore is filled with gratitude for past benefits, and confidence with regard to his protection in the future. Finally, the whole Catholic Church spread throughout the

The intercession of St. Sebastian is very powerful with God to free whole countries from it.

world calls on St. Sebastian as a helper and patron in such sad circumstances.

So that if the plague was in our midst, or threatened us, we should appeal to this Saint with great devotion.

If, I say again, there was nothing else for us to do at the approach of the pestilence than to fly to this Saint for refuge (and when once this evil has gained a footing, there is hardly any remedy against it but the immediate help of heaven), how would you act? what would you wish to do? I certainly would not think it necessary for me to ascend the pulpit and exhort you to this devotion, for the presence or even the dread of the scourge would of itself be sermon enough to induce all of you to appeal for help where help is to be found. And indeed a sermon of the kind is wont to produce greater effect, and to be listened to more attentively; for then the Lord Himself, taking the rod in His hand, speaks to eyes and senses by the general misery. The disciples required no exhortation to call upon Our Lord for help and protection when the waves rose and threatened their ship with destruction, as we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew; the imminent danger of death impelled them at once to waken the sleeping Lord, and cry out to Him: "Lord, save us; we perish."<sup>1</sup> Nor did the people need a preacher at the death of Our Lord to warn them to repent of their cruelty towards Him; the terrible signs they saw, the thick darkness, the rending of the rocks, the trembling of the earth were enough to excite them to contrition: "And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned, striking their breasts."<sup>2</sup> It is not many years ago since we saw what a commotion was excited in many cities of Germany by the mere rumor of the approach of the plague from neighboring countries. What public prayers, fasts, pilgrimages, and processions were then held! And since that time those devotions are still continued in some places. So that without a doubt if such a calamity were again to befall us you would of yourselves, although all preachers were dumb, be moved by the fear of danger to show the utmost devotion and reverence to St. Sebastian as the best means of saving your lives. Could you then find one who would not rejoice to be a member of the sodality dedicated to him? Could one be found then to absent himself from the weekly devotions and meetings? I believe that if their piety would not induce

<sup>1</sup> Domine, salva nos; perimus.—Matt. viii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Omnis turba eorum, qui simul aderant ad spectaculum istud, et videbant quæ fiebant, percutientes pectora sua, revertebantur.—Luke xxiii. 48.

them to come, fear would, as it were, drive them out of their houses to the church as with a whip. Great and small, compelled by the fear of danger, would then come to this church as to a place of refuge, and run to the altar and statue of St. Sebastian as to an ark of safety, begging and praying, vowing and promising, that by his intercession God might deliver them. Is not that so, my dear brethren?

I come at last to the conclusion which I believe I have sufficiently proved already. You acknowledge that it is salutary, just, and necessary to have recourse to St. Sebastian when the evil, that is, the plague is already in our midst, or when it is in our vicinity. You acknowledge that on account of the severity of this scourge and the greatness of the evil it is an incomparable and inestimable benefit to be freed from it, and that he deserves your utmost love, reverence, and gratitude who should deliver you if you were attacked by it. I repeat, then, what I said in the beginning, that we who are now free from this evil, and hope to remain free from it, since we have not heard of any such danger threatening us—we, if we wish to act prudently and uprightly, should show to St. Sebastian the same, nay, still greater love and respect, and continue the devotions we have commenced, and continue them with greater fervor and confidence. For is it a lesser benefit to obtain that we should remain free from the evil, and not have to fear it, than to be delivered from it after it has actually attacked us? Does he do you less good who restrains the rod that is raised to strike you than he who alleviates your pain after you have received the blow? Is he less your benefactor who is the cause of your remaining in good health than he who, when you are sick and suffering, gives you medicine to cure you? Is he who seizes you by the arm, and prevents you from falling, less to be thanked than he who, after you have fallen, lifts you up and heals the limb you have broken? Is he who prevents you from going to prison to be less regarded than he who, after you have lost your liberty, releases you again? If such be your opinion, you show that you think little the good health and freedom from disease you enjoy. Every one who has the use of sound reason must acknowledge that the preservation from evils and the averting of them is a greater benefit and much more to be prized than the mere freeing us from them after we have been made to feel them, and it would be

But we owe him a still greater benefit in being kept free from it so long.

gross ingratitude to forget in the time of prosperity the benefactor to whom we owe it.

And we should be very ungrateful if we showed him less reverence and devotion.

For a similar reason it would be ungrateful in us to grow cold in our devotion, love, and reverence for our holy patron. To erect an altar, and seldom visit it; to be enrolled in a confraternity, and not to appear at the usual meetings, and that because we are not in dread of any approaching calamity, because we have gained the freedom from the evil we feared, because we can enjoy in peace and quiet the fruit of this devotion—is not that gross ingratitude? Who does not condemn the culpable forgetfulness of Pharaoh's butler, of whom we read in the Book of Genesis. Joseph had interpreted his dream in prison, and removed all apprehension from his mind by telling him that in three days he would be set at liberty, and restored to his former place of honor, to stand at the king's side and hand him the cup. No one could be more rejoiced than the butler, no one more profuse in promising to intercede for his prophetic benefactor, and to obtain his liberation. "But," says the Scripture, two years passed away, and he never even thought of Joseph; "the chief butler, when things prospered with him, forgot his interpreter."<sup>1</sup>

Yet when the need is past we are apt to forget our benefactor.

My dear brethren, is it not so sometimes among us men? We attend only to what is present before us, without further thought or reflection, without a particle of gratitude for evident favors we have received, without any effort to fulfil the obligation they impose on us, just like dumb beasts that have to be driven to work by the fear of blows. "Till they receive," says the Wise Man of such people, "they kiss the hands of the lender, and in promises they humble their voice;" but when the time comes to make a return they shrug their shoulders, forget the favor received, or return only half of what they owe.<sup>2</sup> There are some who forget their benefactors altogether. When a man is climbing a ladder he grasps it with both hands; but when the ladder has done its work he throws it into a dark corner, out of sight. While one is taking water from a well he keeps his eyes fixed on it; but when he has enough he goes away and turns his back on the well. So do we, alas! often act towards our benefactors. When necessity is at the door we acknowledge, praise, and honor

<sup>1</sup> Et tamen succedentibus prosperis, præpositus pincernarum oblitus est interpretis sui.—Gen. xi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Donec accipiant, osculantur manus dantis, et in promissionibus humillant vocem suam. In tempore redditionis vix reddet dimidium.—Eccles. xxix. 5-7.



the helper who comes to our aid; when the time of want is at an end our benefactor and the gratitude, love, and reverence we owe him slip from our memory. Well does the Prophet David say: "Our eyes unto the Lord, our God;" how long? "until He have mercy on us."<sup>1</sup> When we have received grace and mercy they are again turned away from Him.

My dear brethren and members of this sodality, are we to act in this manner towards our holy benefactor? Shall we turn our servile eyes towards the Lord only when we see the rod in His hand, and are in dread of the stripes? Shall we not rather show our gratitude and uprightness now, since He has kept the scourge so long and so far away from us? Truly, we should otherwise deserve, and should have good reason to fear that it would be with us as St. Cyprian says: "That since we refuse to acknowledge what we owe this Saint for the many benefits we have received from him, we should be compelled to due acknowledgment by punishment."<sup>2</sup> But I firmly hope for better than that from your zealous devotion. Praise and thanks, then, be to the ashes of him who first instituted this advantageous sodality! Praise and blessing to those who in any way try to spread and help it! Praise and blessing to those who by their good example encourage others to join the sodality, and to attend regularly the appointed devotions, so that by their united prayers and fervent zeal they may avert many evils from the whole community, and ensure its prosperity! Since so much depends on it, let us all take part in this laudable custom, and by frequently and devoutly visiting this altar obtain a continuance of favors from our holy benefactor; thereby we shall merit to be saved from the plague, and from all other contagious maladies. For, as de Lyra remarks on the eighth chapter of Genesis, he perpetuates the benefit who is grateful for it. "I will no more curse the earth," said God to Noe, after the deluge; now thou canst be without fear, for a deluge shall never again overwhelm the earth. How did Noe merit this promise? As soon as he left the ark, "Noe built an altar unto the Lord, and taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar."<sup>3</sup> "Thus," says de Lyra, "after the benefit of freedom from the chastisement

Exhortation to have a zealous devotion to St. Sebastian.

<sup>1</sup> Oculi nostri ad Dominum Deum nostrum; donec misereatur nostri.—Ps. cxxii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ut qui beneficiis non intelligitur, plagis intelligatur.

<sup>3</sup> Nequaquam ultra maledicam terræ. Edificavit altare Domino, et tollens de cunctis pecoribus, et volucribus mundis, obtulit holocausta super altare.—Gen. viii. 21, 20.



comes that of security.”<sup>1</sup> O city of Treves! continue to show thy gratitude to thy benefactor; then thou mayest be sure of the fulfilment of the promise: “There shall no evil come to thee, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling.” But above all let us attend to what generally engages peoples’ minds during a plague, namely, to keep from our consciences the plague of the soul—sin, the fuel of all evil—lest the divine anger should be aroused and punish us by another pestilence of the body. We have had sorrowful times enough; wo to us if this worst of all chastisements should be added to what we have suffered already!

Prayer to  
the Saint.

O God of goodness, protect us therefrom! O great friend of God, holy St. Sebastian, to whom my humble prayers and those of all present are now directed, take under thy protection this city and land of Treves, which owes so much to thee! If perchance we have grown somewhat cold in our first fervor of gratitude, in our reverence and confidence in thee, we now, before thy altar, renew and increase our devotion to thee. We renew our thanks for the great benefit we owe thee in being so long freed from the plague, a benefit we do not deserve, and for which we can never be sufficiently grateful. With thankful hearts, then, we shall in future attend the holy sacrifice here every Wednesday; and so we hope, by thy intercession and advocacy with God, for the time to come that the evil will not approach us, that the scourge will not come near our dwellings, and that thus we, thy children, shall be able to serve thee and our God in greater peace and with greater cheerfulness. Amen.

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FIFTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON THE HOLY POPE AND MARTYR ST. CLEMENT.

Subject.

St. Clement was like the apostles: 1. In his patience; 2. In the signs and wonders he performed.—*Preached on the feast of St. Clement in the Collegiate Church of St. Paulinus.*

Text.

*Signa apostolatus mei facta sunt super vos in omni patientia, in signis et prodigiis.*—II. Cor. xii. 12.

<sup>1</sup> Ideo post beneficium liberationis, datur beneficium securitatis.

“The signs of my apostleship have been wrought on you, in all patience, in signs and wonders.”

### Introduction.

Although I was a persecutor of the Church of Christ; although I am the last of those who were called and appointed to the apostolate by the Lord; although I must acknowledge that I am nothing, yet I am not less than the great apostles: “I have no way come short of them that are above measure apostles, although I be nothing.”<sup>1</sup> Why so? Because I have shown amongst you all the marks of the apostolic office; namely, in all patience, in signs and wonders. This confession regarding himself is made by St. Paul, the great teacher of the nations. My dear brethren, in the same words I can, it seems to me, with reason praise the holy Pope and martyr Clement, whose feast is celebrated to-day in this church. For if the marks of an apostle, according to the words of St. Paul, consist in all patience, in signs and wonders, certainly Clement is not unlike the great apostles, as I mean to show in this panegyric.

### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Clement was like the apostles in all patience; the first part.*  
*St. Clement was like the apostles in signs and wonders; the second part.*

Both to the honor and glory of this Saint; both with a brief moral lesson for the good of our souls, which we expect from God, through the hands of Mary and of the holy angels.

If I had nothing more to say of St. Clement than that he was a companion and fellow-worker of St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, as the latter calls him in the Epistle to the Philippians, “who have labored with me in the gospel with Clement and the rest of my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life,”<sup>2</sup> then I should have sufficiently proved the first part of my proposition, that in all patience he is like the apostles. For what a wonder of the world is proposed to me when Paul is named! After Our Lord Himself, who had so many hardships,

St. Clement was a companion of St. Paul.

<sup>1</sup> Nihil minus fui ab eis, qui sunt supra modum apostoli; tametsi nihil sum.—II. Cor. xii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Quæ mecum laboraverunt in evangelio cum Clemente, et cæteris adiutoribus meis, quorum nomina sunt in libro vitæ.—Philipp. iv. 3.

trials, and difficulties to contend with as he? Humble as he was, and convinced that he was the greatest sinner in the world, unworthy the name of a servant of Christ, yet he boasts that he did more than the other apostles, that he is more than they: "They are the ministers of Christ (I speak as one less wise);" yet I dare say it, "I am more."<sup>1</sup> St. Chrysostom wonders at these words, and thus apostrophizes St. Paul: "Show us what that 'more' is, and how thou dost excel the others."<sup>2</sup> Holy apostle, you say you are more than the others; show us how that is. Perhaps you are more learned, and have received more special wisdom from God to interpret the Scripture, to discover the mysteries hidden therein, and to convince all of the truth of Christianity? No; it is not in such things that I am more. Then it will perhaps be in your great eloquence with which you fearlessly attack the enemies of the faith, and make judges and kings tremble when you open your mouth? No; it is not that, either, that I boast of. And what, then? Did you perhaps perform more miracles than the others? Wrong again. Now I know what it is; you allude to your wonderful visions, to your ecstasies and revelations, to your journey to the third heaven? Neither is it that.

But St. Paul bore many trials most patiently.

I will tell you what it is: My renown as an apostle consists in this, that I have been more humiliated than the others, have endured more crosses and trials, have been more persecuted and hunted from one place to another, and more frequently scourged and beaten: "In many more labors, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often;" in toilsome journeys by day and night; "in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren; in labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."<sup>3</sup> There are the trials of which I have received a greater share than the others; and it is in them that I glory, for them I owe the most to my God, since He has deigned to send

<sup>1</sup> *Ministri Christi sunt (ut minus sapiens dico); plus ego.*—II. Cor. xi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Indica nobis illud plus, et eminentiam tuam.*

<sup>3</sup> *In laboribus plurimis, in carceribus abundantius, in plagis supra modum, in mortibus frequenter. Periculis fluminum, periculis latronum, periculis ex genere, periculis ex gentibus, periculis in civitate, periculis in solitudine, periculis in mare, periculis in falsis fratribus; in labore et ærumna, in vigiliis multis, in fame et siti, in jejuniis multis, in frigore et nuditate.*—II. Cor xi. 23, 26, 27.

them to me so abundantly. "For such a one I will glory,"<sup>1</sup> if it is allowed me.

Now I draw this conclusion, my dear brethren. St. Clement Therefore Clement had his share of them. was the companion and assistant of St. Paul in his labors in preaching the gospel; therefore he was also his companion in suffering persecutions, dangers, and manifold contradictions. For when two persons are on the same journey they are in the same circumstances; if it rains and hails on the one, the other will get wet, too; the same wind that whistles in the ears of the one will also annoy his companion; if the sun burns one, it will not spare the other; if the one has a poor lodging, the other must share it with him. Therefore if things went always so hard with Paul, as he describes, his companion and fellow-worker, wherever he went with him, could not have been much better off; and on this head alone he can boast with his master that he performed his apostolic office with all patience in enduring dangers and trials.

And how much had he not to endure after the death of Paul, when he was raised to the highest dignity of the Christian Church, and was made third Pope after St. Peter? The trials of life consist of three kinds: some affect the soul, such as sadness, desolation, fear, and anxiety; others affect the body, such as those pains that attack the flesh and the outward senses; the third sort affect our good name and reputation, such as humiliations, detractions, injuries, insults, public shame, and disgrace. To the very end of His servant Clement's life God proved him by all these kinds of tribulations, as Ribadeneira says in his *Life*. In the first place, he had to suffer in his good name, for he was publicly decried and accused as a hypocrite, a traitor, a blasphemer, a seducer of the people, a wizard by wicked people who hated him for the innocence and holiness of his life; thus he was made odious in the whole city of Rome as a worthless man, and was brought before the judges, who, although they knew his innocence, yet to avoid a tumult among the people were forced to banish him from the city. Thus we may say of him what St. Athanasius said of St. Antony, who for a long time sought an opportunity of martyrdom in the city of Alexandria, and not finding any, left the city in order to spend his life in the desert in fasting and watching, in hunger and thirst, and in all kinds of austerities for the love of God; so also did the

<sup>1</sup> Pro hujusmodi gloriabor.—II. Cor. xii. 5.

Lord preserve His vicar on earth, St. Clement, for still greater sufferings, and allowed him to be banished from Rome to the Chersonese, that he might there in exile endure a longer martyrdom, and have more opportunity for practising patience.

Great mental sorrow.

Again, what bitter pangs and sorrow must not the holy man have felt at being so violently separated from his Christians of Rome, whom he loved more than his own soul, and who ran after their dear father and only consolation with tears in their eyes; whom, nevertheless, he had to leave like so many sheep amid the fierce wolves, while his only comfort was in the hot tears he shed! And how he must have deplored the wretched state of the Christians, of whom he found two thousand in his exile, who had already been sent there by the tyrant, and were condemned to severe labor, unprovided with the necessaries of life! Clement now found himself in the midst of this oppressed, famished, thirsty, emaciated people like a poor banished father among his children, to whom he cannot give a bit of bread. What bitter sorrow he felt we can easily imagine; as his Life says: "He grieved with the sorrowing, and wept with mourners."<sup>1</sup> I will say nothing of the perpetual anguish, fear, and care that oppressed him for the Church entrusted to his vigilance, for the sheep of the fold of Christ whom he ever carried in his heart, whose lot was ever a source of anxiety to him—an anxiety that increased when he heard that they were persecuted on all sides by the enemies of the faith, that they were martyred and put to death most cruelly.

Bodily discomfort, which, like the Apostle, he bore in all patience.

Finally, we can easily imagine from all this what bodily pains he had to undergo when we consider the miserable slavery to which he was condemned, with his companions. They had to sleep on the ground, and during the day to drag about huge stones, to polish and smoothe them, a work to which they were driven by blows and scourges, and meanwhile they were obliged to suffer hunger and thirst; truly, their bodies could have found little comfort under such circumstances. In this misery Clement had to suffer until at last he was condemned to a martyr's death; a heavy anchor was tied round his neck, and he was sunk into the sea. Thus this holy martyr of Christ, having spent his life in suffering, closed it in suffering also, and therefore he can boast that he was like the apostles in all patience, and that he was one of those to whom Our Lord says in the gospel: "As the

<sup>1</sup> Cum merentibus meribat, et cum fientibus fiebat.



Father hath sent Me, I also send you.”<sup>1</sup> He sent Me into the world to teach and further His glory; in the same way I send you, My dear disciples; go into the whole world and teach all nations. My Father sent Me to take up My cross, to die on the cross, and by My cross and passion to enter into My glory; in the same way I send you to endure many persecutions, to live and die in crosses and trials for My name’s sake.

Let us for our own edification reflect a little on this, my dear brethren. Patience under many trials is the mark by which the apostles and true disciples of Christ are recognized, as St. Gregory remarks: “The disciples are sent into the world by the Lord, not for the joys of the world, but for suffering.”<sup>2</sup> By this they must prove themselves true disciples and followers of Christ. So, I say, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers, patience under adversity is the chief mark and characteristic by which we may certainly recognize and know those who are predestined to heaven. For, as St. Paul says, the eternal Father has ordained that they whom He has called to eternal life should by suffering be made conformable to the image of His crucified and suffering Son. This likeness God enables them to put on by giving them opportunities of practising patience under trials; and He gives this blessing to those whom He loves as His own friends and children. “For unto you it is given for Christ,” says St. Paul; and this high destiny is yours, “not only to believe in Him,” for many go to hell in spite of their faith, “but also to suffer for Him.”<sup>3</sup> It is by patience under adversity that we must especially prove that we have the Christian virtues, that we truly love God with all our hearts. It requires no great skill to keep the Lord before our eyes, to praise and bless Him as long as He gives us everything we desire and wish for; but it is a great virtue when He takes all from us, when He gives us the bitter chalice to drink, when He strikes us with His rod—it is a great virtue then to kiss the chastising hand, to be satisfied with the will of God, and always to think and say, with the patient Job: “Blessed be the name of the Lord!” Finally, it is patience under adversity that must prepare for us the road to the kingdom of God and eternal glory: “Through many tribu-

Exhortation  
to patience  
under  
trials as a  
sign of  
election.

<sup>1</sup> Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos.—John xx. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Discipuli a Domino non ad mundi gaudia, sed ad passionem mittuntur in mundum.

<sup>3</sup> Vobis donatum est pro Christo, ut non solum in eum credatis, sed ut etiam pro illo patiamini.—Philipp. i. 29.

lations we must enter into the kingdom of God.”<sup>1</sup> What a great mistake we then make when we look on trials as signs of the divine anger, and murmur against them! Let us then, my dear brethren, daily encourage ourselves to practise this patience, and show our readiness to bear with resignation for God’s sake, and as long as He pleases, the cross He has laid on our shoulders, and those which He may have ordained for us in the future. What joy, what contentment of heart we shall feel at the end, if, like St. Clement, we shall be able to congratulate ourselves, and say: My life is ended in this world, and ended in many trials, but yet in all patience! I return to St. Clement; as we have seen, he was like the apostles in his patience under adversity; he was also like them in signs and wonders, as I shall briefly prove in the

### Second Part.

St. Clement wrought countless miracles: a simile.

In his first sermon on SS. Peter and Paul St. Augustine describes the manifold powers given by God to those whom He called to the apostolate. “The Lord gave the apostles power over nature, that they might heal it; over the demons, that they might overthrow them; over the elements, that they might change them; over death, that they might contemn and conquer it.”<sup>2</sup> Such power and might did St. Clement receive from God even while he was still in this mortal life. To give a detailed description of all the wonderful miracles he performed would be impossible for me. Ribadeneira, in his *Life*, imitates painters when they wish to represent a great army of soldiers on a small canvas; they paint one or two files of soldiers fully and in detail, but behind them they put in perspective a number of indistinct heads, swords, and spears, thus leaving to our imaginations the multitude of soldiers which the canvas cannot contain. So does our author, when describing the life of Clement. He relates only one or two miracles, in order to give us an idea of the others, and then refers to a great number of them in a few words, without order or detail; “many and astounding were the miracles he daily wrought.”<sup>3</sup>

He had power over nature.

Clement, like the apostles, had power over nature to heal it. By his prayers the eyes of his persecutors were blinded; by his

<sup>1</sup> Per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei.—Acts xiv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Dedit Dominus potestatem apostolis super naturam, ut eam curarent; super dæmones, ut eos everterent; super elementa, ut ipsa immutarent; supra mortem, ut contemnerent et vincerent.

<sup>3</sup> Multis, stupendisque miraculis, quæ quotidie patrabat.

prayers the blind recovered their sight, and were brought to the light of the true faith. It seemed no miracle any longer for him to cure all kinds of sicknesses and maladies by the mere sign of the cross, so frequent every day were the cures he wrought in this manner; and thereby he drew the hearts of men to himself to such an extent that many of those whom he converted left house and home and friends when he was sent into banishment, and voluntarily followed him over the sea, preferring to be with their dear master in misery than to live without him in liberty and prosperity.

Clement had power over the demons to overthrow them. The evil spirits themselves felt that whenever he came near them, and at his command were obliged to leave the bodies of the possessed and the statues of the idols. A year after his arrival in the Chersonese there was not an idolatrous temple to be found in the whole surrounding country; all the pillars and statues of the demons were overturned, broken up, and destroyed utterly, and in their places sixty-five churches were erected to the true God; moreover, every day over fifty heathens who had adored the devil were made members of the true Church by baptism.

Over demons.

He had power over the elements to change them. This Clement showed when, like another Moses, he caused a spring of water to gush forth from the earth by striking it with a rod. The Christian slaves had to suffer from thirst, along with the other miseries that oppressed them, and had to carry water on their backs a distance of two miles. The compassionate father could not bear the sight of such misery among his children; he made them all kneel down and pray; he joined his supplications with theirs, and behold, a lamb appeared, pointing with its foot to a place on the hill where water was to be found. Hardly had Clement gone thither, and begun to dig, when suddenly a spring of the purest and sweetest water bubbled forth, and became a torrent.

Over the elements.

Finally, he had power over death, which he despised and conquered as a victorious martyr; and after death his sacred body was the greatest wonder of all. The heathen magistrate feared that the Christians would venerate him as a god, and that not the least particle of him might remain for their veneration, he caused the holy man to be sunk into the depths of the sea. All the Christians cried out with one voice: Let us all pray that we may recover the holy body; and behold, the otherwise ungovernable sea separated for the distance of a thousand paces, and opened

Over death.

for them a path in the midst. They entered boldly, and walked along the bottom of the sea, until, to their great surprise, they found a chapel built by the angels, and in it a small stone coffin, in which the sacred body was, while beside it lay the anchor with which it had been sunk. And the same miracle was repeated every year as long as the body remained there; during that time the sea would divide and remain so for seven days, so that the faithful had an opportunity of visiting the sacred relics; and, as Metaphrastes testifies, they obtained from God everything they asked for during those days.

A special  
miracle  
wrought at  
his grave.

The following remarkable incident is related by the holy Bishops Ephraim, Gregory, and others: A woman with her little son visited the grave of Clement in the sea; the child, tired out, fell asleep, and the mother forgot it at the grave and returned with the other Christians to the land. When the usual time had elapsed the sea flowed over the chapel. The afflicted mother began to weep and lament the fate of her son; she could find neither counsel nor consolation, and, as she thought, her only resource was to bewail the untimely death of her dear little one. The following year, in spite of her misfortune the year previous, she made her usual pilgrimage to the shrine of the holy martyr, fell down on her knees without further thought, and began her prayers, when, happening to lift up her eyes to the place where she had lost the child a year ago, she found it sleeping calmly as she had left it. She could hardly contain herself for joy and astonishment; she woke the child, embraced it, and asked what it had been doing, and how its life had been saved; but the child could only say that it had been asleep; how long, it knew not.

So that he  
was like  
the apostles  
in signs,  
which he  
generally  
wrought by  
prayer.

Truly, O God, Thou art wonderful in Thy saints, to whom Thou hast given power over all created things, to make their glory and Thine known! You wonder, O Israelites, at your Moses, who at the command of God opened a way for you in the Red Sea. Only once did that wonder happen amongst you, while this was continued for many years. Learn from this how much more glorious and illustrious the Almighty knows how to render His faithful servants in the law of grace. One thing we must here remark for our instruction, my dear brethren: St. Clement was like the apostles in the signs and wonders he worked; but how did he work them? As we have seen, not one did he perform without prayer, and the chief of them—the procuring the water from the rock to refresh the Christians, and the dividing



of the sea to make an open way for the people—were the result of the united prayers of all the Christians assembled there; let us all pray unanimously, they said.<sup>1</sup>

Behold, I now say with St. Augustine, what great power and efficacy with God the prayers and devotions have that many offer together! When in the beginning the Lord God made the light, He looked at it and saw that it was good: “And God saw the light that it was good.”<sup>2</sup> And the same He said of the firmament, of the water, of the earth, and of all other creatures individually. But when He considered them altogether He found, as it were, that their goodness and beauty were increased: “And God saw all things that He had made, and they were very good.”<sup>3</sup> How did it happen that God then found them *very* good? Such is the question asked by St. Augustine, and his answer is that we must learn from this that if the devotions we perform in private are good in the sight of God, the same devotions, when performed with others, and in public, are much more pleasing and agreeable to Him. It is good to praise and adore God at home, or privately in the church, but still better to unite our prayers with those of our Christian brethren, according to the saying of the Prophet: “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name together.”<sup>4</sup> It is certain that such a united prayer is much more efficacious in obtaining what we wish and desire, because the one makes up with his devotion for that in which the other is deficient. And this is founded on the infallible word of God in the Gospel of St. Matthew: “I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”<sup>5</sup> Now if two or three can do so much, what cannot be effected by a devotion in which many are united of all classes, ages, and sexes; in a sodality united to pray and praise God? Oh, says Tertullian, in that way they constitute, so to speak, an army to storm heaven, and to

The great power of prayer, especially when many pray together.

<sup>1</sup> Oremus omnes unanimes.

<sup>2</sup> Vidit Deus lucem, quod esset bona.—Gen. i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Viditque Deus cuncta quæ fecerat, et erant valde bona.—Ibid. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Magnificate Dominum mecum, et exaltemus nomen ejus in idipsum.—Ps. xxxvii. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Dico vobis: quia si duo ex vobis consenserint super terram de omni re, quancumque petierint, fiet illis a Patre meo qui in cœlis est. Ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum.—Matt. xviii. 19, 20.



compel the Almighty, as it were, to restrain His chastising hand, and to grant them the graces they desire.<sup>1</sup>

Exhortation  
to zeal in  
the sodality.

Should not this, dear sodalists, be to us an encouragement to be more zealous in attending the meetings of this sodality? In future, then, when the feast-days of the brethren here arrive, think of the words: "Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol His name together." Let us go to praise the Lord in concert! We will try it, and shall see that the divine promise will be fulfilled: "If two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven." Amen.

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FIFTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON THE COUNTLESS HOLY MARTYRS OF TREVES.

Subject.

1. The inhabitants of Treves are the children of saints; what an honor for the city! 2. The inhabitants of Treves are the children of saints; what a shame for the city if its people should deviate from the constancy and virtue of their holy ancestors!—*Preached on the feast of the Martyrs of Treves.*

Text.

*Filii sanctorum sumus.*—Tob. ii. 18.

"We are the children of saints."

Introduction.

The question was asked, in olden times, among the Macedonians, whether it was a greater glory for King Alexander to have been born of Philip, or for Philip to have Alexander for his son. My dear brethren, I may ask a similar question to-day, namely: Is it a greater glory for the city of Treves to have been the mother of so many countless martyrs whose feast we celebrate to-day, or a greater glory for the Christians who are now in Treves to have had so many holy ancestors? Be the answer what it may, both honors undoubtedly belong to this city, because she has brought into the world and reared so many holy children who shed their blood for Christ, and because she still nourishes so many

<sup>1</sup> Quasi manu facta Deum oramus.

who are the descendants of these holy ancestors; both these circumstances redound to her undying honor. Christian inhabitants of this city, as I am about to address you now, I shall confine myself to the latter, namely:

Plan of Discourse.

*“We are the children of saints;” the people of Treves are the children of saints; what an honor for the city! The first part. “We are the children of saints;” the people of Treves are the children of saints; what a disgrace for the city if its inhabitants should deviate from the constancy and virtue of their holy ancestors! The second part. The first will be to the greater glory of the martyrs of Treves; the second will serve for the edification and profit of the present inhabitants of that city.*

Do you, O holy martyrs, and thou especially, Queen of martyrs, virginal mother Mary, and you, O holy angels, who fought on the side of the martyrs, obtain that profit for us by your prayers!

So close is the union and bond of nature between parents and children, ancestors and their posterity, that the latter inherit from the former their honor or shame, their glory or disgrace, rather than their wealth or poverty. Such is the express testimony of the Holy Ghost: “The glory of children are their fathers.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, “a father without honor is the disgrace of the son.”<sup>2</sup> Hence it is that we look on children as good or bad, according to the nature of their parents. Saul, when enraged with Jonathan, gave him a sharp reproof, and put him to great shame, by calling him, in his anger, “thou son of a woman that is a ravisher of a man.”<sup>3</sup> But Gabelus, when he embraced the younger Tobias, said in joyful accents: “The God of Israel bless thee, because thou art the son of a very good and just man, and that feareth God and doth almsdeeds.”<sup>4</sup> In the same manner, as St. Paulinus remarks, when the evangelists wish to praise any one in a special manner they first of all speak of his honorable descent. Thus St. Luke praises the parents of St. John the Baptist before commencing to describe his won-

Children generally inherit their parents' honor.

<sup>1</sup> Gloria filiorum patres eorum.—Prov. xvii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Dedecus filii pater sine honore.—Eccelus. iii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Fili mulieris virum ultro rapientis.—I. Kings xx. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Benedicat te Deus Israel, quia filius es optimi viri, et justi, et timentis Deum, et elemosynas facientis.—Tob. ix. 9.

derful life: "They were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame."<sup>1</sup> What else does the Evangelist mean by this, asks St. Ambrose, unless "to let us see that St. John is ennobled by his parents"?<sup>2</sup> So that St. John is praised on account of the piety and goodness of his parents. The wise Solomon, in order to give authority to his books, begins by saying whose son he was: "The parables of Solomon, the son of David;"<sup>3</sup> so he begins the Proverbs. "The words of Ecclesiastes, the son of David;"<sup>4</sup> so he begins the Book of Ecclesiastes. When Our Lord said to the Pharisees that He was not of this world, they at once referred to their ancient descent from Abraham: "We are the seed of Abraham;"<sup>5</sup> "Abraham is our father."<sup>6</sup> Where else in our own days does the nobility and respectability of families come from but from their ancestors, who in former times showed great bravery in war, or skill in managing state affairs, or performed other praiseworthy exploits that made their names illustrious before the world, so that they were elevated above others by princes, kings, and emperors? On their account their descendants are held in honor above the common people. So true is it that "the glory of children are their fathers."

The people  
of Treves  
are children  
and descen-  
dants of  
martyrs.

If that is the case, my dear brethren, oh, what glory for this city, and what honor and dignity have fallen to the lot of her children! I will not now refer to the antiquity, excellence, magnanimity, power, and reputation of your heroic forefathers, by whom this city was founded, increased, and continued to our own times. In these matters there is no nation in Europe that excels Treves; so that in ancient times the blind heathens traced her origin to Jupiter and Vesta, whom they looked on as their father and mother. I leave to the heathens their foolish nonsense, and I leave to the world also the vainglory it seeks from others. For true glory and nobility consist in virtue alone and in Christian fortitude. "We are the children of saints." If any one can with truth make that boast, you are the fortunate ones, O inhabitants of Treves! You are children of the saints, children of the martyrs, children of the blood-relations of Christ,

<sup>1</sup> Erant justi ambo ante Deum, incedentes in omnibus mandatis et justificationibus Domini sine querela.—Luke i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Nisi ut Sanctus Joannes nobilitetur parentibus.

<sup>3</sup> Parabolæ Salomonis filii David.—Prov. i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Verba Ecclesiastæ filii David.—Eccles. i. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Semen Abrahamæ sumus.—John viii. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Pater noster Abraham est.—Ibid. 39.

as St. Vincent Ferrer calls the martyrs. You are children of the angels, according to the words of St. Chrysostom: "The martyrs and the angels are distinguished only in name;"<sup>1</sup> you are children of those who, according to the testimony of St. Basil, "are the general protectors of the human race, most powerful ambassadors with God, the stars of the world, the flowers of the Church."<sup>2</sup> You are children of those who, according to St. Cyprian, will be, with Christ, judges of the living and the dead; whose honor and glory excels that of the other saints in heaven; who by their bravery overcame torments and tyrants, and boldly confessed their God under pains and torture, sealing with their blood the truth of their faith. Such are your ancestors, O children of Treves!

Pay attention and see how bravely they fought for the honor of God. That day had come which brought joy to heaven, glory to the city of Treves, and which will be held to the end of the world as a solemn feast—that day when the bloodthirsty judge Riccius Varus began to rage against the Christian faith, that day on which, for the first time, the chief man and burgo-master of this city, St. Palmatius, along with other Catholic councillors and princes of the state, as they are called in the Annals, publicly confessed their faith in presence of all, and offered to give their life's blood for it, and thus, like true shepherds, opened by their blood the gates of heaven to the sheep entrusted to their care; for on the following day the whole flock they left behind, without distinction of state, sex, or age, were driven together, and hewed and smitten down. Oh, what a cruel, and, at the same time, what a glorious spectacle it must have been to behold those gray-haired old men, venerable matrons, tender virgins, young boys, mothers with their children, running with joyful cries out of their houses, vieing with each other in offering themselves to the points of the swords and spears, contending with pious zeal who should be the first to hasten to the slaughter, as if it were a wedding-feast, and suffering death with every sign of joy and exultation! What a sight, worthy of the admiration of heaven, to see the streets covered with dead bodies, the ground reddened with blood, the Moselle choked with corpses, so that its waters were hardly cold any longer, but rather run-

Who shed  
their blood  
for Christ  
with the  
greatest  
constancy.

<sup>1</sup> Martyres et angeli nomine tantum distincti sunt.

<sup>2</sup> Communes humani generis custodes, legati apud Deum potentissimi, astra mundi, flores Ecclesiarum.

ning with warm blood, and bearing the holy crimson tide from Treves throughout the world, thus testifying to the neighboring lands the faith of Christ! This I say with St. Gregory: "Look at the whole world, O brethren; it is full of martyrs."<sup>1</sup> I change those words, and say: "Look at the whole city; it is full of martyrs;" there are so many of them that the counting of them must be left to the Almighty alone. Therefore this feast-day has been instituted to honor the innumerable martyrs of Treves. So many were there that if one were to ask for relics from me I might well say what a Pope once said to a stranger who asked for relics; he took a handful of dust from the ground, and gave it to him with the words: There you have them; for you must know that the dust of the earth here is mingled with the blood of martyrs. The same might be said of the city of Treves; all the places round may be looked on as shrines, because they are inundated with the blood of martyrs.

What an honor for them, and how they should revere their forefathers!

Behold, I must again say to you, children of Treves, what great ancestors you have, how noble your descent! They are saints crowned in heaven, whom men now honor above all the kings and emperors of the world. You are children of the saints; oh, what a great honor and glory! O holy ancestors, now citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, what thanks do not your children and descendants owe you, since you have prepared for them such a glorious road to heaven! In what honor should we not hold you and your relics that we have amongst us, which have brought us such a great name and renown! What devotion and love must we not have for you, whose blood has been the seed from which sprang so many Christians! With what confidence can we not appeal to you in all our needs, since it is by your help and intercession the inhabitants of our city have preserved their faith in the midst of the heresies that have overrun Germany! What do we not owe you, in a word, since it is from you we have the happiness of being able to boast that we are children of saints! I go on to the

### Second Part.

The holy martyrs left their children the example of their lives.

"We are the children of saints." A glorious title! But I fear that it is one that brings to some more shame than honor. When the philosopher Seneca was on his deathbed, and was asked what lesson he wished to leave behind him for his disciples, he

<sup>1</sup> Totum mundum fratres aspiciate; martyribus plenus est.



made an effort to recall for a moment his soul, which was on the point of taking wing, opened his glassy eyes, and with broken voice said these few but impressive words: "I leave you the image of my life."<sup>1</sup> As if to say: You have hitherto had before your eyes the life of your teacher; this life of mine, which, as you have seen, I have used for the practice of virtue, I now bequeath you as one that you have to learn from and to imitate. "I leave you the image of my life." Children of Treves, what legacy have your holy ancestors left you? It seems to me that I hear them, with blood-streaming eyes and mutilated bodies, crying out to all their descendants: "We leave you the image of our lives," of our holiness, of our virtues, of our constancy in the faith even to death; this is our last will, this your inheritance. And the same words are uttered now by their sacred relics that repose here: We leave you the image of our lives. Consider the example of your holy ancestors; with what zeal they fought for the honor of God and for their faith; how important they judged their eternal salvation, so that to ensure it they gave up for God's sake property, blood, and life; this glorious example we leave you for imitation.

Now if we show no traces of this inheritance, what will it profit us to have saints for our fathers? Is it any honor to me to have a king for my father if I live as a peasant? Is it any renown to me that my ancestors were celebrated for skill, piety, and holiness if I am an ill-reared, undutiful, wicked, and ignorant son? "Let no one," says Simon de Cassia, "trust in the justice of his ancestors, if he himself is ruled by wickedness."<sup>2</sup> "What better were the sons of Samuel," asks Mendoza, "for having a holy father, since they did not inherit his virtues?"<sup>3</sup> What better was the shameless Cham for having Noe as his father? What better the wicked Ismael for having been born from Abraham; the wrathful Esau for having been born from Isaac; the rebellious Absalom for having been born from David; the impious Manasses for having been born from Ezechias; the reckless Joachim for having been born from Josias? They were all bad children who were born of holy fathers. And that was all the more to their shame, since by their wicked lives they dishonored their descent. "Although you may have an illustrious father," says St. John Chrysostom, "do not think that enough

The latter  
must follow  
it.

<sup>1</sup> *Imaginem vitæ meæ vobis relinquo.*

<sup>2</sup> *Nemo confidat in prædecessoris iustitia, si sibi dominetur iniquitas.*

<sup>3</sup> *Quid filios Samuelis necessitudo iuvat parentis, cuius non fuerunt virtutis hæredes?*

for your salvation, honor, or glory, unless you resemble him in your way of life.”<sup>1</sup> “If you be the children of Abraham,” said Christ to the Pharisees, “do the works of Abraham.”<sup>2</sup> Imitate that great man; show, not by words, but by deeds, that you are descended from such a noble father. The life of Abraham was holy and innocent; if you are the children of Abraham your lives must resemble his. “But now you seek to kill Me, a man who have spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God; this Abraham did not.”<sup>3</sup> So that you are wicked children of a good father. This, as Barradius remarks, concerns us all; and therefore I say to you: If you are the children of saints, do the works of saints. If you wish to inherit renown and fame from your ancestors you must walk in their footsteps, and by your lives and actions show that you are not degenerate children.

Their  
shame will  
be the  
greater if  
they do not  
live piously.

Our ancestors are saints of God; what a shame if their children should be wicked! Our ancestors were martyrs of Christ; what a shame if their children should be martyrs of the world, the flesh, and the devil! Our ancestors did not allow a cruel death to make them deviate from the path of rectitude, from the love of God; what a shame for their children if human respect and the fear of a slight loss, not to speak of the fear of death, should make them renounce God by sin! Our ancestors, to gain heaven, to save their souls, sacrificed life, and goods, and all they possessed; what a shame for their children, if, for the sake of a wretched piece of money, a breath of honor, a momentary, brutish lust, the love of a vain creature, they should sell their souls to the devil! Our ancestors defended the faith with their lives; what a shame for their children, in whose veins still flows the blood of those holy forefathers, if they, Catholic in name, dishonor that faith by leading wicked lives! Our ancestors ran joyfully to throw themselves on the points of spears and swords, and met torments and death with exultation; what a shame for their children to give way to murmurs and complaints in the slight crosses and daily trials ordained for them by God! Our ancestors kept God before their eyes as their sole end and reward; what a shame for their children to allow their hearts to be fixed on earth and worldly goods! What a shame for an undutiful child to dishon-

<sup>1</sup> Etiam si celebrem habeas parentem, ne putes tibi illud ad salutem sufficere, aut ad honorem et gloriam, nisi et moribus illi cognatus sis.

<sup>2</sup> Si filii Abrahamæ estis, opera Abrahamæ facite.—John viii. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Nunc autem queritis me interficere, hominem qui veritatem vobis locutus sum. quam audivi a Deo: hoc Abraham non fecit.—Ibid. 40.

or by impurity and disgraceful conduct those places that were sprinkled and watered by the blood of such holy ancestors!

“In the land of the saints he hath done wicked things,”<sup>1</sup> says the Prophet Isaias with astonishment, as if he were speaking of a terrible thing. In the land, in the city, in the dwelling-place of the saints he has done evil; what a shame! There he has not hesitated to practise wickedness, to lead a godless life. If this were done by any here, would not the holy remains of the martyrs turn in their graves in this consecrated earth? “Son of man,” said God to the Prophet Ezechiel, “show to the house of Israel the temple;” show it to that thankless people, who do not deserve to be called Mine; “and let them be ashamed of their iniquities . . . and be ashamed of all that they have done.”<sup>2</sup> And why were they to be ashamed and blush at the sight of the temple? Because there they could see the heroic exploits of their glorious forefathers depicted—exploits which they were far from imitating. O children of Treves, if any of you—and I trust such is not the case—lead bad lives, then look on this temple, in which some of your holy forefathers repose, and be ashamed of your vices and the wickedness of your lives. What confusion will be the lot of those degenerate children when, on the last day, their ancestors will come out of this temple and stand before them! “Behold, the Lord cometh with thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to reprove all the ungodly for all the works of their ungodliness, whereby they have done ungodly.”<sup>3</sup>

And if they are wicked in the land of saints.

I conclude with the words of St. Chrysologus: Beloved hearers (I should say holy hearers, because you are children of the saints), we are the children of saints. Children must follow their parents. Come, then: “Let us act up to our dignity; let us live for heaven; let us be like our forefathers.”<sup>4</sup> Let us imitate the virtues of our forefathers, their zeal for the honor of God, their constancy in the faith, their unwearied fervor in good, their earnest devotion and love of Our Lord! “Speak not so,” said Tobias to his friends, who ridiculed him for his devotion, fear of God, and works of mercy, “for we are the children of

Exhortation to imitate the holiness of their ancestors.

<sup>1</sup> In terra sanctorum iniqua gessit.—Is. xxvi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Fili hominis, ostende domui Israel templum, et confundantur ab iniquitatibus suis . . . et erubescant ab omnibus quæ fecerunt.—Ezech. xliii. 10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ecce venit Dominus in sanctis millibus suis, facere iudicium contra omnes, et arguere omnes impios de omnibus operibus impletatis eorum, quibus impie egerunt.—Ep. Jud. 14, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Respondeamus generi, vivamus cœlo, patrem similitudine referamus.—S. Chrysol. Serm. 10.

saints, and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from Him.”<sup>1</sup> This should form the daily lesson taught by parents to their children, by masters to their servants and subjects, and by every one to himself in all temptations, occasions, and dangers of sin. Speak not so; give up that habit of cursing, swearing, quarrelling, abusing, detracting, lying; for we are children of the saints; our forefathers spoke in a far different manner. Think not so; renounce those bad thoughts, imaginations, and desires that you have been wont to indulge in deliberately; for we are the children of saints, whose hearts were always directed to God and heaven! Do not so; let there be in your works no trace of injustice, pride, impurity, vindictiveness, enmity, drunkenness; in a word, let nothing appear in them that savors of sin; for we are the children of saints, whose whole lives were virtuous and holy. Look at the relics of your forefathers that are placed on the altars for public veneration; do not disgrace them by depriving them of the joy they who now rejoice in heaven should have in you on earth. Their lives should be the model of yours, and yours an exact copy of theirs; their relics and images that are everywhere held up before your eyes and minds should be to you as the statues of their forefathers were to the Lacedemonians of old—statues which they caused to be erected in the senate-house as an encouragement and exhortation to their children, with these remarkable words as an inscription: “If you, O Lacedemonians, behave like these, you will be honored like them.”<sup>2</sup> But I say: O dear inhabitants of Treves, children of the saints, if you live as they did, and follow the example of holiness they gave you, you will be holy like them, and like them will have a crown and reward and glory in heaven.

Resolution  
to enact ef-  
fect.

Yes, O holy ancestors, such shall be our unanimous resolution; never for anything whatsoever shall we act so as to dishonor our noble and holy race which descends from you. Your virtue and constancy, your love of God, your sanctity in life and death we shall always keep before our eyes, that, encouraged by your example, we may fight to the death against the perverse inclinations of corrupt nature, against all the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and remain steadfast in the love of God till

<sup>1</sup> Nolite ita loqui; quoniam filii sanctorum sumus, et vitam illam expectamus, quam Deus daturus est his, qui fidem suam nunquam mutant ab eo.—Tob. ii. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Si fueritis sicut isti, eritis sicut isti.

the end. Thus, as worthy children of such holy progenitors, we shall merit to be protected by you in all dangers, and, after having been your imitators here on earth, to be one day with you where you are now, and to rejoice with you in heaven. Amen.

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SIXTIETH SERMON.

ON THE HONOR WHICH THE PEOPLE OF TREVES DERIVE  
FROM THEIR HOLY MARTYRS.

Subject.

The people of Treves derive the greatest renown from their holy forefathers and martyrs: 1. In the sight of heaven; 2. In the sight of men. Therefore they owe them a debt of all possible gratitude, devotion, honor, and love.—*Preached on the feast of the Martyrs of Treves.*

Text.

*Laudemus viros gloriosos, et parentes nostros in generatione sua.*—Eccles. xlv. 1.

“Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation.”

Introduction.

If ever the chief cities of the world showed honor to any one they did so to their founders from whom they acknowledge to have sprung, and from whom, as from parents, they have received life. Therefore the city of Rome honored Romulus, not only by beautiful statues, but also by placing him in the number of the immortal gods. This special gratitude and honor which cities owe their founders cannot be required of thee, O city of Treves, for thou art not so new and young in the world as to know for certain who was the founder to whom thou mayest trace thy beginning. All historians acknowledge this to be doubtful. Some, with Masenius, date the origin of Treves from Trebeta; others, with Brower, attribute the origin, not to him, but to Gomer, the son of Japhet; others among the old heathens trace its origin to Dis, or Mercury; others, to Vesta, whom they then adored as their mother. The time also at which Treves was built is unknown; some say it was built at the time of the Patriarch Abraham; others make it still older, and date its



origin back to the days of Noe, after the deluge. Be this as it may, if, O city of Treves, thy great antiquity is lost in the mist of ages, so that thou canst not know who placed the first stone in thee, and gave thee life, and so thou hast no opportunity of showing thyself grateful to him, yet it cannot be unknown to thee that thou hast reared brave inhabitants, children, and sons, who fought heroically for God and their faith; I mean the innumerable martyrs of Treves, whose yearly commemoration we now celebrate. These are the glorious men, the men of renown, thy forefathers, who have given thee a far better life, and gained far greater honor and glory for thee than all thy former founders who in the beginning surrounded thee with walls and made thee famous. And for that very reason thou owest these holy martyrs a far greater honor, love, and gratitude, as I now mean to show, to the furthering of thy devotion towards them.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*Thy greatest renown and glory, O city of Treves, thou hast from thy holy forefathers and martyrs: thy greatest glory in the sight of heaven; thy greatest glory in the sight of the world. Such is the subject and division of this panegyric. Therefore thou owest them all possible gratitude, devotion, love, and honor. Such shall be the conclusion.*

To enable us to fulfil our duty in this respect, do Thou encourage us, O King and Crown of martyrs, Christ Jesus, through their intercession and that of Mary, Thy virginal Mother, and of the holy angels.

The city of Treves was in a very dangerous state

What glory before heaven and earth—that is, what honor in the sight of God and men—thou, O city of Treves, hast inherited from thy holy forefathers I cannot better describe than by recalling to thy mind and memory the—shall I say troublous and miserable, or rather joyous and happy—condition in which thou then wert when the holy martyrs began their combat, and terminated it victoriously in the very place in which we now are? I must call it a happy and joyous condition on account of the glorious result, which we have just reason for admiring, and a troublous and anxious one when I consider its sorrowful circumstances and great danger. For the question was whether the city would remain faithful to the one true God, to whom it had once for all sworn fidelity, or would perjure itself, turn from

Him, and adore stocks and stones, and the demons who resided in those graven images. The question was whether it would retain and defend the faith it received in the time of St. Peter from Eucharius, his disciple, and acknowledge itself Christian, or by a hateful apostacy deny that faith, and go back to its former heathendom and the worship of false gods. Every motive that could urge it to adopt this last desperate resolution was at hand, while to induce it to keep faith with God there was no motive beyond the fortitude of a Christian mind, supported by the mighty arm and the special helping grace of God. Such was thy condition, O Treves, in the year of Our Lord 286, so that thou wert then in the utmost extremity.

Hardly had the tyrant Riccius Varus entered the city with his heathenish and bloodthirsty soldiers when the inhabitants, with sorrowing eyes, had to behold the images of the gods erected in every street and lane. The magistrate and all the citizens were commanded at the first order to abjure Christianity, and to offer sacrifice after the manner of the Roman heathens; if they refused they were threatened with the most terrible and cruel instruments of torture—chains, rods, scourges, swords, spears, gallows, wheels, burning torches, frying-pans, boiling oil, molten pitch, and all the implements of cruelty that the rage of the tyrant could invent; such were the tongues which were to persuade them to accede to his commands or else the punishments to chastise their disobedience. What a dangerous time for thee, O city! How difficult for thee to save thy honor, thy faith!

I know well that when in former times this city was assaulted in grievous wars it was not wanting in brave men, who, with an heroic contempt for life, sacrificed all they had for the sake of freedom, and for the general welfare; but they were not unavenged, for on both sides wounds were repaid with wounds, blood with blood, life with life. But now there was question of going deliberately to a violent and painful death, in a far different manner—in a manner which, according to the judgment of the world, is dishonorable: offering one's self to the slaughter without any effort at defence, without even opening one's mouth. In other times brave men fought who were accustomed to bloodshed and the roughness of the soldier's life; but now all, young and old, great and small, strong and weak, rich and poor, master and servant, lord and lady, boy and girl—all, without distinction, had to enter the arena; all had to make their choice of suf-

When Riccius Varus persecuted the Christian faith.

Shown from the circumstances.

fering a cruel martyrdom or sacrificing to the gods. Then the father had to look on at his son, the son at his aged father, the mother at her daughter, the daughter at her dear mother, the husband at his wife, the bridegroom at his spouse, while they were suffering the most exquisite tortures, having their bones broken, their limbs cut off, their bodies stretched on the rack; parents were obliged to carry their little children in their arms to the rack, the torture, the stake, and to be butchered with them; all, without exception, had to abandon whatever they had in the world, and to give themselves up to torments and death. The mere recollection of such a time of anxiety and cruelty is enough to make us shudder.

In which we should probably have lost courage.

My dear brethren, how should we have behaved in such circumstances? I hardly dare say that in all of us who are here there would have been constancy enough to withstand such a severe trial. There was indeed question of defending the faith, and in that case no true Christian should hesitate to give up his life if necessary, for heaven is infallibly promised as the immediate reward of martyrdom; even the mere thought of dying for Christ, of being a martyr, is wont to excite a secret joy, desire, and longing in the mind of the Christian. But it is one thing to think of this, and another to fulfil it in reality; it is one thing to wish and desire to be martyred, when we are still far away from the chance of such a death, and another to have the actual experience of it. How it hurts us to have a needle prick our hand, to have a spark of fire fall on the bare skin! and what contortions we make with the pain thus caused! But what am I talking of? Does it not cost a deal of trouble to bear an angry look with patience, to overcome the love, fear, or respect for a mere mortal, to hold our own passions in check, so that they may not go too far? Ah, even lesser difficulties are sometimes powerful enough to take from us all strength and courage, so that we forget the laws of our faith, God, and heaven. What resolution, then, should we come to if we saw the instruments of torture ready, displayed before our eyes, and a painful death awaiting us? I, for my part, would not dare to promise that I should be constant under such circumstances; I should think that I would creep away somewhere, and hide myself through fear of such dreadful torments.

If our forefathers had done that,

But in those days, O city of Treves, to thy undying renown, those heroic souls were created and chosen in the special designs

of Divine Providence for this difficult combat. And if it had not been for them, what would have become of thee? Of what use to thee would have been thy ancient descent, thy power, thy pomp and splendor? Imagine that those ancestors of thine had given up their faith, terrified by the torments threatened by the tyrant; that they obeyed his will and sacrificed to the gods; then unhappy would have been thy fate, O Treves; deplorable thy condition in being descended from such ancestors! What a legacy they would in that case have bequeathed thee, such as in olden times parents left their children, namely, blind heathenism, involved in all sorts of errors and vices, thus entailing the eternal ruin of souls! Should we then have seen so many magnificent temples built all over the land to the true God, and not rather instead of them a stone Jupiter, an iron Mars, a wooden Apollo, a marble Venus, to whom thou wouldst then have offered sacrifice with all kinds of uncouth ceremonies? Where, then, would have been thy precious and glorious relics and shrines? What else wouldst thou have done with them but made sport of them, after the manner of heathens? And if with the lapse of time and the cessation of persecution it had pleased God to restore to thee the light of faith, the stain incurred would have been so deeply branded on thee that all the waters of the Moselle would not have sufficed to wash it out. Hadst thou once given up thy faith by a hideous apostasy, thy disgrace would have been everlasting.

what a  
misery and  
shame it  
would have  
been for  
Treves.

But I must not continue this supposition, lest some should form unworthy thoughts of our heroic ancestors. Truly, they showed themselves quite different in reality, and they have left to you another legacy for your greater glory! Scipio boasted in olden times that he had in his army three hundred soldiers who would have cast themselves into the sea at a single command from him. Oh, far greater, nay, countless, was the number of the heroic and truly Christian soldiers whom Treves could then point to as being quite ready, without even a word of command, to cast themselves into a torrent of blood for God and their faith, who were not to be overcome by any cruelty, who made a feast and a triumph of pains and torments. Heroes were they whom Treves could then point to. What kind of heroes? Old men, weak women, little children. What did they dare to do? To triumph over cuts and wounds, torture and butchery, fire and flame. And how did they meet those things? Even with smiling coun-

But they all  
heroically  
suffered  
martyrdom.



tenances, singing, exulting, and blessing God. The executioners were not so ready to cut and strike as the Christians of Treves were to receive the blows; the former were tired with tormenting before the latter were tired of suffering. As Tertullian says of the first Christians, they were tortured, and they increased in number; <sup>1</sup> the more they were tortured, burnt, slain, the greater the number of those who presented themselves to undergo martyrdom; if a hundred were put to death, a thousand stood up in their place, ready to suffer death; if one had lost an arm, a leg, by the sword, he stretched forth the other to be completely maimed for the sake of the faith. The day was spent in butchery; swords and spears were blunted; the butchers themselves were wearied and required rest; the streets and lanes ran with blood; and yet the torturers could not prevail on one man, woman, or child to stretch forth even a finger in honor of the false gods. The only fear of the Christians was lest any of them should be left out of the number of the martyrs, through the shortness of the day.

And thus  
gained  
glory and  
renown for  
this city,  
for which  
we owe  
them  
thanks and  
reverence.

See, O city of Treves, how thy forefathers acted! Could they well have made thee more glorious, renowned, triumphant before God and the whole court of heaven than when they thus shed for their Creator the blood they had received from Him, and filled heaven with their souls? And from this judge for thyself what gratitude, honor, love, and confidence thou dost owe them. If they had been strangers and foreigners, who had nothing to do with thee; if there had been but a few who thus gloriously suffered death in this city for Christ—even that would have been a great honor for thee, and thou wouldst have been in duty bound always to celebrate their feast with a most tender devotion. Thus the city of Ravenna honors St. Vitalis; Messina St. Placidus; Rome St. Sebastian; Cologne the eleven thousand virgins, for no other reason than because they were bedewed by the blood of those martyrs. How great is not then thy obligation towards thy holy martyrs, of whom there were not merely one or two, but countless numbers; and who were not foreigners, but thy own forefathers, born and brought up in thy walls, and who not only in thee, but for thee and the salvation of all thy posterity gave up their lives! These thou hast to thank for thy ancient, true, and only saving faith, which, witnessed and confirmed by their blood, thou hast hitherto preserved incorrupt.

<sup>1</sup> Torquebantur, et multiplicabantur.



Thus they have brought thee forth in the spirit, after having generated thee according to the flesh, as St. Gregory says of St. Felicitas;<sup>1</sup> from them thou hast received that glorious name which is thy boast even at the present day: *Holy Treves*;<sup>2</sup> so that we may apply to thee and thy inhabitants the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians: "Therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow-citizens," blood-relations and descendants of "the saints."<sup>3</sup> By their means heaven has, as it were, made a compact with thee to regard thee on their account and by their intercession as its city and fortress. St. Chrysostom looks on that city as fortunate which has even one martyr buried within its walls, "for the body that suffered for Christ still cries out, and is heard in favor of the citizens."<sup>4</sup> What a happiness is thine, then, O Treves! and how high must thou not stand in the sight of heaven! For thou hast brought forth not merely one, but many thousands of martyrs, and hast had in thy possession up to the present those whose prayers for thee are always ascending to the throne of God.

And if we think there is any importance to be attached to the praise and esteem of men, what could have brought thee greater honor than was earned for thee by the constancy of thy holy martyrs? If there had been a place in the world where Treves was unknown, the bravery of the holy martyrs would alone have sufficed to bring its fame thither. It is true that in olden times—and who can deny it?—the fame of thy greatness and widespread dominion, the beauty of thy buildings and palaces, the number of thy inhabitants was spread throughout all Europe; but later on thou didst draw to thee far distant nations, who left their own countries and came here in crowds to see with their own eyes the place of which they had heard so much, and to render the tribute of humble homage to the ground bedewed by the blood of so many martyrs. This fame of thine drew hither not only crowds of the common people, but even the crowned heads of the world—popes, cardinals, emperors, kings, princes, nobles. Among the popes who came from Rome was Innocent III., with seventeen cardinals; amongst the emperors was Maximilian I., with a large retinue, who came in the year 1517; amongst the

They have also made Treves glorious before the world.

<sup>1</sup> Parturivit spiritu, quos carne pepererat.

<sup>2</sup> Sancta Treviris.

<sup>3</sup> Non estis hospites et advenæ, sed estis cives sanctorum.—Ephes. ii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Felix civitas in qua vel unus sanctus quiescit; corpus enim illud, quod pro Christo passum est, adhuc clamat pro concivibus suis, et exauditur.

kings, to say nothing of many more, was Theodobert, king of Austrasia, in the year 538, who, having laid aside his crown and bared his head, went to honor the relics and shrines of the martyrs, and to implore their help on bended knees. And what else brings so many people in procession, even in our own days, from far-off lands, except their desire to show their devotion to these and other holy relics, and thus to fulfil their vows?

And given  
it a name  
it never  
had before.

You may say that in former times kings, emperors, and other great ones dwelt in the city of Treves; that it was nothing new then to see crowned heads here. I know well that such was the case; but what was their object in dwelling here? Was it to honor thee, O city? Not at all; but rather to bring thee under their yoke and bondage; to rule thee and be served by thee. And if thou dost look on that as an honor, how far greater the glory that redounds to thee from the fact that those crowned heads came afterwards, not to receive service from thee, but to worship thee and the ground on which thou art built as a sacred thing, as the dwelling-place of saints! In short, I may well use with regard to thee the words spoken by St. Chrysostom about the city of Rome: "I love Rome on this account, although I might praise her for other reasons also; but I look on her as especially praiseworthy in this, that Paul ended his life amongst those who now possess his sacred body, a fact which in itself alone is more admirable than all the other wonders of Rome put together."<sup>1</sup> The same I might say of Treves: I love, praise, and extol thee, O city of Treves! and am moved to do so, not by thy ancient descent, thy greatness, thy glory, thy power, thy wealth, thy valor in war, in which thou didst surpass almost all the cities of the world; I admire thee, not on account of the magnificent buildings, palaces, columns, bridges, amphitheatres, capitols with which thou wert adorned (where can we see a sign of those things now? They are all laid waste); not on account of the great heroes, princes, and emperors who dwelt and died in thee (where are now their graves, their ashes? Who thinks of them any longer?). For this reason, then, alone I praise thee, O city, and call thee fortunate; for this reason alone undying praise belongs to thee, because so many—nay, such countless numbers of thy inhabitants exposed their lives within thy walls for their

<sup>1</sup> Ego et Romam propterea diligo, tametsi aliunde illam laudare queam; ob id illam beatam prædico, quod Paulus postremo vitam apud eos finivit, cujus sanctum corpus ipsi possident; et propterea civitas illa hinc facta est insignis magis, quam ab aliis rebus omnibus.—S. Chrysost. in Ep. ad Rom. Serm. 31.

God and faith, and have left us their sacred relics as a perpetual memorial for our veneration. This is in itself enough to make other towns view thee with a holy envy. Oh, what a glorious triumph will one day be that of Treves, when, in the sight of all angels and men, Palmatius and the councillors of the city, crowned with the palm of victory, will come forth from their graves, and bringing with them a whole host of martyrs, crimsoned with their own blood, will stand before the Judge, and after having been praised for their bravery and virtue, will enter gloriously into heaven! These and similar thoughts suggested by the subject I leave to your pious consideration, as time does not permit me to dwell on them.

Judge now for yourselves what honor, service, devotion, and love are deserved from you by those happy souls now reigning in heaven, who by their glorious death on earth have earned for you such great renown and fame before heaven and earth. What a disgraceful thing it would be for the people of Treves to have to be exhorted by strangers to show reverence to their own saints and ancestors! Many come still from foreign lands, over mountain and valley, by land and water, with much difficulty and hardship, and often hungry and thirsty, to the shrines and churches of these glorious martyrs, singing and praying at their graves, honoring and kissing on bended knee their holy relics; while they who live in the midst of these shrines, they whom the martyrs are most closely connected with, their own children and descendants, who have the sacred remains always at hand, and can visit them without difficulty daily, almost hourly, without having to go further than a few steps from their doors—while they, I say, are cold and tepid in venerating those holy martyrs, and seldom or never think of them. Have not the martyrs of Treves just cause for complaining that they receive more honor, love, and homage from strangers than from their own fellow-citizens and countrymen? that they are more loved and praised by foreigners than by their own relations? that they are visited and called upon with more confidence by pilgrims from far-off lands than by their own descendants?

But I hope that no such cause for complaint has been given as yet. Continue, then, O city of Treves, as far as possible, to further the honor of thy holy martyrs, for in doing so thou wilt add to thine own! “Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation.” Let us always praise and invoke

What a shameful ingratitude it would be for us not to honor them in a special manner!

Exhortation to devotion and reverence towards them.

those holy martyrs, and appeal to them in all our wants as children to their parents; let us lay our petitions here before their shrines, and so we may trust that you, O glorious ancestors, will also show us constantly that you are with God powerful and faithful protectors and guardians of this city, wherein you are especially interested, that you are, as St. Ambrose says, the princes and preservers of our faith, the guardians of our souls, the patterns and models of the Christian life for us; so that when one day your sacred bodies shall arise from this place, we, as your children, shall be associated with you in the blessed company of the elect in eternal glory. Amen.

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SIXTY-FIRST SERMON.

ON THE LESSON WHICH THE PEOPLE OF TREVES SHOULD  
LEARN FROM THEIR HOLY MARTYRS.

Subject.

The holy martyrs teach us: 1. That, after their example, we should live according to the Christian faith; 2. That, after their example, we should die in and for that faith.—*Preached on the feast of the Innumerable Martyrs of Treves.*

Text.

*Interroga patrem tuum, et annuntiabit tibi; majores tuos, et dicent tibi.*—Deut. xxxii. 7.

“Ask thy father, and he will declare to thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.”

Introduction.

Ancient city of Treves, trodden by the feet of Peter, the Prince of the apostles, brought to the true faith by the holy Empress Helena, confirmed and strengthened therein by the teaching of so many holy men, honored by the presence of SS. Athanasius, Jerome, Ambrose, Martin, Bernard, and others besides the saints that belong to thee, what wert thou fifteen hundred and odd years ago? I do not refer to thy outward glory and splendor, but to thy faith and Christian morals. Dost thou wish to know? If thy eyes cannot reach so far, then cast thy thoughts on the graves and coffins that surround us, and on the bones of thy forefathers hidden therein; then thou wilt see what sort of a city

thou wert then, and what sort thou shouldst be now. I allude, my dear brethren, to the innumerable martyrs of Treves, whose bones rest in our midst, and whose feast we now celebrate. "Ask thy elders," ask these forefathers of thine, "and they will tell thee." What will they say? St. Ambrose, writing of the relics of the martyrs, uses words admirably suited to my purpose: "I honor the body that teaches me how to love my Lord, and shows me not to fear on account of His death."<sup>1</sup> The same lesson is taught you by your forefathers, as I now mean to show you in their name.

### Plan of Discourse.

*They will tell you how holily they lived in this city, and teach you how to live according to their example: the first part. They will tell you how valiantly they died for the faith, and teach you how to die according to their example: the second part.*

Holy forefathers! obtain for us from God, through the hands of the angels and of the virginal Mother of God, the grace to take your teaching to heart, and to live and die according to it.

As St. Thomas of Aquin tells us, God is not wont to raise any one to a great and exceptional dignity and grace unless he has first prepared himself for it by an especially innocent and holy life. Of all the children of men, Mary, the Blessed Virgin, alone had the highest honor of becoming the Mother of her Creator; and from this the holy Fathers draw the undoubted conclusion that she must have been free from all stain, even from that of original sin, and have been adorned with all possible virtues. Although the gift of prophecy and miracles cannot of itself make a man holy, yet it is a sign of holiness that rarely deceives; and of him who works real miracles, or foretells the future, we may say with confidence that he is a holy man, that he leads a virtuous and pious life; for otherwise God would not have endowed him in such an extraordinary manner.

God is not wont to give a high grace unless to one who makes himself worthy of it by a holy life.

My dear brethren, of all the graces and dignities to which a soul may be raised after the death of Christ, the greatest and most evident is that of martyrdom. For what could be more glorious and noble for a man than to suffer and die for the honor of his God? What greater good fortune could one have than to be like the eternal Son of God, and to give his life and blood

The grace of martyrdom is one of the highest.

<sup>1</sup> Honoro corpus quod tibi Dominum meum ostendit diligere, quod me propter Domini mortem docuit non timere.



for Him who first gave His for us? Therefore the martyrs are also called blood-relations of Christ. What could be more desirable than to win that crown of triumph with which eternal happiness is so inseparably connected that to die the martyr's death and enter heaven is one and the same thing; so that it would be, as it were, an injury and insult to pray for a martyr who has given his life for the faith, as St. Augustine says.<sup>1</sup> What more glórious than after death to shine in heaven like the stars with a special splendor; to be looked on by the other saints as the flowers of the Church militant; to be general protectors and defenders of the human race, as St. Basil says of the martyrs! If in heaven, that place of eternal glory, there were room for envy and jealousy, then would the angels grudge that grace to men, and wish that they, too, had mortal bodies, that they might suffer and die for their God, and so merit the glorious crown of martyrdom.

Hence pious servants of God longed so much for it.

I am therefore not so much surprised that St. Francis Xavier and so many hundreds of his imitators should display such eagerness in going to India, Japan, and other savage lands, and labor and toil for so many years among barbarous and uncivilized people, suffering countless hardships and trials, looking, hoping, and praying earnestly for no other reward than the happiness and grace of being cut to pieces, burnt, beaten to death, or otherwise martyred for Christ's sake. I am not surprised when I read of the holy martyrs despising danger, and giving themselves up to the tormentors, exciting the anger of the tyrants by mocking at and insulting the false gods, and freely and openly professing the Christian faith that they might be condemned to death and torments. And how grieved and afflicted some of them were when, contrary to their wishes, life was granted them! And with what joy and exultation others hastened to the torture as if they were going to a wedding-feast! And how, in the midst of their torments, they laughed and joked and rejoiced, and confessed that they found it more difficult to bear the exceeding consolation they experienced than even the atrocity of the tortures inflicted on them!

Hence to have received it is a sign of having

Do you think, my dear brethren, that a great favor of this kind, of which even the holiest souls always acknowledged themselves unworthy, would likely fall to the lot of one who leads—I will not say an un-Christian, dissolute life, but even of one whose life

<sup>1</sup> *Injuriam facit martyri, qui orat pro martyre.*

is not extraordinarily pious and holy? It is true that we read of martyrs who, having been suddenly converted from heathenism, received the great grace of dying at once for the faith; but we find hardly one instance of a Christian who, though illumined by the light of faith, had led a bad life receiving the grace of martyrdom, unless a wonderful repentance followed. We rather find instances of such Christians who, being come to the place of martyrdom, were terrified at the sight of the tortures prepared for them, denied the faith, abjured Christ, and became apostates. No! If the gift of miracles and prophecy is a sign of holiness, martyrdom, since it is a much greater grace, is a surer sign of a pious, holy, and God-fearing life. Nay, says St. Ambrose, the very death of the martyrs is nothing else than the reward of their pious lives.<sup>1</sup>

O ancient, Christian Treves, what a pious and holy city thou must then have been in days gone by, and now deeply thou must have been written in the heart of God, since thou becamest the chosen arena, such as no other place in the world can boast of, from which, in the space of three days, while in other places many years would be required to perform so much, so many confessors and martyrs of Christ ascended at once into heaven, not by hundreds, nor by thousands, nor by eleven thousands at a time, but so many that till now there has not been found any one able to compute their numbers, and we must speak of them as we do of the stars in the firmament—by the title of innumerable! The mayor and his councillors, officers and their soldiers, husbands and their wives, fathers and their sons, mothers and their daughters, masters and mistresses and their servants, old people and little children—every one capable of walking or even crawling went forth and cried out in a loud voice (oh, ye angels, what an agreeable sound the words must have made in your ears!): “We are Christians;” Christ is our glory! Take our goods, our blood, our lives; you will never take Christ and His love out of our hearts! In a word, every single Christian in this city had the great honor and glory of dying for Christ, of gaining the crown of martyrdom, and of entering, with a vast crowd, into heaven; nor is there on record a single instance of apostasy.

Again, what a holy city thou must have been! True it is, O great St. Ambrose, that the death of the martyrs is the reward of their lives. What pious and holy lives, then, must not have

lived  
piously.

The ancient  
people of  
Treves re-  
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They must  
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holy.

<sup>1</sup> Ipsa mors martyrum præmium vitæ est.

been led by all the Christian inhabitants of this city, since they all merited to be rewarded by such a glorious martyrdom! Brower, in his history of Treves, gives them this praise, that they must have been of incredible holiness and innocence.<sup>1</sup> Then were those golden times to be seen here which are presented to our contemplation by the virtues of the early Christians, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles and in other ecclesiastical histories, when in the faithful, different as they were by condition and state of life, there was but one heart and one soul: "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul."<sup>2</sup> When the minds of all were united in the bonds of the sincerest love to the greater praise, honor, and glory of God; when enmity could find no room nor dwelling-place, because there was no one to injure another, no one to nourish hatred, anger, or desire of revenge; when the words "yes" and "no" still held their value, and were able to confirm, arrange, and settle everything; when the cold-hearted words "mine" and "thine" had not set on foot so many dissensions, and when there was not even a suspicion, not to speak of a word of injustice: "Neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own;"<sup>3</sup> when the old German faith, expressed by a grasp of the hand, was a far surer pledge than seals and letters and mortgage-bonds are now; when esteem, honor, and respect were paid, not to greater wealth, or a more noble descent, but to greater devotion to God and Christian piety; when a man's happiness was not measured by his riches, but by the heavenly goods he possessed; when the words were still true: "Our conversation is in heaven;"<sup>4</sup> our conversation, our daily intercourse is with God; to Him as to our last end tend all our thoughts and cares; when the likeness to our poor, humble Christ crucified for us was to be seen in the manners and behavior of the faithful; when dress, conversation, eating, drinking, the education of children were all ruled according to the humble, holy gospel of Jesus Christ; when all accusation and suspicion of vices which the heathens might urge against the Christians were repelled once for all by the words: I am a Christian; when all sin and temptation to unbecoming conduct was also overcome with the sole words: I am a Christian. O happy times, what have become of you!

<sup>1</sup> *Martyrum horum incredibilem juxta virtutem ac innocentiam, etc.*

<sup>2</sup> *Multitudinis autem credentium erat cor unum et anima una.—Acts iv. 32.*

<sup>3</sup> *Nec quisquam eorum quæ possidebat, aliquid suum esse dicebat.—Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Nostra autem conversatio in cœlis est.—Phillip. iii. 20.*

See there, Christians of Treves, such were your ancestors, such the holy times, the holy manner in which they lived! The elder Tobias asked the angel, disguised as a pilgrim: "I pray thee, tell me of what family or what tribe art thou." And Raphael answered: "I am Azarias, the son of the great Ananias." Then replied Tobias: "Thou art of a great family."<sup>1</sup> The same I may say of you, citizens of Treves, with all respect, when I cast the eyes of my mind on those great forefathers of yours, nor need I enquire further of what family you are descended; you are of a great family, of a great and holy race! Meanwhile let each one of you reflect on the life he has been hitherto leading, which is known to himself alone. Of what good to me will be this great title of honor and glory and descent from such holy forefathers, if my morals and life do not harmonize with theirs? For in that case I should be like some decayed scion of worldly nobility, who can only point to the ancient escutcheon of his family, while in himself there is no trace of nobility, and his outward conduct and behavior resembles that of a peasant rather than of a noble; and as often as he looks on the portraits of his heroic ancestors he receives a sharp and secret reproof from their dumb images, that upbraid him on account of his unworthiness. Of what use for my eternal salvation will be the holiness of so many, nay, innumerable forefathers, if I have not received any portion of their virtues? Did not Absalom go to hell, although David was his father? Could Manasses have atoned for his sins and blotted them out by merely pointing to the good works of his father Ezechias?

But their holiness will not help us to salvation.

No; it is my own life that must bring me to heaven; my own works for which I shall have to answer. If my soul is not in the state of sanctifying grace I am an enemy of God, and merit everlasting fire, although amongst my forefathers there are countless friends of God in heaven. Nay, on that very account my tepidity in the divine service is less to be excused, for I am all the more bound to lead a holy life the more saints have gone before me with their good example. "Ask thy elders, and they will tell thee." Therefore as often as you hear mentioned the innumerable martyrs of Treves, as often as you come to this place sprinkled with the blood of a number of them, to honor their relics, ask yourselves: How did those holy forefathers of

So that we must learn from them to live piously.

<sup>1</sup> Rogo te, indica mihi; de qua domo, aut de qua tribu es tu. Ego sum Azarias Ananias magni filius. Ex magno genere es tu.—Tob. v. 16, 18, 19.



ours live? How do we live? And they would speak inwardly to you, and tell you and teach you how, after their example, you should live piously, chastely, humbly, temperately, justly, zealously, holily in the true faith. "Ask thy father, and he will declare to thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee." They will show you also how you have to die for the true faith, as we shall see in the

### Second Part.

How heroically Palmatus resolved to die for the faith!

But why should I delay here to explain to you the manner in which your forefathers died? As we have seen already, they all gave up their possessions, their blood, their lives in defence of the Christian faith, and allowed themselves to be done to death most cruelly. This one fact should suffice. When I consider the circumstances of their glorious death—how savagely the executioners raged against the innocent; how meekly, cheerfully, and willingly the soldiers of Christ went to the painful martyrdom—then it seems to me that I behold that cruel massacre of the Jews described in the First Book of Machabees, second chapter. The tyrant Antiochus had resolved either to extirpate the Jews altogether or else compel them to become idolaters. First of all, therefore, he sent to the chief man of the Jews, that renowned hero of Scripture, Mathathias, thinking that if he could be gained over the rest of the people would offer no opposition. "Thou art a ruler," said the messengers of the king to him, "and a great man in this city. Therefore come thou first, and obey the king's commandment, . . . and thou and thy sons shall be in the number of the king's friends, and enriched with gold and silver and many presents." God forbid! cried out Mathathias: "God be merciful unto us; it is not profitable for us to forsake the law, and the justices of God. Every one that hath zeal for the law . . . let him follow me."<sup>1</sup> Who is more clearly represented by this prince than Palmatus, the then mayor of Treves, or, as he was called in those times, the prince of the city? He it was whom, with the other councillors, the bloodhound Riccius Varus attacked with promises and threats in order to induce him to deny the Christian faith. Oh, he exclaimed, God be merciful to us, and keep us from such a shameful crime! No, that I will never do in all eternity! "Every one that hath zeal for the law

<sup>1</sup> Princeps et clarissimus et magnus es in hac civitate. Ergo accede prior, et fac jussum regis . . . eteris tu et filii tui inter amicos regis, et amplificatus auro, et argento, et muneribus multis. Propitius sit nobis Deus; non est nobis utile relinquere legem et justitias Dei. Omnis qui zelum habet legis, exeat post me.—I. Mach. ii. 17, 18, 21, 27.



let him follow me." My dear fellow-citizens, keep fast to the law in which you have hitherto lived so zealously; follow me, and let us give up our lives, and die together, rather than depart a hair's breadth from our God and His law!

The Scripture says further of the Jews that when Mathathias left the city a great multitude assembled in the desert, near at hand, and there courageously awaited the approach of the enemy, and allowed themselves to be put to death without saying a word, much less did they make any attempt to repel violence by violence, as the text says: "They answered them not, neither did they cast a stone at them, nor stopped up the secret places, saying: Let us all die."<sup>1</sup> Again a clear image of the courage of the Christians of Treves. For when Palmatius and his councillors had been beheaded for Christ's sake in this place, the uncontrollable rage of the tyrant was let loose on the people the next day. The latter did not run into the wilderness, like the Jews, but awaited death joyfully in and before their houses. I have often thought, my dear brethren, when reading this history: Is it true that they who were martyred here were innumerable? They must surely have known already how Riccius Varus acted towards the Christians in other places, and how cruelly he caused them to be put to death; and they must have heard from the neighboring people of his approach with his army. Why, then, did they not take measures to oppose him? Why did they not close the gates? Could they not have defended themselves at least for a considerable time, and made it very difficult for him to take the city, and even have made away with a goodly number of their enemies? Or, if they could not make up their minds to do this, could they not have escaped in time? Who can doubt it? But, no! these brave soldiers of Christ knew how to fight in a far different manner; their idea was, not to run upon the enemy, sword in hand, but rather to lay down their arms and run of their own accord on the arms of the enemy: "Neither did they cast a stone at them, nor stopped up the secret places." When the Roman soldiers, with their generals, came into the town, gallows, stakes, and instruments of torture were prepared on all sides; wherever the eye was turned it fell on some evidence of cruelty; the clang of sharp swords and knives resounded everywhere, the lead was melted, the boiling

What a  
cruel mar-  
tyrdom  
all in the  
city suf-  
fered for  
the faith!

<sup>1</sup> Et non responderunt eis, nec lapidem miserunt in eos, nec opplaverunt loca occulta, dicentes: Moriamur omnes.—I. Mach. ii. 36, 37.

oil and pitch prepared. The countless inhabitants of Treves looked on at all this; they were told that these preparations were for them if they would not consent to renounce the faith of Christ. Yet they beheld them without dismay: "They answered them not;" their only reply was a shout of exultation, whereby they encouraged each other to constancy, and urged on the executioners, "saying: Let us all die." Then the slaughtering, hanging, boiling, roasting, cutting, and butchering went on; no state or age was spared; all suffered, from the first to the last, so that the streets ran with blood, and, as history tells us, the Moselle was crimsoned for the space of ten thousand paces.<sup>1</sup> O noble river, never wert thou more beautiful than when thou wert adorned with the precious blood of these holy martyrs! Never wert thou laden with more costly wares than when thou didst bear on thy bosom the bodies of those heroes of the faith, the inhabitants of Treves! See, my dear brethren, how bravely your ancestors fought for the faith of Christ and His honor.

They teach  
us how to  
die for God

But what am I doing? I had hoped, perhaps, to inspire you, too, with the idea of dying for God and the faith, after their example. Now I am afraid that I have done quite the contrary, and that I have terrified you, or made you despair of ever dying such a death. For some will say: Would that we were so fortunate as to give up our lives by martyrdom for Christ's sake! But where is the opportunity? Where are the tyrants, the persecutors? The Christian religion is now free; how, then, can we become martyrs? And the greater number of you will perhaps say, with a sigh: What! must I run on the points of swords and spears, and into fire and flames? Must I allow myself to be so terribly tortured? Ah, I am far too delicate and tender for that! But be of good heart, Christian brethren! Your holy forefathers are ready to assist you from heaven in all the combats that await you; for there is no doubt that they now have a far greater care of the salvation of their descendants than of their temporal prosperity; and besides, they do not expect so much from you; they do not require you to endure such torments as they had to withstand; they are content with far less.

By a moral  
martyrdom.

In olden times people of all classes went to St. John the Baptist, and, moved by the consideration of the austere life he led, and with hearts softened by repentance, they asked him: "And

<sup>1</sup> Ad decem passuum millia.

what shall we do?"<sup>1</sup> What answer did John give them? Did he tell them to go and lay aside their soft clothing, to put on a rough camel-hair garment, to lie on the bare ground, and eat nothing but locusts, drink nothing but muddy water? No; nothing of the sort; for otherwise most of them would have shrugged their shoulders, and gone away from him in disgust. Are you soldiers? he said; "do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man, and be content with your pay."<sup>2</sup> You who are superiors, be mild and gentle towards your inferiors; citizens, be kind and loving towards each other; let him who has more share with him who has less. Thus the holy man, who led such a severe life, imposed a far lighter burden on others. In the same way you can imagine your holy forefathers speaking to you from heaven: Dear fellow-citizens and children! lift up your eyes to heaven; see where we are now. Come, hasten to this far better fatherland, where we await you! The only death we expect you to suffer in order to imitate us is that moral death which Jesus Christ, our sovereign Master, requires of all Christians in the gospel; that, namely, you die every day more and more to the world and its wicked customs and vain goods, to the flesh and its sinful lusts. You can be martyrs if you mortify your evil passions and inclinations, if you restrain anger, oppose inordinate love, bear injuries with patience, treat with meekness him who has done an evil to you, and pardon your enemies from your heart, as St. Bernard teaches you: "You can be a martyr without suffering the stroke of a sword, if you preserve your mind in patience."<sup>3</sup>

You, married people, can be martyrs if in conjugal love and fidelity you bear your daily cares and troubles for God's sake with humility and contentment. You, unmarried people, can be martyrs if you constantly overcome temptations against purity, carefully guard your eyes and other senses, avoid dangerous occasions, and keep your purity untarnished; for, according to St. Jerome, "to keep chastity uninjured is in itself a martyrdom."<sup>4</sup> You rich and wealthy can be martyrs if you do not allow yourselves to become the victims of the spirit of avarice; if you keep your hearts detached from riches, and are diligent in the works

Of which all kinds of people have the opportunity.

<sup>1</sup> Quid faciemus et nos?—Luke III. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Neminem concutiat, neque calumniam faciat; et contenti estote stipendiis vestris. —Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Sine ferro martyr esse poteris, si patientiam in animo conservaveris.

<sup>4</sup> Habet et pudicitia servata martyrium suum.

of charity and mercy to the poor. You can be martyrs, O ye poor, sick, and suffering, if you are always satisfied with the will of God, unite your sufferings, sickness, and trials with the passion and death of Christ, and bear them till death for His sake. You can all be martyrs if you regulate your lives according to the Christian law, and never let joy or sorrow separate you from it. "The whole life of the Christian," says St. Augustine, "if he lives according to the gospel, is a cross and a martyrdom."<sup>1</sup> Thus live, dear children; thus die; it is the way to heaven. Oh, if you only knew what indescribable joys we experience here, how richly we are repaid and rewarded for the little we have endured for Christ, you would stretch forth both hands with eagerness to the cross and to suffering. More than blessed pains and torments, what a short time you lasted! what a long, immeasurable eternity of happiness you have won for us! Ah, come, hasten after us, that we may make you partakers therein! See, my dear brethren, how little your holy forefathers require of you to imitate them, and to enable you to rejoice with them in heaven. I have represented them as speaking to you themselves, that their words may make a deeper impression on you.

Yet all do  
not imitate  
their holy  
ancestors.

How have we profited by this teaching hitherto? How far are we still removed from living and dying in that manner? Ah, we sometimes feel a desire for martyrdom; we boast that we are ready to give up our possessions and lives for our faith and heaven, if it were necessary; and yet we often refuse to undergo a slight trial or mortification for that faith and that heaven. Well do we boast, says Tertullian; which is the easier: to give up our lives, or to restrain an evil passion or inclination? Which is the easier: to shed our blood, or to bear a word of contradiction in silence? Which is the easier: to renounce all our possessions, or to restore ill-gotten goods? Which is the easier: to give up at once and forever all our friends and relations, or to despise human respect when the honor of God and His holy law require us to do so? Which is the easier: to stretch our neck forth to the axe, or to break our obstinacy, in order to give way to another, and humble ourselves? Which is the easier: to be publicly crucified, or in private to beg forgiveness of our neighbor whom we have injured? Which is the easier: to love our enemies who take away our lives, and with them all we have, or to smother our anger, and receive in love and friendship the

<sup>1</sup> *Tota Christiani hominis vita, si secundum evangelium vivat, crux est atque martyrium.*

brother who has done us some slight harm? It is evident that this latter is far less difficult and troublesome. And yet it seems sometimes so hard and intolerable to us that we transgress the Christian law, and deny Christ by our actions, when there is question of suffering a slight mortification. And we dare to boast that we are ready to lay down our lives in torments for the sake of Christ and His doctrine! We have reason rather to be ashamed and confounded when we think of our past conduct in this respect.

“Now, therefore, O my sons,” said Mathathias to his children, and methinks Palmatius and all the martyrs of Treves say the same to us, my dear brethren, “be ye zealous for the law, and” in future, and always, “give your lives for the covenant of your fathers,” which they entered into with Christ, “and call to remembrance the works of the fathers, which they have done in their generations, and you shall receive great glory and an everlasting name.” The remembrance and consideration of their exploits should encourage you never to deflect from the way of virtue and constancy in life or in death; then great shall be your fame. “You, therefore, my sons, take courage, and behave manfully in the law.”<sup>1</sup> Yes, holy forefathers, so let us answer; in future we shall endeavor to do this with all diligence, and, relying on your help and intercession, always try to live piously to the end as you lived, to die daily according to the spirit as you died according to the body, that we may one day come where you now are, that is, to heaven. Amen.

Conclusion  
and exhortation to  
live and die  
like the  
holy mar-  
tyrs.

<sup>1</sup> Nunc ergo, O filii, æmulatores estote legis, et date animas vestras pro testamento patrum vestrorum, et mementote operum patrum, quæ fecerunt in generationibus suis, et accipietis gloriam magnam, et nomen æternum. Filii, confortamini, et viriliter agite in lege.—I. Mach. ii. 50, 51, 64.



# ON THE HOLY CONFESSORS.

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## SIXTY-SECOND SERMON.

### ON THE HUMBLE DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, ST. AUGUSTINE.

#### Subject.

St. Augustine was: 1. Great and noble in the eyes of the whole world; 2. He was lowly and humble in his own eyes.—*Preached on the feast of St. Augustine.*

#### Text.

*Hic magnus vocabitur.*—Matt. v. 19.  
“He shall be called great.”

#### Introduction.

To be called great in the kingdom of heaven is a well-merited honor and happiness of the saints of God, and this praise can be bestowed on them without any danger; for the saints are not subject to vanity and pride, and they seek as the end and object of their own glory nothing but the honor and glory of their Creator. To be called great during life on earth is also a happiness and an honor, but it is full of danger; for who does not know and experience the great power that esteem and honor before the world have over the human heart to make it puffed up and proud and self-complacent? It is indeed a rare thing to be held in high esteem, and yet to remain humble. St. Augustine was a man of this rare kind, or, to speak better, extraordinary virtue; it is his feast that we celebrate to-day. This I at once proceed to prove, to his greater honor.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Augustine was great and noble in the eyes of the whole world; the first part. St. Augustine was lowly and humble in his own eyes; the second part. On both accounts he was an ad*

*mirable saint. Happy for us if, as we cannot strive to be as great as he before the world, we at least endeavor to follow at a distance his humility and lowliness.*

This is the grace which we beg of the Holy Ghost, through the hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels, and also through the humility of the wonderfully humble St. Augustine.

To prove the great esteem and honor in which Augustine was held by the world I need not seek long; the gospel of to-day furnishes me with a sufficient basis for it: "A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid."<sup>1</sup> An unusually brilliant light cannot fail to be remarked unless every one is stone-blind. An extraordinarily clear understanding, wisdom, learning, skill cannot show itself in public without exciting the wonder, admiration, and respect of men.

Great knowledge and skill make one renowned.

My dear brethren, when you hear Augustine mentioned you may picture to yourselves a light such as had never shone in the Church of God since the time of the apostles; a man whose like in wisdom and learning the world had never before seen; a man to whom the Holy Ghost (from whom all wisdom and truth comes) seems to have given all knowledge, and to have chosen as the strongest support of His Church. Although the tongues of men should be silent, we learn this from the books he has left us, treating of the highest mysteries, the number of which is so great that we can hardly understand how the man who wrote them could do anything else, even though he spent day and night in writing. Victor of Utica says that before the persecution of the Vandals commenced two hundred and thirty-two books had already come forth from the pen of Augustine, besides the explanation of the whole Book of Psalms, the epistles, and other tracts called homilies, "the number of which it is impossible to comprehend,"<sup>2</sup> as the author says. St. Thomas of Villanova says that he is not to be believed who says that he has read all the writings of Augustine: "He was able to write more than we can read."<sup>3</sup> The Saint himself acknowledges that in his youth he learned all imaginable arts without a teacher, and without any special trouble, and learned them to perfection, so

The great wisdom of St. Augustine is shown by his books.

<sup>1</sup> Non potest civitas abscondi supra montem posita.—Matt. v. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Quorum numerum comprehendere satis impossibile est.

<sup>3</sup> Mentitur qui se omnia Augustini volumina legisse jactat. Plus valuit ille scribere, quam nos sufficimus legere.

that he was justly considered a miracle of nature, a wonder of mental powers and acuteness.

By the heretics whom he refuted.

This is shown by the many heretics, especially the Manichæans, Donatists, Pelagians, Arians, Priscillianists, Origenists, Marcionists, Nestorians, who in his time attacked the Catholic Church on all sides, and tried to destroy her by their errors; it was Augustine who opposed all those legions of hell, proved their falsehood, and put them to flight. So that one may well apply to him the words said in the Scripture of the wise man: "Thou wast filled as a river with wisdom."<sup>1</sup> It is vain labor to try to restrain a river in its course; the more it is opposed the more impetuously do its waters rush on. There you have a symbol of St. Augustine; like a river he has poured out his knowledge on the world, so that no hostile force could withstand him.

The greatest and most learned honored him.

What renown, reputation, and glory he thus acquired we can again learn from the men of his own time. Great and small, the clergy and the laity, rich and poor came to him as to a public oracle to seek counsel and instruction from his wisdom. No doubt arose in important and weighty matters which Augustine was not able to solve and explain; no passage so dark in Holy Writ that he could not interpret. Pope Martin V. says that any one who thought he knew something of the mysteries of Christ, of the faith, and religion, had Augustine always in his thoughts and on his lips.<sup>2</sup> Hardly any part of Scripture could be understood unless the light to explain it was given to Augustine; hardly anything could be made clear without his interpretation. Even during his lifetime he was called everywhere the salt of the earth, a light of the world, a teacher of teachers, a hammer and scourge of heretics, a tongue of the Church, an oracle of the Holy Ghost. These, and such as these were the titles with which he was honored by popes and prelates, by emperors and rulers of the world. Hear in what terms of laudation the Emperor Theodosius speaks of Augustine in a letter written to invite him to the Council of Ephesus: Now, writes the emperor, we address our prayers to thee, who art in all things a light of the Christian world, an enemy of and terror to apostates, who dread to appear before thee; to thee, we repeat, we address our most earnest prayers, beseeching thee to come to Ephesus, where the Council of the Church is to be held. St. Jerome, whose author-

<sup>1</sup> Impletus es quasi flumen, sapientia.—Eccclus. xlvii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Omnibus in ore erat Augustinus, ut nihil pene ex sacris litteris possit nisi eo duce intelligi, nihil nisi eo interprete, explicari.

ity is worth that of a thousand others, who lived at the same time and kept up a constant interchange of letters with Augustine, used to lay down his pen whenever Augustine began to write, acknowledging publicly that there could be nothing more for him to say on the subject or to add to it. For thus he answers the Pelagians: The holy and eloquent Bishop Augustine has already written against your heresy; therefore I will be silent lest I should seem to carry wood to the forest, or pour water into the sea. For I cannot bring forward anything new that his enlightened understanding has not already perceived. To Augustine himself he writes in the following terms: I have always with the utmost respect admired thy holiness; but now I cannot allow an hour to pass without mentioning thy name. All Catholics honor thee as a new founder of the ancient Christian faith; and, what is a still greater proof of thy renown, all heretics fear and curse thee. In fact, all that could be said hitherto or drawn from the well-spring of the Holy Scriptures has been exhausted by thee. So far St. Jerome. And with what public jubilee and exultation the Fifth General Council greeted Augustine when it adhered to his teaching unanimously, saying: "We follow Augustine in everything;"<sup>1</sup> we accept everything he has said of the true faith and against heretics! See, my dear brethren, how great he was in the eyes of men; but admire still more the humble and lowly opinion he formed of himself.

### Second Part.

It is not unusual for one who is really vile and worthless to look on himself as such; it is no great act of humility for one who has nothing praiseworthy or laudable to be humble, as St. Bernard says. Thus no one is astonished to see a beggar going on his knees to ask for a piece of bread, or calling public attention to his torn and ragged garments. No one is surprised to see a peasant's servant come out of the stable covered with dirt; no one would call him an humble beggar, an humble servant, on that account. But it is a most amazing, rare, and prodigious thing for one to look on himself as vile and unworthy who is praised and esteemed by every one on account of his great and wonderful excellence. "It is," says St. Bernard, "a great and rare virtue to be ignorant of thy greatness, although thou really

To be honored, and at the same time humble, is most rare.

<sup>1</sup> Sequimur Augustinum per omnia.

dost great things,"<sup>1</sup> and art therefore high in the esteem of men.

St. Augustine was most humble in flying honors.

What occasions and opportunities the great Augustine had to become proud and puffed-up! But there is a vast difference between the light of an earthly fire and the light of the sun; such is the beautiful thought of St. John Chrysostom; the earthly fire always throws its flame on high, while the sun pours its rays down on earth. Augustine shone before the world like the sun; the higher his light ascended outwardly the lower he sank in his own estimation. No ambitious man ever sought honor as eagerly as he avoided honor and distinction. His fear and terror of dignities, when his name first began to be celebrated, drove him out of the cities into the solitude of the desert, lest the people might call upon him to accept a high ecclesiastical position. He begged of his bishop, who had called on him to preach to the people, to allow him to remain hidden, and not to impose a burden on his shoulders for which he felt himself unable. And even at the time when others are wont to be filled with consolation, and to shed tears of joy, namely, when he was forced to accept sacerdotal ordination, Augustine was seen, as he himself confesses, to shed tears of sorrow and pain forced from him by his humility. "Violence is done to me,"<sup>2</sup> said he; they wish to raise me to that dignity, a miserable sinner, who have done so much evil, and to send me to take into my hands on the altar the precious body and blood of Jesus Christ. And what terror seized him when, against his will, he was forced to accept the bishop's pastoral staff! Ah, he sighed, that is evidently a punishment brought upon me at last by my sins; now am I made to feel the anger of the just God who is wroth with me; I am made bishop, and the only reason I can find for it is that God wishes to punish me!

And in seeking his own shame by retracting his errors.

And as much as he feared all honors, and tried to avoid them as real misfortunes, which is indeed a humility rare enough amongst men, so much also did he in the midst of the dignities which he could not escape seek his own humiliation and shame and disgrace before the world. And he discovered a way of satisfying his craving in this respect which in such a great man seems to be almost incomprehensible. I will refer in proof of this only to two of his books: one in which he publicly retracts the errors and mistakes that had crept into his former works and writings; another in which he details with the utmost mi-

<sup>1</sup> Magna et rara virtus profecto est, ut magna licet operantem, magnum te nescias.—S. Bern. Serm. 13, in Cant.

<sup>2</sup> Vis mihi facta est.



nuteness the sins of his youth, and lays them before the world with all their circumstances. I leave it to yourselves to judge in which of the two he showed the greater humility. With regard to the first: think, my dear brethren, what it must be to retract one's own words; to say: I did not understand properly; I made a mistake. What a hard thing that must be for a learned, renowned man occupying a high position! Whence comes the obstinacy of so many heretics, who maintain their errors against the known truth, except from their unwillingness to acknowledge that they have made a mistake? Even amongst good friends, between man and wife, what quarrels arise sometimes from some miserable, worthless cause in which the one says yes, the other no, merely because each wishes to be in the right and neither will confess to a mistake! For all look on it as a shame and disgrace to be mistaken in their judgments. Yet Augustine, that man who was everywhere considered as an oracle of learning and wisdom, actually seeks to draw that shame on himself; the man who was able to confute all heretics accuses himself, not merely of one, but of several errors! But you may think that it is no great matter after all; for it is only human to make mistakes, especially in abstruse matters, and therefore his humility may not have been so very great in this respect.

Be that as it may, what do you think of his second proof of humility? Augustine describes publicly all his hideous, hidden sins which he had committed from childhood, even in thought—sins that otherwise could not have come to the knowledge of any one. What shame he put himself to! Or, to speak better, what unheard-of humility was his! I find among the servants of God many humble souls, who, to increase the glory of their Creator, related and made known to the world the virtues and graces they had received from God. Thus the patient Job boasts to his friends that he was an eye to the blind, a foot to the lame, the father of orphans, the protector of the poor; St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, describes in detail all the sufferings he had to endure in his apostolic labors, and the visions he had. I find many humble souls among the saints of God who indeed tried with all possible diligence to hide their special virtues and gifts, lest they should be looked on and esteemed as saints; but when their honor and innocence were calumniated they spared no effort to defend themselves, and to give the lie to their defamers. Samuel was humble, as we know from Script-

And by publicly confessing his sins: which is more than any other saint has done.

ure; but, to stop the mouth of the calumniator, he did not hesitate to show with great freedom before all the people how honestly he had always acted in matters of justice, and how far he was removed from all greed of gain and avarice. Judith was humble, yet how careful she was on her return from the camp of Holofernes to prove to the people that she had suffered no indignity, that her purity had been protected by an angel, and that she had returned from the camp as chaste as she had entered it: "As the same Lord liveth," she said, with an oath, "His angel hath been my keeper, both going hence and abiding there, and returning from thence hither; and the Lord hath not suffered me, His handmaid, to be defiled."<sup>1</sup> I also find among the servants of God saints who remained silent and left their defence to God when they were calumniated; but of one who comes forward of his own accord, and makes known his own wickedness and the filth of his life, I cannot find any example except Augustine.

All seek to  
hide their  
sins.

Nothing is more common for the sinner than to try to conceal his guilt. "Every one that doth evil," says Our Lord Himself, "hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd."<sup>2</sup> Hence the care with which each one tries to hide his vices, to palliate them, to offer a hundred excuses for them. Hence that most reprehensible shame that often closes the mouth of the penitent in the confessional, prevents him from disclosing some shameful sin, and often brings him so far that he bears about with him his whole life long the abominable filth of sin, preferring to sacrifice the friendship of God, his soul, and heaven, and to choose the eternal pains of hell rather than make known to one priest, who is bound to the strictest secrecy, the crime he is guilty of. How would it be if one had to confess publicly before a whole city? Tell me, my dear brethren, there are very few of us here in church; imagine an angel coming in my place, and saying out loud: That man, that woman, that boy, that girl, that religious, that priest has lived in such-and-such a manner; he has entertained such-and-such abominable thoughts; he has said so-and-so; he has done from youth upwards such-and-such bad actions; and thus relat-

<sup>1</sup> Vivit ipse Dominus, quoniam custodivit me angelus ejus, et hinc euntem, et ibi commorantem, et inde huc revertentem, et non permisit me Dominus ancillam suam coinquinari.—Jud. xiii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Omnis qui male agit, odit lucem, et non venit ad lucem, ut non arguantur opera ejus.—John iii. 20.

ing all our sins, mentioning names and circumstances; what would be our feelings in such a case? With what shame we should try to creep under the benches and hide ourselves! How quickly would those whose consciences reprove them seek the door, and rush out of the church, lest their turn should come! For my part, I should be one of the first to run away. And yet there are so few of us here to be ashamed of!

O admirable Augustine, to what shame thy own voluntary humility brought thee! He discloses and reveals his most hideous and abominable sins—sins that men are most anxious to hide through shame; and that he does, not to one, or a hundred, or a thousand people, but to the whole wide world; not to all those who were then present merely, but to all who are to live in this world; and he describes them in a published book that has now so often appeared in print, and is still read by every one, and will always be read. And what may well excite our admiration, of all the books written by him there is none adorned with such art of eloquence, with such choice and elegance of words, with such rare and agreeable subtlety of thought, than that in which he confesses his sins and transgressions. As if he wished to put forward his best efforts to make the book so pleasing that all would read it, that thus his shame might never die among men, and his humiliation might be eternized in their minds. Truly, a great and rare virtue! From this we may form an idea of the wonderful holiness of Augustine, since he united such profound humility with such great gifts and high dignities.

But Augustine disclosed his to all men in the clearest words.

Before concluding, let us cast a glance at ourselves, and see how we are in this particular. To say the thing in a word, my dear brethren, humility is necessary to us all, whether we are great or small, rich or poor, clerics or laymen. Without humility all our good works, all our holiness, are nothing. We may be as pious as we please, spend a long time in prayer, mortify ourselves as much as we can, but if humility is wanting all is worth nothing; we are building without a foundation, resting on sand, high trees without fruit, golden vessels that are empty; for the foundation, the kernel, the guardian, nay, as it were, the soul of all virtue and piety is humility alone. As the humble Augustine says: “He who does good works without humility carries dust in the wind.”<sup>1</sup> It is not the high mountains

Exhortation to humility

<sup>1</sup> Qui sine humilitate bona opera agit, in ventum pulverem portat.

but the lowly valleys that are filled with water; not the proud but the humble soul that is filled with grace by God. Once for all Our Lord has pronounced sentence: "Unless you become as little children," that is, small in your own eyes, "you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup> Therefore I conclude with the words that St. Bernard says of the humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary: When we admire the great Augustine, and see that we cannot reach his holiness, let us try to imitate his humility, and that will be enough.<sup>2</sup> We shall find abundant opportunities for this if we wish; every hour and minute we can practise humility. We can be silent when accused, and confess our faults when in the wrong; we can restrain and overcome ourselves when we would willingly contradict; we can beg forgiveness when we have offended others; we can greet, visit, and show respect to one against whom we feel a natural aversion; we can bear patiently with crosses, trials, contempt, and shame, thinking that we have deserved far worse on account of our sins; when we have sinned we can disclose our sins in confession honestly and candidly; and there are many other ways in which we may every day of our lives show whether or not we are in earnest about practising humility. So let us try to imitate the humble Augustine, and it will suffice for us; that alone will make us great with the great Augustine in heaven. Amen.

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SIXTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON THE GREAT ST. AUGUSTINE.

Subject.

Augustine, from being a great sinner, became a great saint, and therefore is worthy of admiration.—*Preached on the feast of St. Augustine.*

Text.

*Hic magnus vocabitur.*—Matt. v. 19.

"He shall be called great."

Introduction.

It would be a vain and useless labor for me to undertake to-day to prove that Augustine is a great saint; there is nothing

<sup>1</sup> Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cœlorum.—Matt. xviii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Stude humilitatem imitari, et sufficit.

better known in the world, both among the learned and the ignorant; it is proclaimed by the dumb books in libraries, written by pens in the universities, spoken of by tongues in the pulpits; whenever the name of Augustine is mentioned you hear the great Augustine spoken of. So that one who has even a little knowledge of the Saint must, whenever he thinks of him, look on him as a great saint. There is one thing, my dear brethren, that excites my surprise, and that is that he was at first a great sinner, and yet became a great saint. That is what I mean to speak of to-day in his praise.

Plan of Discourse.

*Augustine, from being a great sinner, became a great saint, and therefore he is a wonderful saint. Such is the whole subject of this panegyric. Let no sinner despair of conversion; let no just man be anxious on account of his past sins. Such shall be the brief moral lesson.*

Give us Thy grace to profit by it, O Lord, who didst work such wonders in Thy servant Augustine, through the intercession of Mary and of the holy angels.

St. Gregory distinguishes three classes of sinners: there are some, he says, into whose hearts and consciences sin creeps, but does not remain, because they free themselves at once from it by repentance; there are others in whom sin remains for a time, yet it does not rule in their soul, nor gain the upper hand, because it is not often committed or repeated; the third class consists of those in whom sin takes up a fixed dwelling, and has the mastery, because by being constantly repeated it fastens itself in the soul, takes root, and becomes habitual. The first class is the best (although no sinner is good for anything), and is the easiest of cure. For even a pious man, who is concerned for his salvation, sometimes falls grievously, either through weakness, or an unforeseen occasion, or a violent temptation; but since he immediately condemns and repents of his wickedness, he is not in such great danger of dying in sin and being lost. The second class is more difficult of cure; for when repentance is deferred it requires a special grace and protection from God to guard one from further sins. The third class is the worst of all, and those who compose it can hardly be cured without a miraculous grace, not to speak of bringing them to sanctity.

He who commits many sins habitually is converted with difficulty.



For an inveterate habit is not easily changed.

For who does not know and experience what tyranny is exercised by an old and inveterate habit, especially in vice? It is like a miracle to abandon at once that which has occupied the heart and its love and desire. It is like a miracle to raise up to heaven your thoughts that had been sunk in carnal lusts, and to lead a holy, pure, and heavenly life. A fresh wound is easily healed; but when it grows old, and begins to fester, medicine is of no use; it must be cut and burnt in order to preserve the body in life. So it is with the sickness of the soul, with the habit of sin when it becomes inveterate. This is what Christ wishes us to learn, as our St. Augustine remarks, by the three persons whom He raised from the dead. In the case of the daughter of Jairus He had only to speak two words: "Damsel, arise."<sup>1</sup> The son of the widow of Naim required something more; Our Lord touched his bier, and spoke the impressive words: "Young man, I say to thee, arise."<sup>2</sup> But in the raising of Lazarus, who had been four days in the grave, and had begun to putrify, Our Lord "groaned in the spirit."<sup>3</sup> He began to sigh and weep; He raised His eyes to heaven, and prayed to His heavenly Father: "He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth."<sup>4</sup> Whence such a great difference in Our Lord's mode of acting? Did His omnipotence require more labor in one case than in the other? No; that cannot be. But, as Augustine says, Our Lord wished to show that it is harder to convert a sinner who has lain a long time in the grave of sin than one who has only recently commenced to sin. And he assigns this reason: in the first case the passions and evil inclinations become continually stronger and increase; the desires are more violent; and thus there results a sort of agreeable repose in sin, so that the sinner is pleased with his condition, and has neither wish nor desire to free himself; nay, in time there arises a sort of necessity, a second nature, impelling him to sin; and to change that, although the man may wish to do so, an extraordinary grace from God is required.

Nay, such a change almost requires a miracle.

Nay, the Holy Ghost, by the Prophet Jeremias, seems to make a sort of impossibility of the conversion of such a sinner: "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, you

<sup>1</sup> Puella surge.—Mark v. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Adolescens, tibi dico: surge.—Luke vii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Infremuit spiritu.—John xi. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Voce magna clamavit: Lazare, veni foras.—Ibid. 43.

also may do well when you have learned evil.”<sup>1</sup> When a vicious habit has begun to take root from youth upwards, then the conversion and amendment of the sinner is still more difficult, nay, is almost to be despaired of. The elephant, monstrous as he is, may be tamed if taken in hand when quite young, and trained to bend the knee and wait on one like a dog, a training that he never forgets as he grows older; but if he remains in the forest until he is grown up, and the nerves and bones of the feet become hard, there is no use in trying to train him; he is and will remain an untamed, wild animal. “A young man according to his way,” says the word of God in the Book of Proverbs, “even when he is old he will not depart from it;”<sup>2</sup> and by the Prophet Job: “His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust.”<sup>3</sup> When the man whose son was grievously tormented by the demon came to Our Lord, and complained that the disciples could not drive out the evil spirit, Christ asked him at once: “How long is it since this hath happened unto him?” And the father answered: “From his infancy.”<sup>4</sup> Truly, a curious question to be asked by Him to whom all things are known! Did not Our Lord know more about it than the father himself? Why, then, did He ask? The Gloss answers: That we might understand whence came the difficulty experienced by the disciples in freeing the youth from the devil. As if to say: Since the evil one has had possession of him from his infancy, what wonder is it that he has struggled so long, and refuses to go out at the command of these poor fishermen? This is a case which requires the almighty hand of God.

There, my dear brethren, you have a sketch of the deplorable state of sin in which Augustine was before his conversion. I will not and may not bring forward any other proof of this but his own words, in which he, to his own glory however, publishes, through humility, his shame to the world of his time and to all posterity. “I went away from Thee,” he sighs forth, “and I went wrong, my God!”<sup>5</sup> I have gone astray like a lost sheep; I have abandoned Thee worse than the prodigal son, and have sacrificed to vice the substance Thou hast given me: my memory,

According to his own confession Augustine was given to many vices from his youth.

<sup>1</sup> Si mutare potest Æthiops pellem suam, aut pardus varietatis suas, et vos poteritis benefacere, cum didiceritis malum.—Jer. xlii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum sennerit, non recedet ab ea.—Prov. xxii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ossa ejus implebuntur vitis adolescentiæ ejus, et cum eo in pulvere dormient.—Job xx. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Quantum temporis est, ex quo hoc ei accidit? Ab infantia.—Mark ix. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Deflexi ego a te, et erravi. Deus meus!

understanding, will, eyes, ears, and my other senses. And what vices were they? Those which are the fountain and origin of all sins, namely, pride, greed of gold, and impurity.<sup>1</sup> These I have pursued day and night; so that sin strove with sin within me, to see which should have the greater part of me.<sup>2</sup> And when didst thou commence to commit those sins? As soon, he answers, as I could make use of my reason, and barely knew what sin was.<sup>3</sup> I was hardly a few spans long in my body, and was already full-grown in vice; I was still tender and weak in my members, but they were hardened in wickedness; such a little boy, and such a great sinner! My good mother did her best to teach me to love and fear God; but my father did not agree with her, and took my part. I constantly heard good advice from my mother; but I was so corrupted that I looked on it as womanly weakness. She became sick from grief, shed copious tears, sent forth sigh after sigh into my ears; but I laughed at her, and appealed to my father, who always said that I was right, and took little trouble to enquire into the life I was leading before God. Oh, truly unhappy the children that are brought up by such parents, who are opposed to each other in matters that concern the welfare of the soul! Fathers and mothers, you think those children of yours, be they boys or girls, innocent angels, and care little with whom they associate; and if by your negligence one may say of them that they are little children and great sinners, what will become of them after they have been fed on the poisonous milk of vice?

And as he  
advanced in  
years.

Hear further how things went with the ill-reared Augustine. He describes it himself, with bitter tears: After having thus spent the years of my childhood, and attained the age of sixteen, vice held such sway over me that I could no longer hold my wantonness and wickedness in check, nor be content with being a secret sinner, but I must needs become a public leader of the godless. I lost all fear and the shame that is innate in man, and exulted and gloried in the most disgraceful and abominable excesses; I could not understand how a man could be a man and lead a good and pure life. And in addition to the perversity by which I endeavored to excel my companions in vice, I pretended to be more guilty than I was, and looked on it as a matter for boasting to be

<sup>1</sup> *Inhiabam lucris, honoribus, conjugio.*

<sup>2</sup> *Certabant in melpso, et de melpso ejus potissimum ego viderer.*

<sup>3</sup> *Eram tantillus puer, et tantus peccator.*

the worst of all; I was ashamed not to be the most shameless of all.<sup>1</sup>

From this perverse will of mine came a darkening and blindness of the mind; I fell into an error concerning the faith, and joined the sect of the Manichæans, which seemed to me the best of all, because it suited my beastly lusts and the freedom I allowed my senses; so that I became half Manichæan, half heathen, and wholly godless. At last I was quite obdurate in wickedness, hardened, and almost despairing. "I was pleased with the disease of carnal lusts, and feared to be healed."<sup>2</sup> If a divine inspiration came to warn me to amend I used to cry out: Not now, O Lord, not now! Leave me in my wickedness. For out of my many sins there grew such a habit that it bound me with iron chains, and from the habit there grew the necessity of sinning, and from this necessity the impossibility of conversion and amendment. These were the links of my chain: habit, necessity, despair.

And became, as it were, hardened and desperate.

Pardon me, great Saint, for alluding to thy vices when I should rather praise thee! I do not go beyond thy own words and pen, and my sole object is to make the wonder of thy holiness all the greater and more evident. In this thou hast set thy glory before heaven and earth, that in thee and by thee the honor and glory of the grace and mercy of God may be made evident and public before the world. I appeal to the words of St. John Chrysostom, who says that he should do great wrong to the saints who have been converted, and to the goodness and power of God by which their conversion was effected, if we did not bring to light and make known even the gross crimes they committed in their former lives; for from this appears, on the one hand, the greatness of the divine mercy, which so patiently bore so long with such great sinners, so paternally attracted and changed them into such great saints; and on the other hand, we should wrong the magnanimity and the glorious victory and triumph which those holy penitents gained over their nature and their inveterate habits, with the help of divine grace. Truly, the greatest praise of Augustine consists in this, that from a great sinner he became a wonderful saint, so that now all the world honors him.

This confession redounds to his honor.

What think you of this, my dear brethren? What a wonderfully powerful grace it must have been that brought to sanctity one who from childhood had grown up to be a hardened, obdu-

He would never have believed that he

<sup>1</sup> Pudebat non esse impudentem.

<sup>2</sup> Delectatus morbo carnis, sanari timebam.

would  
amend  
his life.

rate, almost despairing sinner! What an incomprehensible victory over self it must have cost Augustine at first to free himself from so many bonds and chains that tied him down, and to begin a holy life diametrically opposed to his former career! He himself cannot sufficiently express his wonder at the change; and if any one had told him in his youth that it would have taken place he would have laughed at the idea, and treated it as ridiculous and impossible. If an angel had appeared to him disguised, and said, Augustine, listen; all that you now regard as the object of your desires, thoughts, wishes; all that now occupies your whole heart and affections you will, after a certain time, hate and detest, condemn and curse. You now laugh at the tears and sighs of your mother; the time will come when you will shed tears of blood for not having paid better attention to her admonitions. Now it seems to you impossible to abstain from sin and carnal lust; the time will come when nothing will appear sweeter to you than to shun all pleasure, and then it will seem to you impossible to commit the least sin against God, and you will not be able to understand how you could ever have offended Him, how you did not begin to love Him sooner; nor will you have rest or peace until you give yourself altogether to the love of your God. Now in all your actions you seek honor and glory before the world, and part of this honor you place in the fact that you are the most shameless of all; then your humility will bring you so far that you will seek to hide yourself and your great talents, and by publicly confessing your crimes try to bring shame on yourself before the world. Now you cannot live without a wanton companion of the opposite sex; the time will come when you will not speak alone even with your own sister. Now you spend your time in gluttony and drunkenness, and all sorts of sensual indulgence; then you will chastise your body by fasting, watching, and wearing the garb of penitence, and you will take the bread out of your own mouth to feed the hungry and indigent stranger. Now you boast of your vices among your companions; then you will never cease to announce the glory of God everywhere. Now you seek for comrades in sin; the time will come when the world will be filled with convents either founded by you or following your rule, the inmates of which will praise God day and night with prayer, singing, and preaching; while you yourself will learn, before your death, to your great consolation, that in the whole of Africa there is hardly a town or district in



which there is not a convent, many of them having a hundred or more religious; and after your death you will see Europe adorned with your spiritual children in countless places. Now you adhere to the false teaching of heretics; then there will be no heretic who will dare to appear before you, no one who will venture to contend with you, no heresy which you will not refute, confound, and put to shame, either with your pen, or by your tongue, or with your published writings. Now you are a slave of the devil, a treacherous, ravening wolf among the sheep of Christ; then you will be called a shepherd of souls, a teacher of teachers, a tongue, a light, a protector, a preserver of the Church of God. Now you are a great sinner; then you will be a saint, and a great saint before the world. In your honor will be erected everywhere statues, altars, churches, and temples, while universities and pulpits will ring with the praises of your holiness. I now foretell to you that all this will happen. Tell me, my dear brethren, if this had been said to Augustine when he was buried in the grave of sin, do you think he would have believed it, and not rather treated it as an absurd jest? What! he would have exclaimed; I a saint? It is impossible for me to keep one day from sin; and am I to lead such a pure, perfect, and holy life? It is all nonsense; there cannot be a word of truth in it; it is impossible!

Nevertheless all that was accomplished in Augustine. If, according to the words of the Apostle, the complete fulfilment of the law consists in charity; if the greatness of charity is to be measured by the sanctity of the soul, then we require nothing more to see what a great saint Augustine was than to cast our eyes on his images, in which he is generally represented, in distinction to other saints, with a heart in his hand on fire with love; nothing more is necessary than to read the meditations and soliloquies with God that he has left us amongst his writings, wherein every word we read is, as it were, a spark thrown out by a burning fire of unspeakably sweet and intimate love. Hear a few of his sighs of love, wherewith his books are filled: Sweet Lord, my love, my God, my only love! inflame me altogether with Thy love, that my body and soul and all within me may be burnt and consumed with Thy love! I am consumed in Thee; I have Thee in my heart, on my lips, before my eyes, always, in all places. I have no wish to speak, except with and of Thee; to think, except on Thee; to desire, except Thee. If Thou dost not know that I love Thee, and dost not believe my words, then let the torrents of

And yet he became one of the greatest of saints.

tears I shed, and that I cannot restrain, speak and bear witness for me how much my soul loves Thee.<sup>1</sup> On other occasions the violence of his love carries him, as it were, out of himself, so that, as is the case with lovers, he cannot find words to express his love, and desires the impossible, and breaks out into the well-known sigh of love: I rejoice, O Lord, that Thou art God; but if perchance Augustine could be God, then should I prefer to be Augustine, that Thou mightest be God.<sup>2</sup> O wonderful power of divine grace, what extraordinary changes thou canst make in the hearts of men! Now I understand the meaning of those words of the Lord, in which He says that the grace of God can turn the hard stones into children of Abraham. Great Augustine, if it is true, as some say, that during your lifetime you worked no miracle, yet you are in yourself and by yourself the greatest miracle which shows to the world the might of the grace of the Almighty, since from so great a sinner you became such a great saint.

Lesson for  
sinners not  
to despair  
of conver-  
sion.

I conclude, my dear brethren, with a brief moral lesson for the good of our souls—a lesson supplied me by St. Augustine himself when he speaks of the conversion of St. Paul. What, he asks, was the intention of Jesus Christ in the conversion of Paul? Or rather, what object has the Catholic Church in view when she sets before our eyes this wonderful sanctification of Paul, who at first seemed to be a desperate sinner? What else but to teach all who are honestly minded to return to God that they must have a childlike confidence, that if they only wish they can and will be healed of the maladies of their souls, no matter how great and abominable their sins have been? “If Paul was healed, why should I despair? Why should I not have recourse to the same beneficent hands?”<sup>3</sup> Why should I hesitate to cast myself into the good and fatherly arms of the divine mercy? This may be applied to themselves by all who, being in the state of sin, meditate on the conversion of Augustine, even if their sins are worse and of longer continuance than his. If, they should think—if Augustine was healed, why should I despair? If Augustine was converted after having committed so many sins, for such a long time; if from great wickedness he attained to great holiness, why should I despair, as if I could

<sup>1</sup> *Quantum te diligit anima mea.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sed si forte Augustinus Deus esse potest; mallet Augustinus esse, ut tu Deus esses.*

<sup>3</sup> *Si Paulus sanatus est, ego quare despero? Cur ad illas manus non festinabo?*

never be converted? No! I can again become a child of God; if I only will, I can be converted and become holy in spite of the multitude and enormity of my past sins, provided only I work with the grace of God! Meanwhile I must and will not hesitate any longer, nor defer my conversion, but take advantage of the first ray of grace. If Augustine had withstood the grace of God any longer; if he had obstinately remained in the filth of sin till old age—oh, then indeed would the Church perhaps have no Augustine, that great light, and hell would have numbered a great demon among its denizens! Therefore this very day I will profit by the mercy of God.

If Augustine was healed, why should I despair? So should you, too, think, just souls, for among you there may be some who, on account of their past sins, allow themselves to be overcome by an inordinate fear, anxiety, and doubt, and give way to a cowardly pusillanimity, so that they dare not cultivate an intimate love of God; they are in a state of half despair, doubting of the pardon of their past offences, or of the fatherly kindness of God, or of their perseverance in good, and especially of their dying a happy death. Say to yourselves: If Augustine was healed; if the good and loving God dealt so favorably and kindly with Augustine, who was such a deplorable sinner, and gave him more graces and favors than He bestowed on many another saint who lived and served Him piously from youth upwards; if Augustine, after such a wicked life, could love his God so intimately and fervently, why should not I then have a childlike, upright, and intimate confidence towards such a good God and Father, provided only that I am really in earnest about serving Him faithfully in future, according to my state, and in loving Him above all things, as Augustine did, with my whole heart? This should be my only care, and then I shall have nothing to fear. This, O Lord, is what we are all determined to do, with Thy grace. Amen.

To the just  
not to be  
faint-  
hearted on  
account of  
their past  
sins.

## SIXTY-FOURTH SERMON.

## ON ST. FELIX, ARCHBISHOP OF TREVES.

## Subject.

Great and manifold is the fortune that the city of Treves owes to St. Felix, and therefore it also owes him a debt of sincere gratitude and love.—*Preached on the feast of St. Felix.*

## Text.

*Felix dies, in qua reversus es ad terram patrum tuorum, et sedisti in sede regni eorum.*—I. Mach. x. 55.

“Happy is the day wherein thou didst return to the land of thy fathers, and satest in the throne of their kingdom.”

## Introduction.

Divine Providence, that arranges everything in the world, in number, weight, and measure, has also given to some people names that indicate their future lives, or the events that are to happen in them. Thus the precursor of Christ was called John, that is, the grace of God, for he was to announce the presence of the Author of all grace, Jesus Christ. The first martyr was called Stephen, or the crowned, because he was to be the first, after Christ, to gain the crown of martyrdom. The prince of the apostles was called Peter, or the rock, because, as Our Lord Himself explains, the Church was to be built on him. In the same way it seems to me that it is not without reason that the holy Archbishop whose feast we celebrate to-day was called Felix, that is, the happy. In truth he verified his title to that name. Felix was a happy bishop, or, rather, I should say that the city of Treves was fortunate in having received from God such a happy bishop. He it is by whose footsteps this ground on which we stand was trodden and honored, and by whose holy doctrine the church of Treves was enabled to grow in the true faith and to preserve it incorrupt. Happy Treves, I say again, in having Felix as a shepherd and superior!

Plan of Discourse.

*What good fortune thou, O city, owest him, and therefore what gratitude and love thou shouldst show him I mean to explain now, to his honor and praise.*

We beg the help of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of Mary and of the holy angels.

The good fortune brought to the church of Treves by Felix when he was called to this archiepiscopal see I cannot better or clearer describe than by inviting you to cast the eyes of the mind and memory on those sad and dangerous times in which the church of this land then was when Felix began to rule it, to its advantage and salvation; for from the greatness of the danger out of which one is rescued we must judge the benefit conferred by him who liberates him. O sad times, when the bloodhound Riccius Varus was glutting his rage, and slaughtering and butchering, when the city of Treves was running with the blood of her own children and inhabitants! you were indeed, according to outward appearance, terrible and awful, yet in reality sweet and golden times compared to those that preceded the arrival of Felix. For all that Riccius Varus with his cruelty could effect was to send countless numbers of souls from Treves to heaven by martyrdom, and thereby to make the fame and renown of this city undying in the whole world; a fact that might readily cause other cities to feel a sort of holy envy, and awaken in them a desire for a similar opportunity of distinction.

The time when Riccius Varus was persecuting the Christians is not to be called unhappy.

But quite different was the aspect of affairs in the time of St. Felix, so that the author of his *Life*, Severus Sulpitius, compassionates him, and says that he was worthy of better times.<sup>1</sup> For this city and archdiocese was then altogether torn to pieces by an internecine war, and that to the great disadvantage of the divine honor, and to the loss and ruin of the faith and of souls. The Catholic religion, which had been planted here in the beginning by the disciples whom the apostles sent forth, and confirmed by the blood of innumerable martyrs, was now on the point of suffering a shameful downfall, and not only open enemies, but, what was much more dangerous, hypocritical friends and children of the true faith were ready to give it the last push. To speak more plainly: Error and heresy had gained the upper hand, and infected with its baleful poison clergy and laity, with-

But very dangerous and unhappy for Treves were the times that followed.

<sup>1</sup> *Dignus qui meliore tempore fletet sacerdos.*



out distinction, so that one could hardly distinguish between the lambs and the wolves disguised in sheep's clothing. The tyrant Maximus, who had placed himself on the throne by murder, assassination, and violence, held the reins of government here, and therefore obtained the surname of the Emperor of Treves.<sup>1</sup> He arrogated to himself even the ecclesiastical power, and under the pretext of zeal against the heretics summoned the bishops from all parts to Treves. These bishops were pleased to flatter the emperor, and, out of human respect, to give way to him in all their councils and assemblies; so that St. Martin, who had been brought hither by his concern for the danger which he saw threatening the church of Treves, and St. Felix feared to incur excommunication if they had anything to do with those bishops; and these holy men bewailed afterwards with tears that they had gone to meet them even on one solitary occasion. And all pious and good people, among whom was St. Martin, who refused to agree with the opinion of those bishops, were condemned as heretics publicly, and banished. Things got into such a disorderly state that recourse was had to fire and sword, and at last people were condemned as heretics merely from the expression of their countenances, from their dress and manner of clothing; so that a decree was made unanimously to imprison and put to death as Priscillianists all who practised fasting and prayer, or preserved a humble demeanor, or showed any other signs of piety. This sentence was ready to be executed; the swords were sharpened, the imperial soldiers were sent out to use them. In this woful condition of affairs the innocent were on the point of losing goods and life with the guilty, the pious and holy with the wicked and ungodly; there was no distinction made between them. I cannot bear to reopen this wound of my fatherland and make it bleed again.

Fortu-  
nately St.  
Felix was  
there, to set  
all right  
again.

Such were thy circumstances then, O wretched Treves! but even in thy misery a fortunate Treves! Why fortunate? Because at that very time God raised up for thee a fortunate, wise, and virtuous father and shepherd, by whose prudent government the dangerous storm was tided over and changed into calm and tranquil weather. It was St. Felix who undertook this great work, aided indeed at first by St. Martin, but he accomplished it by himself. He, with Martin, courageously opposed the senseless fury of the other bishops, went to the imperial pal-

<sup>1</sup> Imperator Treveus.

ace, and after a long conference at last obtained that the bloody sentence should not be carried into execution, and that the soldiers sent out through the country should be recalled. He then tried to calm the perturbed minds of the malcontents, and partly by persuasion and preaching, partly by kindness and leniency, to bring the heretics and apostates back to the true faith, until at last he managed, during his government, to secure the desired peace and tranquillity.

What labor this must have cost Felix until he brought it to a happy termination is easily imagined. When St. Paul was about to set forth for Jerusalem, to preach the gospel there, he said to his friends: "Behold, I go to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost in every city witnesseth to me, saying that bonds and afflictions wait for me at Jerusalem. But I fear none of these things . . . so that I may consummate my course and the ministry of the word which I received from the Lord Jesus,"<sup>1</sup> and do the duty imposed on me by Him. So could St. Felix with reason have thought and said when he was placed over the church of Treves in such troublous times: There is a duty imposed on me; how things will go with me there I know not, but I am well aware that I shall be confronted by serious difficulties that I must overcome. And in truth such were the circumstances that it could not be otherwise. To bring apostates back to the right way, to calm the discontented, to restrain the rebellious, to chastise and tame the obstinate, to take up arms against the opinion of great, learned, and seemingly pious superiors, and to manage all that so fortunately as to bring back peace and contentment—what skill, trouble, inconvenience, reflection, and difficulties of all kinds a task of that sort would require I leave to the consideration of those who know how hard it is to bring to subjection a country or city that has begun to rebel. Here I may use the words of St. John Chrysostom when he describes the great difficulties the apostles had to contend with in the conversion and changing of the world: In such a vast and mighty undertaking, when all had, as it were, to be turned upside down, when old customs had to be abolished, and new manners and morals, quite opposed to the former, introduced, even if there

But not  
without  
great labor  
and trouble.

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce vado in Jerusalem; quæ in ea ventura sunt mihi ignorans; nisi quod Spiritus Sanctus mihi protestatur, dicens: quoniam vincula et tribulationes Jerosolymis me manent. Sed nihil horum vereor. . . dummodo consummem cursum meum, et ministerium verbi, quod accepi a Domino Jesu.—Acts xx. 22-24.*

were no opposition, and a work of this kind succeeded in peace and quietness, that would be a great, unexpected, and wonderful result.<sup>1</sup> What hardships Felix had to undergo might have been still more clearly explained if, unfortunately, by a deplorable mischance in the devastations and plunderings of subsequent times, the writings and histories of this and other saints of Treves had not been destroyed.

Thus he brought great good fortune to Treves.

From the little I have told you you may see for yourselves what gratitude, honor, love, and confidence you owe your holy bishop and patron. Suppose that the persecution, or, what was still worse, heresy, had then gained the upper hand, and become fixed in the land—an evil that St. Felix happily averted—what would have become of Treves? Could it now boast of that glorious name it has above most countries of Germany that it has never had a ruler addicted to heresy? Go in thought for a moment through Europe, and consider what has been done in different places by heresy when it managed to insinuate itself into a country where it found no opposition. Consider what evil it has caused, what hateful abuses it has introduced, how many thousand souls it has sent to hell. And then ask yourselves: If this fearful evil has brought such ruin to so many kingdoms and provinces, how would it have been here, how would it probably still be, if it had not been stifled in its birth?—a benefit that, after God, we have to ascribe to the care, watchfulness, and labors of St. Felix. Truly, this is a happy day! “Happy is the day wherein thou didst return to the land of thy fathers, and satest in the throne of their kingdom;” happy the day on which Felix came into the land of our forefathers, and sat on the throne of their kingdom.

Besides the other benefits he conferred on this city.

And now, with mixed feelings of joy and sorrow, I cast my eyes on this ancient church of St. Paulinus, and on the ruined heap beside it (may God forgive those, if they are still capable of forgiveness, who left such tokens of their rage behind them!). Again we have a reason, my dear brethren, for acknowledging our debt of gratitude to St. Felix, and calling happy the day on which he came into our city to sit on the archiepiscopal chair. If it were not for him never would that beautiful and celebrated temple have been built; for during his lifetime he had it erected at great expense in honor of the Mother of God and of the

<sup>1</sup> Hæc profecto magna res foret et excellenter magna, si nemo turbaret, essetque paucis, fluctante.

holy martyrs of Treves; and its size and magnificence were so great that in length it measured 410 feet, and in breadth 120. Were it not for Felix this church in which we are now assembled would not have stood in this land for the last 1340 years, nor would the praises of God have been uttered in prayer and hymn by so many religious devoted to the divine service; of all this daily devotion Felix was the first author and founder. If it had not been for him we should not now be able to honor the relics of St. Paulinus, whose body, as that of his predecessor in this see, he had brought at great trouble and expense from distant Phrygia, where Paulinus, banished for the faith, laid down his life; Felix caused the relics to be enshrined in a costly casket. If it had not been for Felix perhaps the relics of our holy forefathers, who gave up their lives for their God and faith, would still be hidden under earth and stones; for he had their bones collected in order, and placed in the crypt of the church built by himself, and thus drew crowds of people from nearly every part of Germany to pay them public honor.

Would to God, my dear brethren, that I could as quickly awaken in you feelings of gratitude, devotion, and love towards this Saint as it is easy to show from the little I have told you how much you owe him. Truly, if even heathen cities and countries always remember and show devotion and gratitude to their first founders, from whom they acknowledge to have received their origin, just as the city of Rome in the darkness of heathenism adored its founder Romulus as a god, what, then, cannot a saint who is really reigning with God in heaven expect and require from you, since you have much more reason to be grateful to him than if he had merely laid the first stone of your city?

Hence we should be most grateful to him.

Meanwhile might he not perhaps have reason to say, in the words of the Prophet: "I am forgotten as one dead from the heart"?<sup>1</sup> I am so little thought of that when my name happens to be mentioned once or twice a year there is hardly one who remembers me, or the benefits that my beloved Treves owes to my care and labors. "I have brought up children, and exalted them, but they have despised me."<sup>2</sup> Whether St. Felix has such reasons for complaint I know not; or, rather, I cannot say whether there is on your part a carelessness in following his example, for imitation is the true way of honoring the saints. All

And should try to imitate his zeal for the glory of God.

<sup>1</sup> Oblivioni datus sum, tanquam mortuus a corde.—Ps. xxx. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Filios enutrivit, et exaltavit; ipsi autem spreverunt me.—Is. i. 2.

the thoughts, cares, and labors of Felix had for their sole object to save the Christian, Catholic faith in the sheep entrusted to his care, to adorn the churches and sacred buildings, and to further the divine honor by his efforts and those of his flock. In this he spent all his strength, to this he devoted all his income, and for the same end he at last, after twelve years' rule, resigned his dignity to another, and entered this cloister in order to be able to attend more strictly in solitude to his salvation and higher perfection. Here he spent the remaining years of his life as the lowest among his brethren, in prayer and praising God.

This is not  
done by all.

What direction do our thoughts and cares mostly take, my dear brethren? Whither tend our desires and efforts? Are there not some of us of whom the words might be said that St. Paul wrote to the Philippians: "All seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's"?<sup>1</sup> They seek the things that are their own—their honor, their profit, their revenues, their repose, their comfort, their temporal well-being; all their care is devoted to such things. They begin with them and end with them, as if they had received life for the sake of them, and had been born into the world and placed in the state they occupy only for them. They think little of and seek not at all the things that are Jesus Christ's; they are careless of the honor of God, the progress of the Church, the amassing treasure and merits for their immortal souls. Let each one look to himself, and see how matters stand with him in this respect, and whether the life he is now leading will at the end bring him the same consolation that St. Felix felt, whose soul was seen ascending into heaven in the shape of a golden dove, accompanied by the songs of the angels.

Exhortation  
to zeal in  
the service  
of God.

I conclude with the short but impressive words of St. Felix, which he said on his death-bed to his brethren who were bewailing the loss of their beloved shepherd, and to the other Christians who were present: "Do not deceive those who are subject to you, but instruct them as your children by the word of God and your example. . . . Do not adore dumb idols;"<sup>2</sup> that is, let not the love of any creature take the upper hand in your hearts; but let Him alone rule in your minds to whom you have

<sup>1</sup> Omnes quæ sua sunt querunt, non quæ sunt Jesu Christi.—Philipp. ii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Nolite fallere subditos vestros, sed ut filios verbo Dei et exemplo instruite. . . . Nolite adorare idola muta.



sworn fidelity and service, namely, our Father in heaven and His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. I have nothing more to add, but: Amen.

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*SIXTY-FIFTH SERMON.*

**ON THE WONDERFUL ST. BERNARD.**

**Subject.**

St. Bernard was a wonder: 1. Of innocence; 2. Of penitence.  
—*Preached on the feast of St. Bernard.*

**Text.**

*Fecit mirabilia in vita sua.*—Eccles. xxxi. 9.  
“He hath done wonderful things in his life.”

**Introduction.**

By the wonderful things the saints have done in their lives are generally understood the signs and miracles they wrought. Thus St. Gregory, St. Antony of Padua, and, in our own times, St. Francis Xavier are surnamed thaumaturgs, or workers of miracles. The same title, my dear brethren, could also be given with just reason to our St. Bernard; for where is there a place in Europe where he has not been, and which has not had experience of his wonderful power? The mere fact of approaching Bernard and receiving a blessing from his hands was to the blind the means of regaining sight, to the deaf it brought hearing, to the lame the use of their limbs, to the sick their health, as we may read in detail in the history of his Life; and this can be testified to by the surrounding country, by the city of Treves, by this sacred place in which we are assembled, which he formerly sanctified by his presence, and which still bears his name. But why should I seek for a motive of praising him from things that were done outside of him, and that were the result of gifts bestowed on him by God gratuitously—gifts that are common to all the saints? Bernard himself, when I consider his person and mode of life, seems to me the greatest wonder of all. And this thought was suggested to me by his own words, which he often said to others, and wrote, as well: “My monstrous life calls out to

you."<sup>1</sup> O Bernard, thou didst say that out of humility; yet thou saidst the truth at the same time, if thou hadst only changed that doubtful word monstrous for another more suitable to thee, and said as I now change instead of thee: My prodigious life calls out to you. Truly, thy wonderful life calls out to us, and will call out as long as the world lasts. Since the whole day would not be long enough for me to relate all the wonders of his life, I will now, my dear brethren, content myself with bringing to your notice two wonders only. I find in him two qualities and effects united which must justly excite the astonishment of every thinking mind, namely:

#### Plan of Discourse.

*I find in him the greatest innocence and the most severe penitence. There you have the subject of this panegyric. St. Bernard a wonder of innocence; the first part. St. Bernard a wonder of penance; the second part. Both together: innocence repenting, the greatest wonder; both to his undying fame and to our salutary confusion.*

O wonderful St. Bernard, obtain for us, through the hands of Mary, whose dearest child thou wert always, and of whose praises thou couldst never speak without shedding the sweetest tears, and uttering words that flowed with honey, obtain for us the grace that, as we cannot imitate thy innocence, we may at least follow thy spirit of penance from a distance. Help us hereto, ye holy angels, who helped Bernard to preserve his innocence.

It is a wonderful thing to keep one's first innocence during a long life in the midst of dangers.

To begin to strive after virtue and holiness when the mind is wearied with sin and vice; to live chaste and pure after having given a loose rein to the lusts of the flesh; to be temperate and abstemious after having indulged the palate without restraint; to sigh, weep, be contrite after having committed actions that are worthy of being deplored, is indeed a laudable thing, but not so wonderful as it is necessary in one who hopes to go to heaven. But for one who has lived long on earth, and that in the midst of dangers and occasions of sin, to preserve the first innocence and purity received in baptism, and to bring it untainted and uninjured to the grave and into eternity—oh, that is indeed an extraordinary and unusual effect of the mighty grace of God! What a small number of such men there are in the world! I may venture to say even: What a small number there is among

<sup>1</sup> Clamat ad vos monstruosa vita mea.

the elect in heaven who can with truth boast of having accomplished that feat!

My dear brethren, St. Bernard was a wonder of innocence of this kind. As Ribadeneira tells us in his *Life*, he was born of noble parents (mark well all the circumstances which render his innocence all the more surprising); he had inherited by nature strong passions, a profound and quick understanding, and a most lively spirit; he was moreover endowed with unusual comeliness, and a gracious manner which won the hearts of all. Besides these excellent gifts of mind and body, he was entitled to the greatest honors, riches, and worldly prosperity on account of his noble birth and great abilities. My God, what dangerous circumstances in which to preserve innocence! Truly, it is a rare thing with such gifts as these not to allow the heart to be enslaved by the attractions of the world and its vanities, and to preserve purity untainted; for the beauty of the body alone always fights most strenuously against the purity of the soul, as St. Augustine plainly says: "What is very beautiful soon falls."<sup>1</sup> Consider, too, his young and tender years. Who knows not that youth, through want of understanding, weakness of nature, the impetuosity of untamed passions, thoughtlessness, and the itching to know everything, is the time in which we are most apt to sin, and the most dangerous of our lives! How many are able to confirm this by sad experience!

From his childhood St. Bernard was in circumstances dangerous to his innocence.

Now when in addition to all this there are not wanting occasions, temptations, allurements, and snares inciting to sin, who could venture to say that he would escape them all unhurt? In his youth Bernard was surrounded by those occasions on all sides. His companions tried to induce him to lead a freer life, and by their bad example to tempt him to commit unbecoming actions; he was assailed by shameless and wanton women, who tried in every way to gain his affections; the devil never ceased to assault his imagination with all kinds of impure images. Nay, he had to suffer from his own friends, relations, and brothers, who spared no efforts to lead him from the path of virtue, and to persuade him to indulge in sinful pleasures.

He had to suffer many temptations.

Yet in those dangerous circumstances, which are the occasion of ruin to thousands of souls, in the midst of temptations that the holy David in his old age and the wise Solomon acknowledged themselves too weak to overcome, Bernard's innocence re-

And yet kept his baptismal innocence.

<sup>1</sup> Quod valde pulchrum est, hoc cito cadit.

mained in its pristine vigor. I have read the whole history of his life most carefully in order to see whether I might not detect some trace of those faults that even the holiest are wont to commit; but I could not find the least indication of his having been wanting in anything, except in mere outward appearance, as we shall see farther on.

Nay, always  
led a holy  
life.

Hardly had he attained the use of reason when he made it his first and most important business to know God, to love God, to be united with God in constant prayer, so that while still a child he was honored more than once by a visit from the Child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of heaven, who taught him in a special manner how to pray internally and to meditate on heavenly things; hence he never after found pleasure in anything except in the thought of God and heavenly truths. To his elder brothers he was a perfect model of obedience and submission to his parents; his control over his tongue was an indication of the wonderful silence he afterwards introduced among his religious; his love of solitude was so great that he could not be induced to go into company, as if he had been born for the religious and solitary life. The money given him for his pleasure belonged, not to him, but to the poor, to whom he gave it all, without keeping the least part for himself, and so great was his charity as well as his humility that he did this only in secret, so that no one could see him. His love of truth, his modesty and reserve made him resemble an angel more than a human being. The world and all that the world loves was in his sight only a worthless rag. As it seems to me, he dealt with it almost as Moses did with the land of Egypt; before that holy lawgiver left Egypt he, by divine inspiration, deprived it of its treasures. Even so Bernard was not content with leaving the world, and devoting himself completely to the service of God, for he brought away from it with him all that he had most precious and costly, namely, his own relations—his brothers and sisters, nay, even his father, all of whom he persuaded to join the religious life either with himself or afterwards.

He was  
still more  
holy and in-  
nocent in  
the religious  
state.

From this, my dear brethren, I leave you to judge of the life that he led in after years. I argue in this manner: If, while still a child, a youth, he had such a distaste for the world and its joys and goods, and such a desire and longing to devote himself to divine and heavenly things, how must it have been with him afterwards, when he became a man, and was taught the most sub-

lime mysteries by the Almighty? If he remained free from sin in the midst of filth; if he suffered no loss of innocence in the deceitful world, and amid temptations, occasions, and dangers, how must it have been with him in the walls of the cloister, in the religious life? Certainly if virtue and innocence have a favorite place on earth it is in the religious state. And therefore I repeat that if in the world, where he lived for three and twenty years—if in the world, where there are so many foes to virtue, where innocence is secretly and openly attacked, he still managed to keep it untarnished, I leave you to imagine how much more innocent, holy, and perfect he must have become in the cloister. The history of his life, which there is no time now to refer to, shows that. See now what a wonder of innocence Bernard was. But at the same time behold in him a wonder of penance, or of repenting innocence, as we shall see in the

### Second Part.

Here I might well make the same confession as St. Gregory makes when speaking of the penitent Magdalene: “When I think of the penitence of Mary Magdalene I am more inclined to weep than to speak.”<sup>1</sup> I may say the same of the penitence of Bernard. This angel, so far removed from the shadow of sin, so pious, so holy, nevertheless treated himself as harshly, as severely, and as unmercifully during his whole life as if he were the greatest sinner in the world; nay, he could not have been harder on himself if he had in reality surpassed all sinners in wickedness. I will not return to his youthful years and recount the austerities he then practised. As soon as he entered religion, and devoted himself altogether to the divine service, he began to practise towards himself what he afterwards recommended to his novices as the very foundation of the religious life; he told them that they should leave their bodies outside the gates of the monastery, and enter with the soul alone, that is, they must once for all renounce all bodily comforts, and treat their flesh as if it were their worst enemy.

Yet this innocent man did most severe penance.

To realize this in himself Bernard crept away from all society of men, into a most savage and solitary wilderness, and he used to say afterwards that here his councillors, advisers, and masters were the oaks and beeches. He never allowed the least satisfaction to the outward senses; he kept them so well in check

By mortifying his outward senses.

<sup>1</sup> *Cogitantī mihi de Mariæ Magdalenæ pœnitentiâ, flere magis libet, quam aliquid dicere.*



that one might say of him what Our Lord said in quite a different meaning: "Having eyes, see you not? and having ears, hear you not?"<sup>1</sup> He had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not, a tongue and spoke not. For a whole year he lived in a room, and did not know at the end whether it was vaulted or ceiled with boards. He was always of the opinion that the church in which he used to pray had but one window to admit the light. After having wearied his body the whole day with hard work, he did not permit it to rest at night; his sleep was so short that it seemed impossible for him to preserve life with it.

By severe  
fasting.

Eating and drinking, if we can call them so in his case, were with him unknown things; he had such a disgust for meals that when the time for them came he felt, as his Life says, as if he were going to the rack; the bare thought of food and drink was enough for him. And when, after long fasting, his emaciated body was in need of food to preserve life, his meal consisted of a draught of water and a piece of barley bread, which was so insipid that Pope Innocent II., when he saw a bit of it, began to weep with those who were with him, thinking it impossible for a man to live on such nourishment as that. The usual food of his religious were boiled beech leaves; if Bernard happened now and then to taste them he thought he had been partaking of a delicious banquet, although by constant fasting he had lost the sense of taste to such an extent that he could not distinguish one kind of food from another, and once, through inadvertency, drank water instead of wine. At last he was hardly able to take enough food to keep body and soul together.

By chastis-  
ing the  
flesh.

Besides this fasting, watching, and labor, which did not seem penance enough for him, he tortured his emaciated body by a hair-shirt, which he never laid aside, and with iron girdles, scourges, and disciplines, as if he were minded to kill it altogether. And (mark this, my dear brethren) the holy man was so severe to himself that, although he was free from all internal maladies and pains, as well as from external diseases, from his first entry into religion, yet it is no wonder that he became so thin and worn that he looked more like a skeleton than a living man, and one could say of him what St. John Chrysostom said of St. Paul, the great apostle: "He was nothing but soul;"<sup>2</sup> besides his bones and dried-up skin he had nothing but his soul,

<sup>1</sup> *Oculos habentes non videtis? et aures habentes non auditis?*—Mark viii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Nuda erat anima.*

which, according to the testimony of the physicians of the time, could not have existed had not his life been preserved specially by God that he might torture himself longer. This penitential life he never interrupted, although engaged in many important matters of Church and state; still practising these austerities, and animated by the love of his neighbor and his zeal for the glory of God, he travelled through all the kingdoms and important cities of Europe, bearing about with him everywhere, as he himself says, "the pallid image of his death."<sup>1</sup>

What think you of this, my dear brethren? What could be more wonderful than the union of such innocence with such penitence? A very severe penance awakens horror even in the worst sinners, although it seems tolerable to some extent that a man should be hard on himself when he remembers that by his misdeeds he has often merited the pains of hell. What wonder is it that such a man should treat himself with a holy anger, and take a just revenge on the flesh that sinned so often? But for a man in whose life not the least fault can be found, whose conscience reproves him with nothing, to chastise himself in so terrible a manner, does it not seem as if we could regard that as an injustice, a culpable presumption, a cruelty? But holy people are wont to weigh their faults more accurately than others; let us hear, then, what was the fault in Bernard that, according to his idea, merited such severe punishment. I have found one.

So did this innocent man treat himself.

Perhaps it was this, my dear brethren: In his early youth Bernard had once allowed his eyes to wander for a moment on a person of the opposite sex, although he immediately turned them away again. There you have all his sins together; I cannot find any more. O innocent Bernard, is that the worst thing you have done? Is that the sin that deserved such a long and cruel penance? Was that the fault that had to be atoned for by such fasting, watching, scourging, and shedding your own blood? Oh, if so, wo to me! wo to all poor sinners! What ought I not to do, then, to atone for my many and grievous sins! Ah, quickly, Bernard, give me thy garb of penance, thy iron girdle, the rods and scourges with which thou didst arm thy hands. All the torments of the martyrs are not enough to atone for my sins if thy faults had to be punished so severely. And hadst thou not in thy youth done penance enough for them? Hear, my dear brethren, how he acted. As soon as he thought of himself after

And that to punish a small fault.

<sup>1</sup> Ubique pavida: mortis pallidam circumferens imaginem.—S. Bern. Ep. 144.

that incautious glance, and remembered that he had given way to curiosity, filled with contrition, he ran and threw himself into a frozen pond in the winter time to wash out that stain; there he remained up to the neck in water until he was drawn out, more dead than alive. And that this penance of his was pleasing to God is evident from the fact that from that time concupiscence was so extinguished in him that he never felt the least inclination to carnal lust, inborn though that inclination is in us all. But, I ask again, was this penance not enough for such a small fault? What necessity was there for such austerities during the remainder of his life? Ah, my dear brethren, this is the thought that fills me with shame! For that highly enlightened soul knew better what it is to offend the sovereign majesty of God, worthy of all love, even by a small fault only once; he knew well that the only way to heaven is the rugged way of the cross; he understood that he is not worthy of Christ who does not daily take up his cross and follow Him. Therefore Bernard embraced the cross, and in that position he is generally painted, and with the cross the instruments of Our Lord's passion, sighing forth constantly, like St. Paul: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross."<sup>1</sup> And in spite of all this he thought he was doing but little to merit heaven; for he wrote from his death-bed to the Abbot Arnold in the following strain: Now I am on the point of entering into eternity; pray for me to Our Saviour, who does not desire the death of the sinner, that He may receive my poor soul into favor.<sup>2</sup>

We have often lost our innocence.

O wonderful Bernard, wonder of innocence, wonder of penance! What glory for thee, but what shame for me and those like me! Can I, can any of you, my dear brethren, compare our innocence with that of Bernard? Let each one enter into his own conscience, and examine with me briefly the past years of his life. Years of my childhood, after I came to the use of reason, how was it with me then? Where is my innocence? Youth, and the years that have passed since then, what have you to say? Where is my innocence? Ye chambers and gardens, ye streets and lanes, ye pleasure parties, ye gaming-houses and taverns, nay, ye churches and temples, that have been witnesses of my past life, if you could speak what would you say? Where is my innocence? How often have I lost it alone by myself, how

<sup>1</sup> Christo confixus sum cruci.—Gal. ii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Orate Salvatorem, etc.

often in company, how often in thought and desire, in unlawful discourses, in songs, in shameful touches, in deeds and actions? Ah, innocent Bernard, lend me the words which thy humility forced from thee; they are better suited in their obvious meaning to me; the monstrous life I have led cries, not to men, who cannot see the heart, but to the all-knowing God, who proves the reins, and says that as thou art a wonder of innocence, so I am a wonder of wickedness!

Meanwhile where is my penance? After a life spent in sin, while my conscience reproves me with so often having offended God, lost my soul, bartered heaven, and merited the everlasting fire of hell, can I imagine that I may lead a careless and an easy life and go to heaven on a bed of roses and soft down? My desires always tend to rest, comfort, good living, eating, drinking, and sleeping; I seek what pleases my eyes, delights my ears, tastes well to my palate; that I take when I can have it; but penance is a word that I do not wish to understand the meaning of. To yield to my neighbor, to forget an imaginary insult, to keep silent when a word of contradiction is spoken, is for me an insuperable difficulty; the least touch of adversity is enough to make me burst forth into curses, imprecations, and blasphemies, as if I had never done any wrong. In the daily crosses and trials from which hardly one on earth is free, in the little troubles sent to me that come from the hand of the heavenly Father, who means so well with me, I begin to murmur, through discontent, to complain against God as if I were treated unjustly, as if I were innocence itself. What is to be the end of this life of mine if the way to heaven is that by which the saints of God travelled? if the way to heaven is no other, even for innocent and just souls, than the way of mortification, of self-denial, of constant crosses and penance; the way that Jesus Christ has marked out for all the elect? Is there perhaps a different, a more comfortable and broad way for the sinner who has often and grievously offended God? Shall he perhaps have less penance to do in order to go to heaven than an innocent man?

Alas, where shall I creep to on that day when I shall see an innocent Bernard coming forward, armed with the cross, the rods, and scourges, followed by a countless multitude of his spiritual sons, and hear him speaking to the Judge in the words of the Prophet Isaias: "Behold I and my children, whom the Lord

And yet do  
such little  
penance.

So that one  
day the  
holy penitents shall  
put us to  
shame.

hath given me for a sign, and for a wonder in Israel.”<sup>1</sup> Behold, here I am (so I imagine Bernard speaking), and I have with me the children whom the Lord gave me to be a sign in the Church of God; who, after my example, united innocence with penance; for, generally speaking, they were taken from the dangerous world in the first bloom of their youth, and yet they spent the remaining years of their lives in this holy solitude, in many watchings, in fasting, and other austerities; their sole business was to praise God and love Him with unceasing prayers and hymns; their only profession was to learn nothing but to be crucified here with the crucified Jesus. What, then, shall become of me, I ask again, who have done so much evil and so little penance? Ah, my Lord and my God, what am I to do? Must I not begin at last to amend my way of life?

Resolution  
to repent.

Yes, truly, I acknowledge it is high time to do so. It shall be done, O Lord, with Thy grace, this very day! To-day shall my penance begin, and that by the most necessary penance of all; for I will first make a candid confession of all my sins, and especially of those secret sins that I have carried about for so many years in my uneasy conscience, that shame kept me from telling, so that I have never made a sincere confession, and have incurred the guilt of many sacrileges and unworthy communions; I will confess them now candidly and with a contrite heart. And in future my sinful eyes shall be kept from indulging in wanton glances, and, with Bernard, even from looking at things that are remotely dangerous. My sinful ears shall do penance, for I will close them to all unlawful and uncharitable discourse. My sinful tongue shall do penance, for it will never more indulge in that un-Christian, hellish speech common to all the reprobate, namely, that scandalous cursing and swearing. My sinful mouth shall do penance, for I will never more indulge in excessive drinking, which, as I know by experience, has been the occasion of many sins. My sinful feet shall do penance, for they will never more bear me to that person, that house, that company where I have found the occasion of sin. My sinful hands shall do penance, for I will this very day make restitution of ill-gotten goods, and never more stretch them forth to unlawful actions. My wanton flesh shall do penance by being forced to renounce even lawful amusements, since it has so often indulged in forbidden

<sup>1</sup> Ecce ego et pueri mei, quos dedit mihi Dominus in signum, et in portentum Israel.—Is. viii. 18.



ones, contrary to the law of God. I will do penance my whole life long by patiently bearing all the annoyances that are caused me daily by my husband, my wife, my children, my neighbors, in any way whatsoever; by willingly undergoing all the contradictions that the Almighty may please to send me, humbly acknowledging that I have deserved far more on account of my sins; that so, with the penitent St. Bernard (since I cannot as an innocent penitent), at least as a penitent sinner receive in heaven the reward promised by a merciful God to all penitents. Amen.

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SIXTY-SIXTH SERMON.

ON ST. BERNARD AS A DESPISER OF THE WORLD.

Subject.

1. St. Bernard left everything to follow Christ; 2. We, too, should leave everything to follow Christ into heaven.—*Preached on the feast of St. Bernard.*

Text.

*Ecce, nos reliquimus omnia, et secuti sumus te.*—Matt. xix. 27.  
“Behold, we have left all things, and have followed Thee.”

Introduction.

Is it then such a great exploit to leave all things? Sometimes even heathen philosophers did that, as St. Jerome says of the gospel from which I have taken my text: “This was done by Crates, the philosopher; and many others despised riches.” Yes; but mark, my dear brethren, how in the words of my text St. Peter does not merely say: We have left all things, but he adds: We have followed Thee. That the heathens did not do; they left earthly goods through vanity and love of praise, in order to be admired and esteemed by men; but, as St. Jerome says, to leave all things and follow Christ, to walk in His footsteps, “is the mark of the apostles and the faithful.” St. Bernard could say with truth of himself these words of St. Peter, as I now mean to prove in this panegyric.

Plan of Discourse.

*St. Bernard left all things to follow Christ; the first and longer part. We, too, should leave all things to follow Christ into*

*heaven; the second part. The first to the undying praise of St. Bernard; the second to the use and profit of our souls.*

O great servant of God, St. Bernard, obtain this latter grace for us from God, for whose sake thou didst leave all things; we expect it through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, whom thou didst love most tenderly in a wonderful manner. Help us herein you, too, holy angels.

The goods we can leave are partly external, partly internal.

There are two kinds of goods that we mortals can leave in this world: the first are external, the second are within ourselves. The external goods are described by Our Lord in to-day's gospel: "Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands." In a word, to this class belongs everything that man can possess, or gain, or appropriate to himself for his support, or advantage, or amusement. The internal goods that belong to us are body and soul, freedom, understanding, memory, our natural inclinations and desires, the use of our eyes, ears, tongue, and other senses and powers of our body. There we have all that man has had placed in his power by the Creator. Now if Christ has pronounced blessed, and prizes so highly one who has left only some of the outward and less valuable goods, such as house, or lands, or brother, or sister for His sake, so that He is willing to give him a hundredfold here, and life eternal in heaven, how highly must He not value, what a great reward, honor, and glory must He not give to him who once for all leaves, not some of those things, but everything for His sake!

St. Bernard left all external goods.

Such a generous and faithful follower of Jesus Christ was St. Bernard, my dear brethren. There was nothing in or outside of himself which he did not completely, without the slightest exception, and in the most perfect manner, leave and give to his God forever. First, he did not keep for himself any of his external goods, but everything that had the name of a temporal good that belonged to him, or that he could hope for, or gain in future, he left forever; nor did he, like St. Peter, wait to do this until he had arrived at man's estate, and was called by Christ to follow Him; but in his early youth, as soon as he came to the use of reason, and was able to understand the interior voice of the divine inspiration, when he had hardly begun to taste the first enjoyment of worldly goods, he already resolved to relinquish them once for all; and this resolution he carried into effect,

not being deterred from it by any difficulty, hindrance, temptation, persecution, although his brothers and relations did all they could to prevent him; nor was he easy in his mind until he could say with Peter: Behold, I have left all things—house and home, gold and money, father, brothers, sisters, friends, relations, and acquaintances. Good-bye to all of you! I will go to the desert; God alone shall be my refuge.

And what kind of a house and home did he leave? If Peter had a home of his own to leave, I can find in it nothing in the shape of worldly goods, as St. Jerome says, speaking of this gospel, except a poor fisherman's garment, a few nets, hooks, and other fisher's gear by which he managed to earn his bread. "And yet," continues St. Jerome, "he says with confidence: We have left all things." Of what kind was the house of Bernard? As Ribadeneira tells us, it was that of a noble and rich family. On account of the wonderful keenness of intellect and great mind and ability of which Bernard gave promise in his early youth, his brothers were not at all willing that he should enter religion, a rare thing among brothers and sisters; and the children of the family were seven in number. From this we can judge what a rich inheritance he left; otherwise his brothers and sisters would not have taken such trouble to prevent him from entering religion; besides that, his personal comeliness attracted the attention of many of the opposite sex, who tried to gain his affections. From all this, my dear brethren, you can easily imagine what prosperity Bernard had to expect, what honor he could have enjoyed, and what pleasures awaited him had he remained in the world and lived according to the usages of the world.

Oh, truly, it requires a great fight in the human heart, an heroic and difficult act of self-denial, to renounce all those things of one's own free will, and leave them forever! How was it with that young man of whom we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew, who, through a desire of saving his soul, had most carefully observed all the commandments from his childhood, and with all eagerness presented himself to Our Lord, and asked Him: "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" I have kept all the commandments from my youth. "What is yet wanting to me?" "If thou wilt be perfect," said Jesus to him, "go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor; and come, follow Me." Alas, what a hard saying for this young man, well-meaning though he was! "And when the young man had heard

And they  
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and numer-  
ous.

That are not  
usually re-  
linquished  
without a  
struggle.

this word," says the Scripture, "he went away sad." Why? "For he had great possessions." So difficult it is to separate one's self from worldly goods when they are possessed in abundance. And this was what Our Lord said to His disciples after the young man had gone away: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

He left  
them in the  
most perfect  
manner.

And yet how did Bernard act in similar, nay, more difficult circumstances? Great as was the wealth to which he could justly lay claim, attractive as were the comforts and pleasures that awaited him, high as was the position promised him by the world, he cast it all aside and turned his back on it to follow Christ. And where did he go to? Mark, my dear brethren, the perfection with which he left all. We still praise and admire the obedience of the Patriarch Abraham when God commanded him, saying: "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house."<sup>2</sup> He obeyed at once; but he did not leave all; for, as the Scripture says, he took with him Sarah, his wife, and Lot, the son of his brother, "and all the substance which they had gathered."<sup>3</sup> Besides, he was promised a far better and richer land, where God was to give him abundance of blessings and goods, and to make him the father of an innumerable people. It is not hard to leave one's country on such conditions. But it was quite different with Bernard; he did not bring the least iota with him, except that his father, brother, sister, and some of his nearest relatives, persuaded by his example and exhortations, left the world and joined the banner of Christ. The place to which he fled was a wilderness, abandoned by men; there his home was the desert, his possessions extreme poverty, his bed the hard earth, his clothing a rude garb of penance, his food boiled beech leaves, his company hazel and beech trees, as he himself tells us. In a word, of the whole world he had nothing but room enough in which to pray, watch, fast, and praise God. "Behold, we have left all things;" that is the right way in which to renounce the world.

And he also  
renounced  
himself  
completely.

Many men of the world cannot understand the ideas of religious, and look on it as a strange thing to abandon all temporal goods; some, in fact, go so far as to condemn this mode of action

<sup>1</sup> Magister bone, quid boni faciam, ut habeam vitam æternam? Quid adhuc mihi deest? Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende quæ habes, et da pauperibus, et veni, sequere me. Abiit tristis, erat enim habens multas possessiones. Amen dico vobis, quia dives difficile intrabit in regnum cœlorum.—Matt. xix. 16, 20-23.

<sup>2</sup> Egredere de terra tua, et de cognatione tua, et de domo patris tui.—Gen. xii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Universamque substantiam quam possederant.—Ibid. 5.

as opposed to nature and reason; but their astonishment and condemnation are the result of gross ignorance, for they know not how to distinguish between transitory and true everlasting goods. Bernard could see much farther ahead; all that he left he looked on as toys, and it seemed to him that in giving to God his external goods he had given nothing at all, and therefore he gave himself, with body and soul, and all that he was and had.

So that after renouncing all things he completely detached <sup>His body</sup> himself from them. He renounced his body, and he used afterwards to say to his novices that they should leave their bodies outside the door of the monastery, and enter with the soul alone; and in fact he treated his body as if it did not any more belong to him, but was the property of some malefactor that merited nothing but to be daily scourged and chastised; and he was as unmerciful, cruel, and severe towards it as I have described on another occasion, when speaking of his wonderful penance. He abandoned the use of his tongue, which he condemned to a perpetual silence, so that he never allowed it to speak a word, unless to praise God and announce His glories. He abandoned the use of his ears, for he separated himself from all society of men, and took no interest in anything that occurred outside himself; nay, even the pleasing song of the birds was an annoyance to him, so that, as is well known, he caused the nightingales in Himmenrodt to become dumb because they disturbed him in his prayer and intercourse with God; and those birds are dumb in that place to this day. He abandoned the use of his eyes, which he so mortified and chastened by long self-denial that when they beheld any object he took no notice of it. He lived a whole year in a novice's cell, and when he came out he did not know whether the cell was vaulted or had a boarded ceiling. In the church that he visited daily he thought there was only one window in the choir, although there were three of them. For a whole day he travelled once along a lake, and did not remark it, or take any notice of it, or remember that he had seen it; for when the religious began to speak of this lake in the evening he asked where it was. He abandoned the use of his taste, for he was so emaciated by his long and severe fasts that he could hardly take enough nourishment to preserve his life, and at last he lost all taste completely, and could not distinguish one kind of food from another. For many days, one after the other, he ate raw blood that had been set before him by mistake, and drank oil in-



stead of water, without in the least noticing what he was eating or drinking. It would take too long to relate all that is written in his Life of similar traits of his.

All the faculties of his soul.

And what wonder was it? How could it be otherwise? All the senses of the body must lose their power when, as was the case with Bernard, the soul itself was, so to speak, abandoned, which, with all its faculties, memory, understanding, will, thoughts, and desires, was by night, during long watching, as well as by day, while he worked hard, always sunk in God alone, and, as it were, ravished out of itself. In a word, the life led by this wonderful man was more like that of an angel without a body or bodily appetites than that of a human being. "No one," says the Abbot William, in the history of his life, "could, in my opinion, explain how he lived who does not live by the same spirit."<sup>1</sup>

His health and life.

And even this solitude and intimacy with God that were so dear to him he left when the honor of God, the good of the Church, and the salvation of souls required it. He travelled through nearly every country in Europe, and visited the chief cities of Italy, France, and Germany, partly to combat the new heresies that were just cropping up, and partly to further important ecclesiastical business that was entrusted to him by different Popes. In these journeys he lost no opportunity of working countless wonders in his unwearied zeal for the honor of God, and that without in the least abating his wonted austerities, until at last, worn out and exhausted, more like a skeleton, as he says himself, than a living man, leaving all his remaining strength and vital spirits for the love of God, he resigned his valiant soul into the hands of his Creator.

Thus he merited a great reward.

"Behold, we have left all things, and have followed Thee. What, therefore, shall we have?" Such was the question asked by St. Peter, who had left only a few fisherman's nets. O holy St. Bernard, what reward must then have been given to thee? Yet thou didst receive here on this earth the hundredfold. Didst thou not receive a hundred times more wealth, in the shape of illuminations and graces from God, than thou didst renounce in the world? A hundred times more honor and glory, too, before men, in every place where thy wonderful sanctity was known, than thou couldst have hoped for in thy father's house? A hundred times more consolation, joy, and delight in thy intimacy

<sup>1</sup> *Neminem enarrare posse puto, qui non vivat de spiritu, de quo ille vixit.*

with God than all the pleasures of the world could have given thee? Oh, what glory, happiness, and sweetness will now, O Bernard, be thy lot in all eternity with God in heaven! This we cannot now understand; but we shall see it one day with thee, if we only now endeavor to follow the example of thy virtues, and for God's sake to renounce all things. My dear brethren, if we wish the first we must also do the latter. We, too, if we desire to follow Christ into heaven, should and must leave all things for God's sake. This is briefly the moral lesson of the

### Second Part.

We, too, must leave all things. Hear this, ye married men! Go away, then, from your wives; leave house and home, shop, business, and trade! We must leave all things. Hear this, ye mothers; leave your children to themselves; to the desert with you! We must leave all things. Children, why do you tarry? You must take leave of father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends, and relations, and shut yourselves up in the walls of a cloister! We must leave all things. At once, ye peasants; give up your fields and lands and vineyards; they are no more for you; you are relieved from all work; abandon your homes and barns, and follow Christ, if you wish to go to heaven! But, you will say, what queer kind of preaching is this? Have we not received from God, by the apostle St. Paul, the express command: "But to them that are married, not I, but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife" ?<sup>1</sup> Are not all parents bound by God, under a grievous obligation, to bring up their children for God and heaven, to keep a watchful eye on them, and to direct them as well as they can? Does not the same apostle say: "Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called" ?<sup>2</sup> How can these commands be fulfilled if we have to run away and leave everything? And you are right! Remain, therefore, where you are, with your own, according to the requirements of your duty and state of life, and live in a Christian and holy manner as becomes you. Meanwhile it is true that all who wish to save their souls must leave all things, not indeed in act, but at least in heart, affection, and inclination. Of this

We, too,  
must leave  
everything,  
as far as our  
affections  
are con-  
cerned.

<sup>1</sup> *His autem qui matrimonio juncti sunt, præcipio, non ego, sed Dominus, uxorem a viro non discedere. Et vir uxorem non dimittat.—I. Cor. vii. 10, 11.*

<sup>2</sup> *Unusquisque in qua vocatione vocatus est, in ea permaneat.—Ibid. 20.*

the same apostle writes in the same chapter: "This, therefore, I say, brethren: The time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives be as if they had none; . . . and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as though they used it not."<sup>1</sup> In this consists the detachment of the heart, that one does not allow his heart, inclinations, and desire to cleave to any earthly thing, and uses what is necessary only so far as is required for the service of God; and that one is always so disposed in his heart as to lose husband, wife, children, house and home, money and property, rather than for their sake to transgress any one of the divine laws. He who is not so disposed at heart, and does not in that manner and in affection leave all things, is not on the way to heaven.

and in  
reality, too,  
when God  
requires it.

Besides, we must also in reality leave everything at once that we cannot retain without losing our souls. Sinners, leave, therefore, by speedy repentance and amendment, the yoke of the evil one whom you have been serving hitherto; leave that unhappy state in which, if death surprises you, your poor souls will be condemned to the eternal pains of hell. Do this at once; there is no time to lose! You must leave everything that, so long as you retain it, keeps you from regaining the grace of God. You must leave that ill-gotten gain that you have hitherto had in your possession, and restore it to its lawful owner. You must leave that secret hatred, anger, and desire of revenge you have hitherto entertained against your neighbor, whom you could not bear to look at, or to speak a kind word to, and you must be reconciled to him from your heart. You must leave the proximate occasion of sin; that house in which, as you know by experience, you have sinned so often and grievously; that company in which you have done so much evil; that person with whom you have been united in the bonds of unlawful love. If you do not leave all these things all your confessions, communions, and absolutions are nothing but so many sacrileges. You must leave that bad habit of cursing, which gives so much scandal to your children and domestics; that habit of excessive drinking, which is the cause of so much sin; that habit of talking against charity, which so often injures the character of your neighbor; that habit of impure conversation, which is the occasion of evil to so many innocent souls. You must leave that perverse, scandalous,

<sup>1</sup> Hoc itaque dico fratres: Tempus breve est; reliquum est, ut et qui habent uxores, tanquam non habentes sint; . . . et qui emunt, tanquam non possidentes; et qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—I. Cor. vii. 29-31.

and unlawful worldly custom which cannot harmonize with the teaching and principles of the gospel. You must leave that devil's pillow, that is, idleness, which is the cause of so much sin to yourselves and your children. You must leave that habit of gambling and paying unnecessary visits by which so much precious time is squandered, and which prevents the training of children from being properly attended to.

Further, we must leave all that might place us in danger of losing the grace of God by sin; namely, we must leave the too free use of the eyes, so that, like Bernard, we must close them, not only to unlawful objects, but even to those that are remotely dangerous; we must leave the too curious use of the ears, that we may not listen to uncharitable or impure talk; we must leave the too unrestrained use of the tongue, that we may learn to be silent about the faults and failings of others; we must leave the use of the feet, that they may not bring us into the dangerous company of persons of the opposite sex; and we must leave all carnal sensualities, and mortify our senses, often even in lawful things, for the sake of God and heaven. Finally, we must and will, with all our hearts, leave all that the providence of God has not given to us as well as to others who are richer, or that He has taken from us by misfortune and temporal calamities, or that He may in future deprive us of; so that, since we must in any case suffer the loss of those things, we may turn it to the profit of our souls by bearing it with Christian patience and conformity to the will of God, and with peaceful and contented minds for the sake of God and heaven.

Let us, with the utmost care, seek wealth and riches, but, with Bernard, let them be heavenly riches, that no thief, nor misfortune, nor adversity, nor death can deprive us of. Let us seek honor and esteem, but let them be that undying honor and glory that will be ours for all eternity. Let us seek pleasures and delights, but let them be those of which the Apostle speaks, that surpass all human understanding. Let us, as long as we are on this earth, abandoned by temporal prosperity and worldly pleasures, always keep our hearts fixed on heaven. Yes, so it shall be, O Lord! But what reward have we to expect? Even those very goods, honors, and pleasures that we shall have sought in this manner; Thy grace and friendship, repose of conscience, the consolation of the Holy Ghost on earth, and eternal life with Thee in heaven. With that we shall have enough. Amen.

And all  
that might  
lead us  
from God.

Exhortation  
and resolution  
to seek  
eternal  
goods.

## SIXTY-SEVENTH SERMON.

## ON THE HOLY CONFESSOR OF TREVES, ST. SIMEON.

## Subject.

1. St. Simeon had good reason to rejoice at his death, and to say with Simeon of old: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord," etc.; 2. If we imitate St. Simeon in life we shall have reason to rejoice with him at the hour of death.—*Preached on the feast of St. Simeon.*

## Text.

*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace.*—Luke ii. 29.

"Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace."

## Introduction.

If it be true, as Plato writes, swans never sing so sweetly and agreeably as when they know that they are on the point of death,<sup>1</sup> a similar pleasing song was sung in olden times by that pious, God-fearing old man Simeon, so celebrated by St. Luke the Evangelist, when, after having spent a long life in the service of the Lord, he saw and received into his arms the Saviour of the world, whom he so eagerly longed to behold. "Now," he cried out, full of joy, "Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace." The same words, it seems to me, could have been said with the same joy and sweet consolation of heart by our great St. Simeon, who was like that holy old man, not only in name, but also in justice and righteousness, when, after having come to the end of a severe and laborious life, in this cloister, at the invitation of his Saviour, and in His embrace, he gave up the ghost. What just reason he had to rejoice at the hour of death, and how we may attain to a similar happiness at the end of our lives, shall form the subject of this panegyric.

## Plan of Discourse.

*Just cause had St. Simeon to rejoice at the hour of death, and to sing: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, etc.": this we shall see, to his praise, in the first part. If we imitate St. Simeon in*

<sup>1</sup> Cygni quando se brevi præsentunt morituros, tunc dulcius canunt.



*life we shall have like cause to rejoice in death: this shall form the lesson of the second part.*

O great patron, holy St. Simeon, obtain for us, through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God, and that of the holy angels, powerful graces, that we may resolve to do this latter, and so be enabled in our last moments to say and sing with joy: "Now Thou," etc.

But after all is that enough to a man's praise to be able to say of him that he left this world with joy? Is it then so very unusual and rare to die cheerfully and contentedly? Can I find nothing else in our St. Simeon wherewith to praise him than his last hour and departure into eternity? Is there not more than matter enough to extol him in what almost half the world from east to west has seen and admired of his holy and wonderful life? Truly, my dear brethren, such is the case; and if I had time to describe his life at length I should go in thought to Constantinople where, in the bloom of youth, he learned, with the liberal arts, the contempt of the world and of all its goods, and renouncing his native land and inheritance once for all, and leaving his father and friends, impelled only by the love of God and the desire of serving Him perfectly, set out on a journey to the Holy Land, and accomplished it in spite of a thousand dangers and difficulties. I should have to go with you to Jerusalem, where he spent seven whole years attending on poor strangers and pilgrims through Christian charity; I should show you, if it were possible, the gloomy deserts on the banks of the Jordan, the ravines on the shore of the Red Sea, the caves in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, the deep holes and fallen rocks on Mount Sinai, in which, separated from all human consolation, he hid himself among wild animals, and lived in the utmost poverty, assailed continually by the rage of the demons, and terrified by hideous spectres, while he endeavored to sustain life by eating herbs and roots, and drinking muddy, stagnant water.

St. Simeon  
always led  
a holy life.

Again, I should accompany you to Babylon, where this holy man, having been forced by obedience to leave his solitude in order to go to France, was seized as a spy and traitor, and driven off with many insults. I should explain to you how, not long after, by a decree of Divine Providence, since God wished to try His servant by many contradictions, he fell into the hands of pirates, who cruelly slew all who were with him in the ship, while

And endured many  
hardships  
for God's  
sake.

he alone, trusting in God, leaped into the sea, and escaping the fury of the waves, as well as the clouds of arrows that were shot at him, arrived safely in harbor; how, now that he was deprived of his companions, he travelled quite alone through Italy and France, amid countless dangers by land and water, and, after suffering many hardships, at last arrived here in Treves. From Treves he again went with the then Archbishop Poppo to the Holy Land, and from there returned again to Treves, which of all places in the world was assigned to him by a divine revelation as his last dwelling and final resting-place in his laborious life. I could and must finally lead you here to the holes and crannies that are still to be found in these walls where he had himself built in, and spent the remaining seven years of his life in constant watching, prayer, and psalmody, amid unceasing attacks of the hellish foe, and sustaining life with a little bread and water, so that, like St. Paul, he could say: "Our flesh had no rest, but we suffered all tribulation. . . . In many labors" I passed my life; "in deaths often, in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers; in perils in the sea, in labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness;"<sup>1</sup> always in difficulties, never out of want, as the Life of this Saint in the History of Treves proves.

So that he  
had reason  
to await  
death with  
joy.

See, my dear brethren, what matter I have to praise him; but I will not dwell on this, for I believe you have heard it all described in former years, and perhaps you are better acquainted with it than I am. I will only briefly recall to-day what you have often heard before: for I refer to the holy life of this great servant of God in proof of the proposition with which I began, that, namely, our St. Simeon, as well as the holy old man of the gospel, had a joyful and consoling death, which sets the crown on all his other laudable exploits, and that he could say with as much desire and longing as his namesake the Canticle of Simeon: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace." And truly, if the saint of old could utter those consoling words on account of his just and pious life, as the Scripture says of him: "And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout,"<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Nullam requiem habuit caro nostra, sed omnem tribulationem passi sumus. . . . In laboribus plurimis, in mortibus frequenter; in itineribus sæpe, periculis fluminum, periculis latronum, etc.—II. Cor. vii. 5; xi. 23, 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ecce homo erat in Jerusalem, cui nomen Simeon, et homo iste justus et timoratus.-- Luke ii. 25.

God-fearing, what else but piety and uprightness do we find in the life of our St. Simeon? If the former had a desire and longing to die because his eyes had seen the Saviour, as he says himself: "Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation,"<sup>1</sup> so, too, did our St. Simeon see with his own eyes the holy places in which the same Saviour was born, where He died and was buried, and where He rose again and ascended into heaven; while with the eyes of the faith, and far more meritoriously, he saw his Lord continually in contemplation, and embraced Him in his heart with burning love. If a divine revelation gave the former courage to die: "He had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord,"<sup>2</sup> so, too, our St. Simeon had received a similar answer from God; for three months before his death he himself related in detail to the Abbot Ebervin, in his cell, how God had announced to him his approaching death; how he was to die in presence of the Abbot, and in what manner he was to be buried.

I know well that death is looked on as the most terrible of all terrible things. I know, too, that the approach of death is wont to make even the bravest heroes and holiest souls shudder and tremble with dread and aversion through the natural horror we have of it. But what fear or terror could it cause such a servant of God, who had, so to speak, spent the time of his life rather with the dead in a grave than with the living? When David spoke of the courage of Abner he said: "Not as cowards are wont to die hath Abner died."<sup>3</sup> The same I might say of St. Simeon: Not as cowards are wont to die hath Simeon died; not with fear and trembling, but full of consolation and joy. Sinners may await death with anguish and despair; and no wonder they should, for they have every ill to fear, and no good to hope for. Not as these did our Saint die; for to keep his soul, innocent as it was, from hell, he condemned himself to prison, and could say with St. Jerome: "Through fear of hell I have sentenced myself to this prison."<sup>4</sup> Let those vain children of the world die with fear and trembling who fix their thoughts and hopes in gold and temporal goods, and their hearts on creatures; no wonder they should; death must be bitter to them, since it

For he had  
nothing to  
fear, like  
others.

<sup>1</sup> Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum.—Luke II. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Responsum acceperat a Spiritu Sancto, non visurum se mortem, nisi prius videret Christum Domini.—Ibid. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Nequaquam ut mori solent ignavi, mortuus est Abner.—II. Kings III. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Ego ob gehennæ metum, carcere isto me ipse damnavi.—S. Hieron. ad Eustoch.

takes them violently away from what they love to excess. Not as they are wont to die did Simeon die, for death could take from him nothing but his troubles; he never asked the world for consolation; although in the world, he was, as it were, out of it, and was in the number of those of whom St. Paul says: "Of whom the world was not worthy;" whom it did not deserve to have on it; who were "wandering in deserts, in mountains and in dens, and in caves of the earth."<sup>1</sup> Let tenderlings fear death on account of its pains; he did not die as they are wont to die, for he never allowed himself any comfort, and was already accustomed to suffering. Let others feel the anguish inspired by the presence of the demons in their last moments, when the evil spirits put forth all their strength to attack the dying man; our Saint had little to fear from them, for he had been engaged in constant combats with them, and had turned them into ridicule. Let others fear to be separated from the world, since they desire and expect a longer life on earth; not like them did St. Simeon die; for, like St. Paul, his most ardent wish was to be dissolved and to be with God as soon as possible; therefore he could not look on death otherwise than as the joyful completion of his merits, the beginning of his future happiness, the foundation of his glory, the union with his last end, the crown of his combat, a sweet sleep and longed-for repose, which was to put an end to all the miseries of life. Finally, let others fear death who do not know when, where, and how they are to die; not so did St. Simeon die, for all this was revealed to him by God, who invited him to enter into glory.

And he died  
joyfully.

Oh, with what reason, then, could he not have wished for the approach of death; nay, with what real eagerness did he not actually see it approach; and with what joy and exultation did he not behold the heavenly glory prepared for him, so that he might well sing: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant;" now shall my eyes behold my Saviour, no longer darkly, but in the clear light! Such seems to have been his idea when, a week before his death, he said with a cheerful countenance to him who brought him the bread and water as usual: Now it is finished; you have done your duty well; you need not bring me anything else, and then, as if saying adieu to everything in the world, he added: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, accord-

<sup>1</sup> Quibus dignus non erat mundus; in solitudinibus errantes, in montibus et speluncis, et in cavernis terræ.—Heb. xi. 38.

ing to Thy word, in peace;" all suffering is now at an end. Hunger and thirst, you will plague me no more; ye caves and dens will no longer shut me in; ye demons will no more annoy me; ye hardships that I have voluntarily undergone will no more torment me; the long wished-for hour of my departure is at hand! Now, O Lord, Thou dost allow Thy poor and lowly servant to depart! Now wait no longer; my eyes have seen Thy holy one; they have wept enough; my hands have labored, my feet have walked in the way of Thy commandments; my body is worn away with penances; my heart is melting with love; I have done what Thou didst require of me; now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant; now give me what Thou hast promised, according to Thy word, which Thou didst reveal to me. Now let me depart into that better and eternal life with the hope of which I have consoled myself!

Thus, my dear brethren, he who wept during life could afford to laugh in death; thus he who was always sighing could sing at the end; thus he who lived in hardships could at last exult; thus he who dwelt among wild beasts and the assaults of the demons could close his eyes and joyfully give up the ghost in the hands of the angels, in the embrace of his Saviour. Thus he whom the world despised and considered as a poor, simple, miserable fool, entered into his glory in heaven, and was made illustrious before the whole world, after his death, by countless miracles. One day the children of the world will say: "We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor; behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints."<sup>1</sup> O death of the just, how precious thou art in the sight of God! O death of the just, how joyous thou art in the hearts of the dying! O death of the just, what a reward is given to thee in heaven! Rejoice, therefore, now, O holy St. Simeon; we congratulate thee, and while we humbly beg of thee to intercede for us, permit me to go on to the moral lesson for the good of our souls in the

Precious is  
the death of  
the just.

### Second Part.

One day, and perhaps it is not far distant, that *now* will also come for us, and we shall have to leave the world. When it comes we may not all expect a revelation to warn us of it as

There are  
few who de-  
sire death.

<sup>1</sup> Nos incensati vitam illorum æstimabamus insaniam, et finem illorum sine honore; ecce quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei, et inter sanctos sors illorum est.—Wis. v. 4, 5.



happened to St. Simeon. All the Holy Ghost says to us is: "Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come."<sup>1</sup> Who among us is so daring as to venture this day, this very hour, in the place in which we now are, to send forth his voice to heaven, and to challenge death to appear? Who has the courage to sing in joyous tones, like Simeon: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord"? come, now, Lord, and take me from this world? I am now ready to die? Oh, if it came to the last moment with us, how laughing and singing would be at an end with the most of us! Far other would be the notes we should utter, the sighs that would burst forth from our lips! What would you think who now exult in your youthful health and strength, and think of nothing but leading a happy and comfortable life? Would you say: Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant? Oh, no; methinks I hear you rather cry out: Oh, not now, O Lord, not now! it is too soon for me; I must first learn to know the world! What would you think of it who seem to have a good hold of prosperity, if death were to come to your door to-day suddenly? Would you say: Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant? Oh, no, not yet! you would exclaim; I have not yet prepared for death; I should like first to enjoy the good things that surround me! What would you think who, sunk in worldly and domestic occupations, toil and sweat the whole day for the good of those dependent on you, and hardly find a moment for your God and your soul? Oh, not yet, O Lord! you would exclaim; do not take me from my children so soon! How would it be with you who are fettered by the love of a creature, in whom you place all your happiness and delight, and whom you regard as your last end? Oh, no! you would cry out; not yet; death would be too bitter altogether now! What would you think, O sinner, who are still in the state of sin, and are still minded to continue in your wicked ways? Are you inclined to say: Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord? Now, O Lord, I am ready? Ah, ready to die in the state of sin! Oh, no; I must first make my confession; I must first be reconciled with God. In a word, my dear brethren, I should find very few who, like St. Simeon, are ready with joy and cheerfulness to await the approach of death.

Some wish  
to die

Yet there is no one, no matter how wicked he may be, who does not now and then desire to die, and say with the Prophet:

<sup>1</sup> Et vos estote parati, quia qua hora non putatis, Filius hominis veniet.—Luke xii. 40.

“ Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them;”<sup>1</sup> yet we do not always dare to welcome death, because our lives are not like the lives of the just. We sometimes hear people crying out for death, and exclaiming, as it were, at the top of their voice: Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord! Such is the cry of the unhappy wife; of the man who has fallen into dire poverty and secret want, who hardly knows what to do to find food for himself and his family; it is the cry of the persecuted man, who is oppressed and hunted down; it is the cry of nearly all who are discontented with their state, and overwhelmed with trials and crosses. Come, O death! they say; Oh, that I were dead! But why so? Is it through fervent love of God? through a confident desire of heaven? Not by any means! Love has not such power over them! Their trials, their want, their poverty, their misery, their pain seem too much for them; they wish to be freed from suffering, and so impatience or desperation presses that cry from them. But a wish of that kind is of no good, and when it is the result of despair it does not help to heaven. Come, O death, that I may be freed from this torment! What! do you really mean that? If your invitation were accepted, and death came to you in your despair, where would you go to? Not into the peace of the servants of God, but in your anger and discontent you would involve yourself in far greater sufferings. My opinion is that many a one would bitterly repent if he were taken at his word when he utters such thoughtless complaints, and wishes for death.

And, as there is reason to dread, how many in such circumstances, instead of singing the joyful *nunc dimittis* of Simeon, would rather, like the wicked Antiochus, writhe with agony on their beds, and howl forth: “ Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow wherein now I am; I that was pleasant. . . . But now I remember the evils that I did in Jerusalem.”<sup>2</sup> Ah, now at last my eyes are opened; now I see that everything in the world that I have loved is vanity; now there is an end to my pleasures and delights; now I know how wickedly and foolishly I have acted in not loving my God and serving Him more zealously; now I see the sins I have committed in the city, in that house, in that company, with that person;

through  
despair.

Many on  
their death-  
beds w'll  
think of  
their sins  
with terro:

<sup>1</sup> Moriatur anima mea morte justorum, fiant novissima mea horum similia.—Num. xxiii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> In quantam tribulationem deveni, et in quos fluctus tristitiae, in qua nunc sum, qui jucundus eram. . . . Nunc vero reminiscor malorum quae feci in Jerusalem.—I. Mach. vi. 11, 12.

now I remember the injustices, the hatred, the persecution of my neighbor, the impurity and wantonness that I have committed in thought, word, and action! "Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein I now am!" Would that I were now so happy as to be able to think of my good works, and to say with Ezechias: "I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before Thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is pleasing before Thee."<sup>1</sup>

And wish that, like St. Simeon, they had led poor and penitent lives.

How happy I should be now, many a one will say, if, like St. Simeon, I had led a poor, austere, and just life in a cave; as Philip, king of Spain, holy though he was, sighed when on his death-bed: "Ah, how happy I should now be if I had lived in some out-of-the-way corner in a desert!" And I believe it, too; it would be far better for him to have lived thus than to have wielded the royal sceptre. With what sweet consolation the formerly poor Simeon may now say: Oh, what a happiness for me now that I lived in a corner of the desert! that I spent almost all my life apart from men, hidden from the world, unknown, despised, living in caves and holes in the earth, serving my God alone in solitude! O blessed caves, O blessed cells, which enclosed me for so many years! O blessed tears that the love of God forced me to shed! Blessed the nights that I spent in watching and prayer; blessed the fasts and hunger I suffered voluntarily; blessed the hair-girdles with which I encircled my loins! You have raised me to this glory before men, to this eternal joy in heaven!

Exhortation to leave the world like St. Simeon.

My dear brethren, if we wish to die thus joyfully with St. Simeon, and like him to exult in the hour of death, let us now live like him, and abandon the world. We, I say; for the author of the life of our Saint affirms of the people of Treves that in former times they could boast, not merely of possessing the body of St. Simeon, but also of having inherited his mind and spirit.<sup>2</sup> Let us, then, not depart from this spirit, nor go aside from the footsteps of our ancestors. But are we, then, all to shut ourselves up within four walls? No. Must we all become hermits, and hide ourselves in the caves of the wilderness? No. Must we enter a cloister and become religious? No. Must we all

<sup>1</sup> Obsecro Domine, memento quæso, quomodo ambulaverim coram te in veritate, et in corde perfecto, et quod placitum est coram te, fecerim.—IV. Kings xx. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cujus non modo Treviri corpus, verum etiam spiritum se quondam habuisse gloriantur.

lead an austere life, and pass the nights in watching, and live on bread and water? Neither is that necessary. What, then? Shall we, like Simeon, abandon the world? Yes! But in what manner? In the way of which the Apostle speaks: "They that use this world as if they used it not;"<sup>1</sup> they who live in the world as laity should not and must not live according to the world, nor according to the teaching of the world, nor according to the perverse maxims and usages of the world, nor according to the vain principles of the world, nor according to its false policy and scandalous practices. We must not allow our hearts to become attached to the goods of the world; we must keep our desires and thoughts free from its delights; we must dwell in spirit in heaven, and devote our chief care and labor to our God, to our souls, and to their eternal salvation; we must mortify our senses, and restrain and deaden our evil passions; we must take from the hand of the Lord with patience and gratitude the miseries, trials, and troubles that daily cross our path in the world; we must be as satisfied, and love and serve and praise God as well in adversity as in prosperity, in poverty as well as in riches, in contempt as well as in honors, in sickness as well as in health, in suffering as well as in joy; that will be a sign that we care little for the world; that we are only pilgrims and strangers who are here for a time; that we set little store by worldly gain, suffer no disappointment by worldly loss; in a word, that is the way to leave the world in a spiritual sense.

Oh, what a joyful death will follow such a life! "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Blessed are they who, already dead to the world, have served the Lord alone, and at last die in the Lord. They may die poor, despised, abandoned by all; that makes no matter; they are blessed because they die in the Lord! And what a consolation it must be in that hour to have enjoyed little of the consolation of this world! What a joy to have suffered much for God's sake; to have patiently borne many crosses and trials! What happiness to be able to look at those things as evils that we have suffered, and that appeared indeed hard and difficult to bear, and to remember that they are now passed away, that they can never trouble us again; that, on the contrary, they will be to us the source of a bliss that will never pass! Ye miseries of this life, how many tears you have cost

Then we shall die with the same joy.

<sup>1</sup> Qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—I. Cor. vii. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur.—Apoc. xiv. 13.

me! Ye persecutions, how many sad days you made me spend! Misfortune, poverty, secret want, how many sleepless nights you caused me! Premature death of my dear friends, how you have troubled me! Past pains, sighs, miseries, sicknesses, where are ye now? You are all gone; I feel you no longer. "I have afflicted thee," will the Lord say, "and I will afflict thee no more;"<sup>1</sup> the rod is broken. "Well done, good and faithful servant (oh, what sweetness these words cause in the hearts of the dying!), enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."<sup>2</sup>

Resolution  
to serve God  
alone zeal-  
ously that  
we may die  
well.

O my God, shall that consolation fall to my lot on my death-bed? Alas, what will all the world be able to do for me if I do not die the death of the just! How could I have been so foolish as not to have prepared myself sooner for it, and with more diligence! How foolish of me to make my death troubled and anxious by a sinful life! What a false opinion I have formed of those contradictions that Thou, my God, hast sent me! I looked on myself as unfortunate when I had the least thing to suffer, although if I had borne it for Thy sake it would have helped to prepare for me a joyful death and a happy heaven. In future, my God, this shall be my greatest, my only care: to avoid all sin, to serve Thee alone zealously, to bear with patience and joy the crosses Thou wilt send me, and those I have now to suffer; so that one day, when Thou wilt come for me, even if it were to-day, I may be able to sing with consolation, like Thy servant Simeon: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace," and bring him to heaven. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> *Affixi te, et non affligam te ultra.*—Nahum i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Euge serve bone et fidelis, intra in gaudium Domini tui.*—Matt. xxv. 21.



# ON THE HOLY VIRGINS AND WIDOWS.

SIXTY-EIGHTH SERMON.

ON ST. AGNES AS A TEACHER OF WISDOM.

Subject.

The child Agnes with wonderful wisdom teaches us what belongs to God, and what to the world: namely, to the world a sovereign contempt; to the Lord God a perfect, zealous love.—*Preached on the feast of St. Agnes.*

Text.

*Quinque autem ex eis erant fatuæ, et quinque prudentes.*—  
Matt. xxv. 2.

“And five of them were foolish, and five wise.”

Introduction.

I must bring you with me into school to-day, my dear brethren; you and I shall be the scholars, and a child the mistress who is to teach us. Be not ashamed when you hear the name of a child to go into that school to learn. For it is a child of wonderful wisdom, who is capable of teaching the wisest and most learned in the world what they have perhaps hitherto neither learned nor been able to understand. I speak of the holy virgin and martyr Agnes, in years a child of thirteen, in wisdom an accomplished mistress. “Let men stand amazed,” says St. Ambrose, when speaking of her; “let not children despair; let the married be astonished; let the unmarried imitate her.”<sup>1</sup> Come here, all of you! exclaims St. Maximus, and learn in this school. What! “Learn from that young child the fervent love of Christ, and to esteem as filth all the delights of the

<sup>1</sup> *Mirentur viri, non desperent parvuli; stupeant nuptæ, imitentur innuptæ.*

world.”<sup>1</sup> This is the teaching in which all Christian wisdom consists, which she will now explain to us, partly by word, partly by her example.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Agnes, a child of wonderful wisdom, teaches us what belongs to the world, and what to God: namely, to the world a generous contempt; to God a perfect and zealous love. By the first she puts to shame the folly of worldlings; by the second our tepidity and sloth in the divine service.*

Both to the undying renown of St. Agnes, both to the profit of our souls, which we hope to attain to-day, by the intercession of St. Agnes, mistress of this wisdom, and especially by that of the Queen of virgins, Mary, who is the seat of wisdom. Holy angels, help us herein, that we may reap all the more profit from our visit to this school.

It is no wonder that he should despise the world who has had long experience of its vanity.

We must first go to school and study diligently, and then become masters; such is the proper way, and the one generally followed. But to teach what we have never learned is either a ridiculous presumption or else a sign of an extraordinary, infused wisdom. For an old, worn-out man of sound mind who has spent many years in different parts, and experienced all sorts of events and circumstances, and grown weary of the world—for him to judge harshly of the world, and describe it and its goods as worthless, and to long for better things in heaven is not so very astonishing; for such a man, by virtue of his long experience, has a sufficient knowledge of the inconstancy, vanity, and deceitfulness of worldly things, and can easily tell others how little those things are to be valued, and how they deserve to be despised. See, he can say, when I was young I thought great things of the world. I was like a little senseless child who, when it happens sometimes to see a high mountain, thinks the sky is on the top of it, and that if it could only climb so far it would be able to grasp it in its hands, and to wash them in the clouds; but when, after long climbing, it at last reaches the top, it sees then how grossly it was deceived, and that the sky is still a long way off. Oh, it then says, would I were down below again; but that will cost some trouble! Such, too, were my thoughts, such the deceit I learned to detect by experience. I heard people speak of

<sup>1</sup> *Discite Christi amorem in puella ferventem, et omnes mundi delicias velut stercora recusantem.*

treasures and riches, of honor and glory, of pleasures and delights; I saw some, splendidly clad, sitting on high, waited on by many zealous attendants, eating, drinking, and amusing themselves as they pleased; oh, I thought, what a high mountain of happiness they have reached! Would that I were as high as they; would that I had that property, that position, that office; if I could possess that creature I should have a heaven of joys and pleasure on earth! Ah, it is easy to talk of heaven! I climbed with a great deal of trouble to the top of the mountain; after much care and labor I became possessed of the desired good, the coveted position and office; and what have I now from it all? Nothing but an increase of care and worry. I was not long content with that property; I wanted more; the position I gained redoubled my cares and labor; the friend, the person on whom I set all my hopes was taken from me by death, and left me a legacy of sorrow. In a word, everything in the world is vanity and folly; it is and always will be a vale of tears, in which joys and consolations come singly and rarely, while miseries and troubles flock in by the dozen, nay, by the hundred. The only sensible thing one can do is to hold fast by the Almighty God always, and to seek the true joys of heaven. That, I say, such should be the views of one who has learned by long experience is to me not at all surprising.

But for a child who has hardly had an opportunity of seeing the world, and learning anything of it; for a child who has not had time to learn the hollowness and falsehood of the goods of the world; for a child who, moreover, lived in circumstances and occasions that all tended to inspire it with the love of the world and of creatures, while youth of itself requires little to deceive it in those matters, since children, through want of good sense, consideration, and reflection, and through the weakness of their nature, the pleasing disposition peculiar to their years, the novelty of the things that attract their attention, the curiosity of the senses, are generally inclined to judge of everything by its outward appearance, and take the accident for the substance and essence, a blind color, a glittering show, a worthless toy for an incomparable treasure; while they allow themselves to be attracted by every sweetness, to be allured by every flattery, to be befooled by every external beauty;—for a child, I say, in spite o fall this to have such a clear knowledge of the nothingness of the world, and to give such a sublime example of contemning it—

But for a child to despise it is wonderful wisdom.

that is indeed a rare and prodigious instance of wisdom, which goes far beyond the usual powers of nature; a wisdom that can come only from the special influence of the Holy Ghost; a wisdom that even the sage Solomon in his years of manhood seems not to have attained to. At least he gave no proof of having done so; for, as the Scripture says, he allowed himself to be completely befooled by the love of creatures and sensual delights; and although in his youth he had received from God a great knowledge of natural things, yet it was only in his old age that he pronounced that sentence on the vanity of the world, after enjoyment and satiety had rendered its goods insipid and disgusting in his sight; then only he said: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity."<sup>1</sup>

St. Agnes was still a child, and exposed to the allurements of the world.

In the holy virgin and martyr Agnes we have an example of this extraordinary wisdom in a child. St. Ambrose says of her that he has no ideas nor words with which to express her praises worthily. "Her devotion," he says, "was beyond her age; her virtue above nature. She filled the office of a mistress of virtue, although by her age she could not yet be mistress of herself."<sup>2</sup> This maiden of twelve years of age (for she was in her thirteenth year when she shed her blood for Christ) seemed to be a true favorite of the world, which had set forth all its charms to attract her heart. At her first entry into life great riches, honors, and comforts were at her command, for she was born of a noble Roman family. Rare personal beauty, an agreeable manner, a friendly and affable disposition were the gifts she had received from her Creator; by their means she attracted attention, excited admiration, and filled the hearts of all with affection for her. What dangerous circumstances to be placed in—I will not say for an inexperienced girl, but even for the strongest and wisest man; for our nature is frail, and liable even of its own accord to be perverted by the love of a sensual world.

And had to live in the midst of its seductions.

Now when in addition to these allurements and occasions there are temptations and assaults as well, who could dare to say that he will stand firm, and not allow himself to be overcome? Yet such was the experience of Agnes. To say nothing of the period of her martyrdom, when her virginal honor was exposed to the utmost peril and escaped unhurt, what a hateful and yet alluring violence was offered her by the son of a Roman prætor, who, cap-

<sup>1</sup> Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas.—Eccles. 1. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Quid dignum ea loqui possumus? Devotio supra ætatem, virtus supra naturam. Magisterium virtutis implevit, quæ adhuc arbitra sui per ætatem esse non posset.

tivated by the love of her, endeavored, by promises and caresses, by the most costly presents, and by the persuasion of her parents and friends, to obtain her as his wife! A circumstance, indeed, that, in the judgment of the world, would have been considered as most fortunate for her, and would not have been contrary to her honor or to the divine law. I need not dwell on the description of this, for the history of her life is no doubt frequently read and well known in this place.

But how did the child Agnes act? All the goods we have heard of, and the treasures, honors, and pleasures offered to her she esteemed as mere clay and filth, to use the words of St. Maximus. Her sole thought, and the only one she would speak of, was Jesus the crucified; her whole business was to hide herself in His wounds; her only consolation and comfort was to meditate on His bitter sufferings and death. Hear how this child speaks, as we learn from St. Ambrose, when rejecting the addresses of her suitor: "Depart from me, O food of death!" said she, throwing down the ornaments of gold and precious stones he had presented to her, "for my heart is already occupied by another Lover; you are too low for me; another has offered Himself to me, and I have accepted Him as my Spouse; He offers me far more precious treasures than you or the whole city of Rome can give; His beauty is incomparable, His power irresistible, His wisdom inscrutable, His riches inexhaustible; at His nod sun, moon, stars, the earth, the heavens, the angels stand in awe, ready to obey Him. What are you thinking of? The treasure you offer me is a stone dug out of the earth, what my Beloved will give to me is an eternal good; the honor you promise me is a breath of vapor that passes, while my Bridegroom will give me an unfading crown of glory; the pleasure I have to expect from you is momentary, and mixed with sorrow and pain, while He has promised me unending joys. Your love is transitory, my Beloved is unchangeable; you will be taken away by death, He will never die; you will become the food of worms, He to whom I have given my heart will live forever. Think not that for the sake of pleasing a wretched mortal I will be unfaithful to Him; I will be true to Him whom I love; to Him will I give all the affection of my heart; Him will I possess, and still remain a virgin."

But she despised them all.

Hear this child speaking, my dear brethren, but not in a childish manner. Her words are marked by a wisdom that all the teachers and universities in the world, with all their theological learn-

A wisdom she must have re-



ceived from  
God.

ing, could not surpass. Who taught that maiden such things? He who taught the fire to force itself up on high from the earth; He who by the mouths of babes and sucklings knows how to announce His praises, as the Prophet says: "Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings Thou hast perfected praise;"<sup>1</sup> namely, Jesus, to whom Agnes gave herself completely at the first dawn of reason, and to whose love she devoted all the powers of her heart and mind. So that the world, with all its goods, could have no influence on this child, a fact which deserves all our admiration. Let us see if it had better success with threats.

Nor did she  
allow the  
world's  
threats to  
frighten  
her, but of-  
fered her-  
self joyfully  
to suffer all  
torments.

Oh, let the world act as it pleases; let it turn all its flattery and caresses into threats and outbursts of wrath; the child Agnes will not be frightened by them. Come, ye executioners, bring forward all the instruments of torture that tyranny has ever been able to invent; the child Agnes will only laugh at them. Load her with chains and fetters, shut her up in a dungeon, cast her into the most infamous den of shame, throw her into the flames, and see whether you will be able—I do not say to make her renounce Christ, but even to sacrifice her virginal purity by making a promise of marriage. The child Agnes will put all your efforts to shame. Her body is so small and tender that St. Ambrose asks whether there is really room in it to receive a wound from a sword.<sup>2</sup> The child Agnes will offer it, tender and weak as it is, to all the torments in the world for Christ's sake; the more tender her limbs the greater the courage with which she will put to shame all your wrath and cruelty. Where are your bonds and fetters? She is ready to stretch out her hands and feet to them, and even to put them on herself, if necessary. Have you rods and whips, and at the same time strength to use them? This child is ready to receive the blows. Have you swords and axes? This child is willing to stretch forth her head to be cut off; her neck to receive the stroke. Do you threaten her with fire? You will not be so eager to kindle it as she will be to offer herself to the flames, with smiling countenance, and every expression of joy, as she showed in reality. In a word, do all you can and you will not be able to overcome her. Although she is so young and delicate as hardly to be fit for the torture, yet she is able to gain the victory.<sup>3</sup> She has only one heart, but

<sup>1</sup> Ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem.—Ps. viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Fuitne in illo corpusculo vulneri locus?

<sup>3</sup> Nondum idonea poenæ, et jam matura victoriæ.

if she had a thousand to dispose of they would all be devoted to the service of Jesus, her Spouse. So little does Agnes care for all the world can offer her; so little does she fear its threats and the harm it can do her; so clearly does she know what is due to her God, what a great Lord He is, and how worthy of all love. Oh, truly, a wonderful example of true Christian wisdom in one so young!

“Learn,” I repeat with St. Maximus, “learn from her to love Christ with fervor, and to despise all the goods of the world as mere filth.” Learn, no matter what your state in life may be, or your sex, or your age,—learn, great and small, young and old,—learn from this teacher how to love your God and to condemn the world. Learn from this child, you, especially, vain children of the world, and be ashamed of your folly, which you try to pass off as wisdom; inasmuch as you so eagerly desire, so laboriously seek, so carefully keep, so fervently and exclusively love what the world esteems as beautiful, noble, and costly, while you do so little to secure eternal goods, and think as rarely of God and heaven as if you were created, not for God, but for the world. Children of the world, I say; for they deserve no other name who, like senseless children, place their happiness in things in which it cannot be found, while they neglect those true goods in which alone happiness is. Show to a child a beautiful painting, a costly golden vessel; it will indeed look at it and examine it; but since it does not know the value of such things, it will take no further notice; but show him an apple, a nut, a doll, and he will stretch forth both hands to grasp it; and if you do not give it to him he will cry most piteously. Is it not so with most people in the world? “O children, how long will you love childishness,” complains the Lord by the wise Solomon, “and fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves?”<sup>1</sup> How long will the children of the world love its toys? God shows us heavenly joys, which shall be ours if we only love Him; how do most people act with regard to them? Ah, they have no taste for them, because they have never seen or experienced them. We bite eagerly at the apples and pears, that is, at the transitory goods of the world, that come before our eyes and other senses; our hearts and desires go out altogether to them; we grasp at them; we work day and night for them, and for their sake we

Lesson for  
the lovers  
of the  
world.

<sup>1</sup> *Usquequo parvuli diligitis infantiam, et stulti ea, quæ sibi sunt noxia, cupient?—Prov. i. 22.*

often give up God and heaven. If there is question of a fashion, of a custom of the world, as to whether one should adopt it, and dress and converse in the style favored by others, then is the world preferred, and Jesus and His holy gospel must give way. O folly! "how long will you love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves, and the unwise hate knowledge?"<sup>1</sup>

For the  
servants of  
Christ.

Learn from this child, you, too, servants of God, how to love Him truly and zealously. We sometimes love God; but how? and for how long? We should be ashamed of our laziness and sloth when we consider St. Agnes. She loved God, and God alone; she allowed no other lover a place in her heart; to Him she gave herself altogether, without exception, body and soul. Our hearts and love and affection are directed to God; but in how many parts they are often divided! Sometimes a part is given to this creature, at other times to that; and it is sold, as it were, to the one that offers the most; just as little children act who smile kindly at all who please them, without distinction, and are just as friendly to the servants in the house as to their own brothers and sisters. Agnes showed her love even amid fire and sword. St. Ambrose says: "No bride hastens so eagerly to the marriage as this virgin joyfully set out for the place of torture and martyrdom."<sup>2</sup> We love; but how? and how long? When everything goes according to our wish, when we are filled with interior consolations—then we love God; but there is no great art required for that. A true, sincere love is never better known than in adversity; that is the touchstone to prove and test it. We often say with the lips that we love God, and indeed that we love Him above all things; and yet a small contradiction or difficulty is often enough to deprive us of all energy and fervor in the service of God; if a slight cross comes in our way we begin to grow discontented, displeased, down-hearted, cowardly—just as little children begin to cry when they see the rod. We sometimes offer ourselves to God, and profess our willingness to endure all for His sake, for His honor and glory; but this offering, this willingness lasts only as long as we feel that we have nothing to suffer. If we happen to be visited by a cross (not to speak of some serious trial, such as a long sickness, great misfortune in tempo-

<sup>1</sup> Et imprudentes odibunt scientiam?

<sup>2</sup> Non sic ad thalamum nupta properaret, ut ad supplicii locum læta successu gradu festina virgo processit.

ral things, the unforeseen death of a dear friend), if we only hear a word of contradiction from one or the other whom we do not like; if anything is refused, no matter how small it may be, that we have set our heart on—oh, then, where is our virtue? where our willingness and readiness to suffer for God's sake? Agnes loved God always from her infancy; she offered her life to Him in the first bloom of her years, which made the offering all the more pleasing; we love and serve God, but when did we begin to do so? How long had the Lord to wait for our service? Perhaps many of us deserved in our conversion the reproof: "Thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless return to Me, and I will receive thee."<sup>1</sup> Thou comest to Me after having played Me false with many; thou art now willing to serve Me, after having spent long years in the service of others; the bloom of thy youth thou hast given to the vain, transitory world, to the flesh, to the devil; and I am to have what is left? Nevertheless, come, and I will receive thee. Oh, truly, a painful thought for me! O Lord, I am ashamed, and I must acknowledge, with the humble and penitent St. Augustine: Late have I loved Thee, O God of beauty and love! Late have I loved Thee!

What a consolation it would be to me if, with those souls who have loved Thee from infancy like Agnes, and who, after having despised and abandoned the world, have devoted themselves to Thy service, of whom I see some now before me; what a consolation if I could say with them: O God of my love, I am Thine totally, and have always been Thine; I turned my back on the world before I had any experience of its hollowness and dangers! The days of my life I have spent in this sacred solitude, in Thy service alone; I will continue, with Thy grace, as I have begun, to sacrifice my understanding and will to Thee by obedience, my goods by poverty, my body by chastity, my whole self by a long martyrdom, renouncing any hope and desire of worldly honors and pleasures. It is indeed little to offer such a great Lord; but it is all I have; all Thou hast given me. I expect no reward except, with St. Agnes, Thee, my Beloved. Oh, what a consolation for a soul! Continue to enjoy it! And I will at least learn from the child Agnes what I have not done hitherto: to despise all temporal things, and to love Thee, my God, constantly above all. Amen.

Consolation  
for relig-  
ious.

<sup>1</sup> Tu fornicata es cum amatoribus multis, tamen revertere ad me, et ego suscipiam te.—  
Jer. iii. 1.

SIXTY-NINTH SERMON.

ON ST. AGNES AS A LAMB AMONG THE WOLVES.

Subject.

St. Agnes was: 1. A lamb of the fold of Christ; 2. She was a lamb in the midst of wolves.—*Preached on the feast of St. Agnes.*

Text.

*Ecce, ego mitto vos sicut agnos inter lupos.*—Luke x. 3.  
“Behold, I send you as lambs among wolves.”

Introduction.

So spoke Christ to His apostles and disciples when He was sending them into the world to preach the gospel; and at the same time He foretold them the terrible and manifold persecutions they would have to suffer for His name's sake from the infidel and the wicked. They will bind you, said He, with chains and fetters; they will drag you before the judges and condemn you; they will scourge you with rods, and drive you out of one city into another; in a word, they will treat you as wolves treat lambs. And such was the experience of the apostles, as we know from the Acts of the Apostles. Most extraordinary is the might of divine grace by which, although they were innocent lambs, they were enabled to endure all this with undisturbed serenity, and to overcome it. Yet what do I wonder at? At any rate they were men, and mostly poor men, who from their youth upwards were accustomed to hard work and discomforts, and who, moreover, had been already trained in the school of Christ. But weak women, tender virgins, and young children learned afterwards to imitate them. We need not read the Lives of the Saints to have a proof of this, we need only consider her whose feast we celebrate to-day—St Agnes. Her very name shows her to have been a lamb. But she proved herself such, not merely in name, but in reality; and she proved herself to be not merely a lamb, but a lamb among wolves, as I now mean to show, to her undying praise.



Plan of Discourse.

*St. Agnes was a lamb of the fold of Christ; the first part. St. Agnes was a lamb among the wolves; the second part. A short lesson for our own profit will form the conclusion.*

Christ Jesus, Thou good Shepherd of souls, who didst preserve Agnes unhurt in the midst of the wolves, give us the grace to live so that we may be counted in the number of Thy lambs! This we beg of Thee through the intercession of Mary, of her child Agnes, and of the holy angels.

Of all four-footed animals there is none more innocent, pure, meek, patient than the lamb. Therefore we are wont to say of one who has either inherited such qualities from nature or who has gained them by the practice of virtue: That man is a lamb; he is as innocent as a lamb; as quiet and meek as a lamb. It seems, too, that the Almighty God, though He has no need of any creature, has a special pleasure in this creature; for, as we know, He commanded in the Old Law that a lamb of a year old should be offered to Him as a most agreeable sacrifice, and as a figure and symbol of that unspotted Lamb of whom St. John said: "Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world."<sup>1</sup> As a figure, I say, of Jesus Christ, His eternal Son, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and did not open His mouth, as Isaias prophesied, and who was sacrificed on the gibbet of the cross to the eternal Father, and who is still offered daily in the Holy Mass.

The lamb is the meekest, purest, and most innocent of animals.

My dear brethren, if all faithful and just souls are sheep under the one Shepherd, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, as He calls Himself so often in the gospel: "I am the Good Shepherd; and I know Mine, and Mine know Me,"<sup>2</sup> then all virgins, and those who have preserved their purity untouched for God's sake, must justly be reckoned among the purest lambs of the fold of Christ; "The noblest part of the flock of Christ,"<sup>3</sup> as St. Cyprian calls them; whom Christ, as the Lover and Spouse of chaste souls, embraces with special fervor, and wishes to have nearest Himself. These are they of whom St. John, in the Apocalypse, says that they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth: "They are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the

Pure virgins are the lambs of the flock of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Ecce agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.—John 1. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Ego sum pastor bonus, et cognosco meas, et cognoscunt me meæ.—Ibid. x. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Illustrior portio gregis Christi.

St. Agnes  
was one of  
the most  
innocent  
and pure.

Lamb, . . . for they are without spot before the throne of God.”<sup>1</sup>

What a dear lamb, then, Agnes must have been in the sight of God; for she was one of the purest virgins whom, after Mary, the Mother of God and the Virgin of virgins, the world ever saw. St. Ambrose does not hesitate to give her the glorious title that is otherwise given to Mary alone; for he always calls her most blessed. “Let us remember,” he says, “how the most blessed Agnes suffered.”<sup>2</sup> It is a thousand pities that of the lives of the martyrs hardly anything is known to the world except their glorious triumph of martyrdom. St. Chrysostom complains that what we now read in histories of the merits and virtues of the saints is the least part of the good works they performed. And that arises from the fact that either the saints themselves knew how to hide their virtues from the world, through humility, or the enemies of Christ hid them, that they might not appear, or the lapse of time caused them to sink into oblivion. The time that Agnes spent in this mortal life was indeed short, for she was butchered and slain for Christ in her thirteenth year; but if we knew all she did during those years—how she lived, how zealously she served her God—we should have to admire in this child many extraordinary and sublime virtues that are now known to God alone. “In years,” says St. Ambrose, “she was a child, but in wisdom she was a very old woman; in body she was a young maiden, but she was old in mind, prudence, holiness, and merits.”<sup>3</sup>

Shown from  
her life.

And truly, when we consider all the circumstances, Agnes must indeed have been a pure and innocent lamb. This is proved by her age—so young as to be hardly apt for vice; it is shown by her name, Agnes, which in Greek signifies one who is pure, chaste, and undefiled; it is proved by the crown of martyrdom, which, as St. Thomas teaches, is one of the greatest graces, that God seldom gives unless to one who has already made himself worthy of it by many and great merits; it is proved by the angel who was always with her besides her ordinary angel guardian, whom she often saw and conversed and spoke with in a most friendly manner, as she herself says: “I have as the guardian of my body an angel of the Lord, who clothed me with this gar-

<sup>1</sup> *Virgines enim sunt. Hi sequuntur Agnum, quocumque ferit. Hi empti sunt ex hominibus primitiæ Deo et Agno . . . sine macula enim sunt ante thronum Dei.*—Apoc. xiv. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Qualiter passa sit Agnes beatissima, ad memoriam revocemus.*

<sup>3</sup> *Infantia computatur annis, sed erat senectus mentis immensa; corpore quidem juvenacula, sed animo cana.*

ment.”<sup>1</sup> And we read, too, in the history of her life that when, during prayer, she was dissolved in tears, an angel of the Lord appeared, raised her from the ground, and consoled her.<sup>2</sup> Now the angels, those most pure spirits, cannot, according to St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, have friendly intercourse unless with souls that are as pure as themselves, with souls who lead an angelic life. And, finally, this is seen from the extraordinary favor and love of Our Lord for this virgin, who showed in a wonderful manner the great pleasure He had in the innocence and purity of Agnes, inasmuch as He espoused her as His dearest bride in her childhood, as she again confesses, in the words used by St. Ambrose in the history of her life: “He has espoused me with the ring of His fidelity; He has surrounded my right hand and my neck with precious stones; He has put into my ears inestimable jewels; He has set a sign on my face, that I should allow of no other lover but Himself.”<sup>3</sup>

Of all animals sheep are those which allow themselves to be guarded, guided, and governed with the least trouble. If the shepherd makes a sign with horn or staff it is enough to gather them together, no matter how far they may have strayed; at the first signal, the first call they run together at once. If the shepherd goes in front, they follow him, without caring where he leads them, while the guardians of other animals have to labor and toil, to shout and scream, to throw stones and rain down blows before they can keep their flock in good order. This is what Our Lord exults in when speaking of His sheep: “My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me”<sup>4</sup> wherever I wish to bring them.

What trouble or labor did it cost Our Lord to bring Agnes to love and follow Him? As we know, He called Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, but had, as it were, to employ violence with him; for He first threw him down from his horse by a flash of lightning, and then spoke to him in a terrible voice. In the same manner He called the great St. Augustine, whose heart was afterwards changed into a burning furnace of divine love; but this was after He had, so to speak, pursued Augustine for

Sheep hear the voice of the shepherd.

St. Agnes followed the voice of Christ most perfectly.

<sup>1</sup> *Mecum habeo custodem corporis mei, angelum Domini, qui et induit me hoc vestimento.*

<sup>2</sup> *Orante autem illa, apparuit angelus Domini, qui elevavit eam flentem.*

<sup>3</sup> *Annulo fidei suae subarrhavit me; dexteram meam et collum meum cinxit lapidibus pretiosis, tradidit auribus meis inestimabiles margaritas; posuit signum in faciem meam, ut nullum præter eum amatorem admittam.*

<sup>4</sup> *Oves meæ vocem meam audiunt, et sequuntur me.—John x. 27.*

seventeen years, during which the holy mother of the latter was constantly sighing, weeping, and praying for her son. And in our days the Lord calls all men to His love; but how few there are who hear His voice and follow Him! How very few who follow at once when they hear His call! And still fewer are they who remain with Him constantly! What a great number there are who, in spite of the divine calls, run wild, and never come back to the true fold! Agnes, like a lamb, obeys the first sign of the Shepherd. When? At once, without delay. As soon as she began to know God by the first dawn of reason she at once commenced to love Him, and betrothed herself to Him alone; so she says herself: "He has guarded my body, which was consecrated and offered to Christ from my cradle."<sup>1</sup> How did she love Christ? She loved Him alone, and no one except Him, as St. Ambrose tells us: "She found life because she loved no one but the Author of life."<sup>2</sup> In what degree did she love Him? Of this again she herself is the best witness: Her parents sat day and night weeping at the grave of their dear little daughter; Agnes appeared to them, accompanied by a great number of other virgins; weep not, said she, on account of my death, but rather rejoice and congratulate me: "For I am now united to Him in heaven whom while on earth I loved with all the strength of my heart."<sup>3</sup> How long did she so love Him? To her latest breath, till by martyrdom she offered herself as a holocaust to her Beloved. Thus, my dear brethren, you see in Agnes a true lamb of Christ; let us now consider her as a lamb in the midst of wolves.

### Second Part.

Two kinds  
of wolves  
rage against  
the flock of  
Christ.

There are two kinds of wolves: some, raging with hunger, openly fall upon the sheep and devour them, unless they are prevented by force from so doing; others attack the flock secretly and slyly, creeping up to it as if they were quite tame and harmless, to see if they may not carry off something by deceit and treachery. Such is the sense in which Our Lord speaks of those wolves that attack His beloved flock; and of the first ravening sort He says, by the apostle St. Peter: "Watch, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom

<sup>1</sup> Custodivit corpus meum, quod ab ipsis inenabulis Christo consecratum est et oblatum.

<sup>2</sup> Vitam invenit, quia solum vitæ dilexit auctorem.

<sup>3</sup> Illi sum juncta in cœlis, quem in terris posita, tota animi intensione dilexi.

he may devour; whom resist ye strong in faith.”<sup>1</sup> Of the other sort He says, in the Gospel of St. Matthew: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”<sup>2</sup>

The innocent lamb Agnes was surrounded by both kinds of wolves during her life. The devil, a sworn enemy of chaste and pure hearts, cannot see, without the bitterest envy and rage, young, tender, and weak children in their first innocence and purity, and often does he succeed in carrying away a portion of their hearts. Yet he did not dare to tempt the young Agnes because he foresaw that he would only be put to shame by her, and knew well that she was protected by an angel much more powerful than he. So that he employed all his skill in urging on other wolves to take his place, and either clad in the clothing of sheep to endeavor to win her heart by flattery and craft, or else by open rage and violence to undermine her virtue.

Amongst the first was the son of the then chief magistrate of Rome, who followed her everywhere about the streets, and visited her constantly at her house, paying all sorts of compliments, making costly presents of rare jewels and pearls, and promising all the joys of the world; he left none of the allurements untried that a foolish love could invent to gain her heart; but all to no purpose. I told you last year how Agnes, that wisest of children, ridiculed all the attempts of this wolf, turned him away, appealing to her only Love in heaven. He went off crestfallen, and driven to despair; his angry father Symphronianus takes his part, and tries on another most vile plan with Agnes. After having in vain employed promises and threats, he caused her to be stripped of her clothing and brought to a house of ill fame, where she might be exposed defenceless to the rage of the most wicked. Oh, truly, a lamb among the wolves! But what had she to fear when she was protected by the Good Shepherd? The same God who clothes the sheep with wool covered Agnes in a miraculous manner with her own hair, and after, by means of His angels, with a snow-white garment; so that not an eye could see her without being at once dazzled by the splendor of her purity, and no one approach her without being illumined by the wonderful light that emanated from her, so that they who came near

Both as-  
sailed Ag-  
nes.

The crafty  
wolves,  
whom she  
despised.

<sup>1</sup> Vigilate, quia adversarius vester diabolus tanquam leo rugiens circuit, quærens quem devoret: cui resistite fortes in fide.—I. Pet. v. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsicus autem sunt lupi rapaces.—Matt. vii. 15.



her abjured the false gods, adored the true God, and, as we read in her Life, came away from her purer than they were before. The magistrate's son alone, who ventured in his despair to treat her with disrespect, was strangled by the demon, and fell dead at her feet, but being recalled to life by the prayers of Agnes, he cried out: "The God of the Christians is the only God!"<sup>1</sup> Thus Agnes, in the midst of the wolves, not only escaped all harm, but even turned them into meek sheep of the fold of Christ.

The threaten-  
ing  
wolves,  
whom she  
did not fear.

Meanwhile there was not yet an end of the wolves. Others came forward, whetting their fangs against the lamb of Christ; those, namely, whom Christ has told us not to fear, since they can only hurt the body: "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul."<sup>2</sup> The idolatrous priests, and all the rest of the people, seeing the wonder, cried out: Away with the witch who has befooled the minds of the people!<sup>3</sup> To the fire, to the stake with her! Hear how Agnes was frightened by these wolves. When the judge told her that she should either sacrifice to the gods or be put to a cruel death after having been violated, "Ha! ha!" said the undaunted child, "what a foolish man you are! What are you thinking of? I could not even bear to look at your son, so determined was I to remain true to Christ; although that son is a living man who can see and hear and walk. Do you think, then, that I shall renounce my God to bow the head and bend the knee to a senseless and lifeless image that cannot even move itself? Let your gods themselves grow angry with me; let them speak to me and command me to adore them; but that they cannot do. Miserable gods that they are, made of clay and copper, out of which you have made, much more to your advantage, pots and pans for the use of man; or else your gods are made of stone that you pave the streets with to keep down the dust and mud! And you think you can persuade me to adore them? Threaten me as you please; do with me what you will; I will adore and love only Him who can give eternal life after death."

The raging  
wolves,  
whom she  
overcame.

Finally the threats were fulfilled. The judge, moved by the raising of his son from the dead, entered into himself, and went away quietly, so that Aspasius pronounced sentence. He caused a great fire to be kindled, and Agnes to be thrown into it

<sup>1</sup> Unus est Deus Christianorum!

<sup>2</sup> Nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus, animam vero non possunt occidere.—Matt. x. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Tolle magam!

alive. But the fire had more respect and reverence for innocence than men had; it flew out on all sides against the wicked men, while Agnes sat in the midst of it unhurt, lifting her folded hands to heaven, and her only cry was a joyful hymn in which she praised God and blessed Him: "Behold, my God, now I see what I have believed; now I have what I hoped for; I embrace what I desired. Behold, I come to Thee, the only true God."<sup>1</sup> While intoning this song of joy, since the fire had become extinguished, Agnes was at last put to death by the sword. Thus, like the paschal lamb that God commanded the people in the Old Law to sacrifice to Him, Agnes, after having immolated her body by uncontaminated virginity, and having given her soul and life by the martyr's death to her beloved Spouse, came to the place in which she now follows the Lamb of God wherever He goes.

My dear brethren, Agnes was a true lamb of the fold; wo to us if we are not sheep of the same flock! Whether we have been so always, whether we are so now, is a question that each one must ask himself. The innocent lamb Agnes was never stained by any grievous sin; if we are sheep of Christ we must also be innocent. But, alas! what am I saying? In that case neither I nor many others belong to the fold of Christ! How often have I not lost my innocence by mortal sin! Can I then hope to have a place among the blessed ones of the flock? Eh! better is the opinion and the hope I have of the mercy and goodness of the Shepherd who ran over hill and dale to seek the lost sheep, and brought it back on His shoulders. If, then, I have erred I will return in humility; if my baptismal innocence is gone I will wash away my guilt by true contrition, and will in future guard most carefully against sin. Agnes was a pure and holy lamb; if we are sheep of Christ we must lead chaste lives; we must be chaste in heart and thought, chaste in eye and behavior, chaste in speech and conversation, chaste in our whole bodies and in all our senses. Agnes, a dutiful and obedient lamb, always followed the first sign given her by the Shepherd, whom alone she loved with all her strength, above all things, to the end; if we are sheep of Christ we must hear His voice, obey His will in all things with contentment, and never leave Him, whether He leads us through thistles and thorns, through the contradictions of this

Like St. Agnes, we should be true sheep of the fold of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Ecce jam quod credidi, video; quod speravi, jam eneo; quod concupivi, amplector. Ecce ad te venio, unum et verum Deum!

life, or through flowers and roses and temporal prosperity, which latter, however, He is not wont to do long with His sheep. If we are sheep of Christ we must, like St. Agnes, love Him above all things, with all our hearts, so that we are determined to lose everything in the world rather than forfeit His friendship by sin. If we are not honestly so minded we do not belong to His fold. Oh, what great reason for repentance we have, my dear brethren, when we think of our past lives! How necessary for us to resolve to amend when we think of the future!

And as such  
not fear  
the wolves.

Agnes was a lamb among the wolves; if we belong to the flock of Christ we must not expect to be free from the attacks of the wolves, nay, for that very reason we shall be all the more exposed to them. The Wise Man gives us this warning: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God . . . prepare thy soul for temptation."<sup>1</sup> Truly, we must do our best to live as piously as we can, and we must be on our guard as well as possible; yet in spite of all that there are too many wolves lying in wait for our souls, and trying with all their might to get possession of them. The devil never rests; he is always prowling about, seeing if he may not snatch up one of the sheep of Christ. The world puts forward its false doctrine, and appeals to custom, according to which most people imagine they must order their lives; and even one man is often a danger and an occasion of fall to another. If we all went into a cloister, or hid ourselves in caves, still we should bring ourselves with us, and our own flesh is always obstinate and unwilling to submit as a servant to reason. What else are these enemies but ravening wolves that try to lead us away from God and heaven, to bring us into sin, to destroy our souls forever, and to deliver us up to the fangs of the hellish wolf? But let us not lose heart; the same almighty, good God still lives who preserved the child Agnes unhurt in the midst of the fierce wolves; He can, with His powerful grace, protect us in the midst of temptations, no matter how great, how violent, how hideous they may be. He will never refuse to help us if only, like the holy virgin Agnes, we place in Him a childlike confidence, fly to Him by prayer, and remain true to Him by constant service. Let us all resolve to do this, my dear brethren, that, after having been here true sheep of Christ among the wolves, we may one day be elect sheep, and, with St. Agnes, rejoice forever in the company of the angels. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Fili, accedens ad servitutem Dei, præpara animam tuam ad tentationem.—Eccius. ii. 1.

SEVENTIETH SERMON.

ON ST. AGNES AS A VALIANT WOMAN.

Subject.

St. Agnes was a valiant woman in overcoming all the attacks made on her virginal purity.—*Preached on the feast of St. Agnes.*

Text.

*Mulierem fortem quis inveniet.*—Prov. xxxi. 10.

“Who shall find a valiant woman?”

Introduction.

Is it then so rare to see a valiant woman that Solomon must ask who shall find one? “The price of her is as things brought from afar off, and from the uttermost coasts.”<sup>1</sup> O Solomon, hadst thou been able to foresee the future, and to cast thy eyes on the Christian times that were to come, thou wouldst have seen, not only one, but many women more brave and heroic than the strongest men; and thou wouldst have beheld with astonishment even young maidens and little children defying kings and tyrants, and gaining the victory over all the attacks of men in the most difficult and dangerous combats. So it is, my dear brethren. Let us now, of so many heroines, consider only one, whose feast we celebrate to-day—the holy virgin and martyr Agnes. Agnes was still almost a child, yet she was a valiant woman. This name she deserved by her contempt of the world, as I have shown elsewhere, when speaking of her extraordinary wisdom. This name she deserved by her constancy in enduring terrible torments and a martyr’s death, as I explained last year, when I spoke of her as a lamb among the wolves. This name she especially earned by the combat she sustained against her purity; this latter will now form my whole subject, to her undying praise, namely:

Plan of Discourse.

*Agnes was a valiant woman by the victory she gained against the dangerous assaults made on her virginal purity.*

Heroic virgin! to follow thy example in this we stand in need

<sup>1</sup> *Procul et de ultimis finibus pretium ejus.*

of a powerful grace from God, which we beg of the Spouse of virgins by the merits of her whom the Divine Word chose to be His Mother when she heard the angel say: Hail, Mary, full of grace.

It needs  
great  
strength of  
mind to  
conquer all  
temptations  
against  
purity.

The enemies of our souls use two kinds of arms, especially when they assail our purity: they either captivate by promises and caresses, or they have recourse to threats, violence, and force. Of the two kinds I find examples in the Holy Scriptures: one in Joseph, the other in Susanna. The former was constantly assailed by the wife of his master, who used all sorts of cajolery to induce him to commit the horrible sin, as we read in the thirty-ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis; Susanna was threatened by the two wicked elders that if she did not consent to sin she should be accused and stoned as an adulteress. Oh, how many souls are nowadays brought to ruin and destruction by those means! To resist violence and not to be influenced by the threat of public shame and disgrace requires great strength of mind and bravery; to refuse a proffered pleasure and not to be led astray either by flattery or promises requires an uncommon degree of virtue. How little is necessary to excite sinful desires! For many a one a chance company or occasion, a gentle word, a look, a glance cast from afar at another, nay, a bare thought, is temptation enough to sully the purity, if not of the body, at least of the heart. Therefore there is a divine command obliging us to remove all dangers to our souls in this respect, and so carefully to close eyes, ears, and all our senses, with our hearts and minds as well, that we may avoid not only a sinful act, but even refrain from taking wilful pleasure, though it be only for a moment, in an impure thought. And although God exhorts us in other matters to meet temptation calmly, and grapple with the enemy of our souls, yet when there is question of a temptation against purity the only remedy He gives, even to the holiest souls who are most practised in virtue, is immediate flight. Now when both temptations come at once, namely, great violence and threats along with great blandishments and promises, and that, too, in such circumstances that there is no way of avoiding them, do you not think that an heroic virtue and wonderful bravery as well as prudence are required to overcome the assault, and remain uninjured by it? "Who shall find a valiant woman?" I may well ask; a woman, nay, a man, a hero brave enough to conquer in such a combat; where can he be found?



Agnes was obliged to enter into this formidable contest. Whatever blandishments and promises the deceitful world could hold forth, whatever terrors a cruel tyranny could invent, were all employed and used against Agnes in order to deprive her of the treasure of her virtue; yet she conquered them all, and preserved her virginal chastity unhurt. Imagine, my dear brethren, on the one side a young maiden of thirteen years of age, endowed by God with most excellent gifts of nature and grace, and on the other side a young nobleman, the son of the chief magistrate of Rome, who in those days came next after the emperor himself. The father and son both begged most humbly that Agnes would agree to marry the son. We need not now dwell on the efforts made by the young man to secure her consent; on the assiduity of his attentions, on the rich presents he made—all of which were steadily rejected by Agnes. For these things are sufficiently known from the history of her life.

Agnes had to contend with caresses and promises.

Let us only consider the greatness of the temptation in its circumstances. Renowned and tried was thy chastity, O Joseph, and in the Old Law it could not be sufficiently admired, and even now, after the coming of Christ, we must still praise and wonder at it; for thou didst reject the shameful proposals of the wife of Putiphar, and, leaving thy mantle in her hands, didst at once take to flight. Yet thy virtue is not equal to that of Agnes, which is all the more deserving of our admiration as the combat she had to sustain at first appeared in no way contrary to decency or honor, and she might easily have agreed to the proposal made to her. If Joseph had consented he would not have gained anything more than he had already, for he enjoyed full control over all his master's goods. The proffer made to Agnes would have added notably to her honor, position, and happiness in the eyes of the world. Joseph's consent could not have been given without imperilling his life and honor if his master found him out; if Agnes had consented she would have had as her friends the noblest families of Rome. What horrified Joseph was the gravity of the sin he would have committed against his earthly master, and against his sovereign Lord in heaven: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?"<sup>1</sup> He who has a little conscience and sense of decency left, no matter how violent the temptation may be, when he remembers that God is present everywhere, who threatens him with the eternal fire of hell, must

The violence of this temptation explained.

<sup>1</sup> Quomodo possum hoc malum facere, et peccare in Deum meum?—Gen. xxxix. 9.

necessarily feel a horror and aversion to sin. On the other hand, the proposal made to Agnes was in itself lawful, for the matrimonial state, if rightly entered into, is even a holy one—one in which she could still have enjoyed the friendship of God. Joseph, by consenting to the proposal of the impure woman, would have ruined his own soul; Agnes, by consenting, might have had the well-founded hope of gaining the soul of her husband, and perhaps also many of his relatives, to the true God and the Christian faith, once she had won his affections.

Which she  
conquered  
by the love  
of Christ  
and of pur-  
ity.

In a word, what strengthened Joseph against temptation was the fear of offending God's supreme majesty; what strengthened Agnes in her purpose, and made her despise the proffered goods and delights of the world, was simply the love she had of virginal purity, and her zealous and burning love for Jesus, to whom she had already given and consecrated her whole heart, her body and soul. Therefore she repelled all attacks with this one word, as St. Ambrose tells us: "You offer me a spouse; I have found a better one."<sup>1</sup> You offer me a bridegroom of noble birth; I have found a better one, who is the King of heaven and earth; you offer me a spouse of great beauty; I do not want him I have found a better one, whose beauty makes the joy and delight of the angels; you offer me one who is rich; I will not accept him; I have found one to whom all the treasures of the earth belong; the spouse you offer me is only a mortal man; therefore I will not have him; I have found one who is God and man at the same time, who died once for me, and now cannot die any more; Him alone will I love, for Him alone will I live and die. Do what you please; this is my fixed determination; you will never make me change, never make me turn away my love from Christ.

Lesson for  
religious.

Christian virgins, who by divine inspiration and the disposition of Providence have made a vow of chastity, these words are for you also, as St. Ambrose says. Learn, with feelings of the deepest gratitude, what a special grace the Lord God has shown you, since He has chosen you as His spouses in preference to so many others; so that you can make this boast, and in all difficulties, troubles, temptations console yourselves with this comforting thought: I have found a better one; I have chosen the best bridegroom in heaven or on earth; I must not and cannot be untrue to Him! Learn to love Him alone, with all your hearts,

<sup>1</sup> Sponsum offertis, meliorem reperi.

for He wishes to have you for Himself alone, and cannot bear that others should have the least share in you. Learn that you cannot love too much Him who has loved you from eternity, who for your sake has become man, and who on account of His infinite, immeasurable goodness is alone worthy of all love.

Learn, also, you married people, and all others, whatever may be the state in life to which the Lord has called you, that the love of God must always hold the chief place in your hearts. Husbands, love your wives; wives, love your husbands; for such is the will and commandment of God. Ye poor, love those who do you good; ye afflicted, love those who comfort you; ye persecuted, love those who protect you; for such is the law of nature and gratitude. Let each one love his neighbor, and even his worst enemy; for such is the command of Christ. But, as far as your state in life allows, love no mortal, no good, no joy, or pleasure as much as you love your God; still less should you love anything or any one against the will and law of your God. Think and say, with Agnes, although not quite in the same sense: You offer me a spouse, but I have found a better; I have a better Lord, whom I must obey, serve, and love far above all things.

For the  
salty.

Finally, this answer of Agnes changed friendship into enmity, favor into hatred, love into rage and cruelty. What! said they; shall we tolerate this in a mere child, and allow her to defy us so hardily and obstinately? What kindness and love could not effect must now be done by anger and vengeance; she has refused the honor offered her; let her now be made the prey of the very lowest. Hear! you must select one of these alternatives: either give up your God and sacrifice to our deities, or else your virginal honor shall be exposed to shame and public disgrace. Wicked proposal, than which the demon himself could not have invented a more hateful one! She must lose either her faith or her honor! Poor child, what will you do now? Here I imagine I see a Susanna in the hands of the godless elders, who make to her the same proposal: Either consent to our wishes, or you shall be publicly stoned as an adulteress. "Susanna," says the Scripture, "sighed, and said: I am straitened on every side; for if I do this thing it is death to me," since my soul shall die by sin; "if I do it not I shall not escape your hands;" I am straitened on every side! Still she was better off than Agnes; there was one choice left her which did not involve her honor, and she accepted it at once: If, said she, I have to sin

The purity  
of St. Agnes  
was exposed  
to violence.

or die, then I will choose death: "It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it than to sin in the sight of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Against  
which her  
sole help  
was confi-  
dence in  
God.

Oh, if Agnes had had the choice of death, how soon would she not have been ready with her answer! Sword and spear, wheel and gallows, fire and gridiron—all the torments of the world come and fall upon me; this is what I have been wishing for, what alone I seek—to be martyred and be made a holocaust and burnt-offering to my Bridegroom. But, ah, what shall I do now? Give up my faith I cannot and will not. Yet to submit to that disgrace of losing my purity is a hard and terrible thing even to think of. I am straitened on all sides, she might well have said with more reason than Susanna. Her only resource was a still and secret sigh to her Spouse Jesus. Almighty God, whom I love with all my heart, Thou knowest my thoughts and wishes; Thou seest the straits in which I am placed; Thou alone canst help me now. Thou hast given me the faith, I have given Thee my virginity; things have come to such a pass that I must lose one or the other. Without Thee I shall lose both those treasures; with Thy help I can keep them both. I will keep the faith; do Thou preserve my virginity. I offer Thee my life, and commend my honor to Thee. Thou didst save Jonas in the belly of the whale; Thou wert able to save Daniel in the den of the hungry lions; Thou wert able to preserve the three youths unhurt in the fiery furnace at Babylon; Thou canst as easily save my honor from those impure robbers. I resign myself into Thy hands; whosoever trusts in Thee will never be confounded. Thus prayed Agnes in the secrecy of her heart.

She was  
protected  
by a mira-  
cle.

Meanwhile the shameful threat was still more shamefully carried into execution; Agnes was brought by force into a house of ill fame. Oh, truly, far more tolerable to Tobias was his sudden blindness, more desirable to Job the ulcer that tortured him! Willingly would Agnes have changed with either; willingly would she have become blind and leprous, so as to excite horror in all who saw her. O ye angels who came to comfort Job on the dung-hill, to give Tobias his sight back again, and who hitherto preserved the innocence of Agnes, have you no means now of saving her virginal honor from the utmost danger? Truly, they have, my dear brethren; you need not fear for Agnes; the

<sup>1</sup> *Ingeniuit Susanna: angustiae sunt mihi undique; si enim hoc egero, mors mihi est; si autem non egero, non effugiam manus vestras. Melius est mihi absque opere incidere in manus vestras, quam peccare in conspectu Domini.—Dan. xiii. 22, 23.*



same God to whom she once for all gave her body and soul has already worked a miracle to keep from all danger the pledge entrusted to Him, for He surrounded her and the place of shame with such splendor that not an eye could behold her, nor dared any one come near her without being at once dazzled, or struck dead to the ground, or compelled to acknowledge the truth of the Christian faith, and publicly to praise the true God. Thus does the Lord God know how to protect His own who love Him and trust in Him in their necessities, and to put to shame even by little children all the power and violence and assaults of men. We wish thee joy, holy virgin! The fight is fought, and the victory in thy hands! Now thou mayest sing to thy beloved Lord that canticle of the Wise Man intoned in thy honor by the Church: "I will give glory to Thee, O Lord, my King, and I will praise Thee, O God, my Saviour. . . . For Thou hast been a helper and protector to me, and Thou hast preserved my body from destruction; . . . out of the hands of them that sought my life, . . . from the oppression of the flame which surrounded me; and in the midst of the fire I was not burnt."<sup>1</sup>

We wonder at this, my dear brethren, and with reason. But we must not expect such a miraculous preservation of innocence unless we carefully avoid all dangers and occasions. To no purpose should we pray to God for help, to no purpose should we place our confidence in Him, and expect Him to keep us from sin, if by our own fault we open the doors and windows, that is, the outward senses, to temptation. God worked a miracle to preserve the purity of His holy spouse Agnes in the midst of dangers because against her will and by violence she was brought into those dangers. But can we expect to be saved by a miracle in dangers that we seek and love, into which we go through wantonness, or culpable negligence and carelessness? Oh, no! that will never do! God protected Joseph in the danger to which he had not given occasion; the same God allowed David, although he was a man after His own heart, to fall shamefully in a far lesser danger because he did not guard his eyes from an unchaste look. God saved Susanna from shame in an extreme danger into which she had been forced; the same God allowed Dina to be disgraced because she left her tent to see the for-

Exhortation  
to shun all  
that endan-  
gers purity,  
and to love  
God.

<sup>1</sup> Confitebor tibi Domine Rex, et collaudabo te Deum Salvatorem meum, . . . quoniam ad-  
jutor et protector factus es mihi; et liberasti corpus meum a perditione, . . . de manibus  
quærentium animam meam, . . . a pressura flammæ quæ circumdedit me, et in medio ig-  
nis non sum æstuata. —Ecclesi. li. 1-3, 5, 6.



eign women, as we read in the Book of Genesis. In a word, my dear brethren, to see, hear, speak, read, and think of what can excite unlawful desire and rebellious passions, to frequent all sorts of company without necessity in which the poison of impure love is wont to insinuate itself gently and gradually by eyes and ears—to do this, and yet expect to preserve holy purity of the heart, would be a miracle indeed, humanly speaking, but one that God would certainly not work in such circumstances for our advantage. Let us, then, all learn from Agnes to have God before our eyes always, in all our actions, to love Him constantly with all our hearts, to avoid the occasions of sin as well as we can, to fly with childlike confidence to Him in prayer in all the temptations that come in our way against our will, and to resist and bravely overcome them. Then, with the valiant woman whom we admire in the child Agnes, we shall win the crown in heaven promised to all who fight manfully and conquer. Amen.

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*SEVENTY-FIRST SERMON.*

**ON THE HOLY EMPRESS HELEN A MOTHER OF CHRISTENDOM.**

**Subject.**

St. Helen is a mother of Christianity in general, and especially of the Christians of Treves: 1. In the Christian training of her spiritual children; 2. Inasmuch as she has left a rich spiritual inheritance to her children.—*Preached on the feast of St. Helen.*

**Text.**

*Ecce mater tua.*—John xix. 27.

“Behold thy mother.”

**Introduction.**

Great Queen of heaven, Mary! these words are, properly speaking, for thee, for in them thy dying Son, Jesus Christ, addressed St. John, and in his person all Christians, and gave thee to them, after His death, as their Mother. “Behold thy mother.” Yes, most blessed Virgin! we acknowledge and honor thee with the deepest reverence as the dearest spiritual mother of us all; for thou didst bring forth into the world our elder Brother who, by

His merits, brought us forth again to heaven, and made us adopted children of His Father. We acknowledge thee with joy as our most loving Mother, who in heaven hast a motherly care of us, thy children, entrusted to thee; and it is by thy hand that all graces flow down on us from thy Son. Meanwhile, allow me to-day to apply the same words in a spiritual sense to another whose anniversary as foundress we now celebrate with a festival of joy and thanksgiving: I mean the holy Empress Helen. "Behold thy mother." City and land of Treves, behold thy spiritual mother, who can be justly called so in the sense in which St. Paul calls himself the father of the Galatians: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you."<sup>1</sup> This St. Helen might with reason say to us, as I mean to show in this panegyric.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Helen is a mother of Christians in general, and especially of the Christians of Treves. Such is the whole subject. A careful mother in the Christian training of her spiritual children; the first part. A kind mother in the rich spiritual legacy she has left her children; the second part. Let us act as true children of such a mother; the conclusion.*

Give us Thy grace, O Lord, to do this latter, through the intercession of Thy Mother, Mary, and of the holy angels.

The first and chief care of a mother is the training of her children, for she must feed, clothe, and teach them to walk and speak. And this duty devolves more on the mother than on the father, for the latter, being obliged to attend to his daily business, has no time for his children's education. But this duty is common to all mothers, even among Turks and heathens. What am I saying? Even unreasoning wild beasts do not yield a whit to human beings in this respect, for they use the greatest care, according to their natures, to bring up their young properly. Far more is required from a Christian mother, in which, too, the father is obliged to help; for the parents must bring up their children for their last end, for God and heaven, and therefore must teach them the true fear of God, and how to lead a really Christian life. Where this training is wanting or deficient the parents are not true Christians, or, as St. Bernard says, "they are

She is no true mother who does not bring up her children for God and heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Filioi mei, quos iterum parturio, donec formetur Christus in vobis.—Gal. iv. 19.

robbers and seducers of their children.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, alas! there are many Christian households in which this training is reckoned of the least importance. St. Chrysostom says: “Some bring up their sons to be soldiers, others provide them with riches, others with honors; none provide their children with God.”<sup>2</sup> They are taught how to dress, how to adorn themselves, how to salute others and pay compliments, how to behave in company, and to act towards others; they are taught gambling, dancing, fencing, and all sorts of languages and sciences; but no one provides them with God, no one thinks much of the things that concern God and their souls, and sometimes those things are neglected altogether.

The motherly care of St. Helen for Christians was directed to leading them to imitate Christ.

But I must not complain any longer! I have to preach a panegyric, and to speak of St. Helen as a perfect model of a holy mother in the training of her children; of Helen as the general mother of all Christians. Let us consider her conduct, and learn how to train children in a becoming manner from her example. Her chief and greatest care was to impress the life and holiness of Jesus Christ on the souls of her subjects: “Until Christ be formed in you.” To that end she began with herself, and labored to make her inward and outward life conformable to that of the Son of God. For she knew well that the best means of urging others to good was to be good herself, and that generally it is in vain to expect children to be dutiful and pious when the father and mother do not give them proper example. She knew that a superior is looked up to by the common people as the citizens of a town look up to the town clock; if that goes wrong all order is disturbed in the place. Therefore the holy empress led her flock on by her own example to the Christian virtues more than by mere words.

Shown from the holy Fathers.

St. John Chrysostom writes as follows of her and her son Constantine: “The pious emperor and his royal mother taught their subjects by their own example how to lead good lives; and as they were the greatest in the empire in authority, so they were greater still by the force of their example.”<sup>3</sup> “That holy empress,” says St. Ambrose, like Magdalene at the feet of Our Lord, “depended in all things on the bishops,” to learn from them the

<sup>1</sup> *Seductores et latrones filiorum.*

<sup>2</sup> *Alii militiam filiis suis provident, alii dignitates, alii divitias, et nemo filiis suis providet Deum.*

<sup>3</sup> *Facere recte cives suos princeps optimus et augusta mater faciendo docebat; cumque essent imperio maximi, majores erant exemplo.*

word of God and true devotion; "she always carried the gospel of Christ with her, that wherever she went she might by reading and meditating on it renovate her spirit, and be impelled to imitate the life of Christ."<sup>1</sup> Nothing else did she bear in her heart or on her lips, like St. Paul; nothing else did she desire to know but Jesus Christ crucified. To preach Him and make Him known she wandered over the world, although she was a weak woman, and endeavored to bring all people to the knowledge and love of Christ. Therefore she was justly called by St. Paulinus "a teacher of the faith, of religion, and of piety."<sup>2</sup>

In the tenth chapter of the Third Book of Kings we read that the queen of Saba came with a great retinue to Jerusalem to visit the wise Solomon; a figure, says St. Augustine, of our holy mother: "This empress of ours, Helen, came with the nations of the whole earth to Christ, the true Solomon, that all nations might learn what she had already learned."<sup>3</sup> The queen of Saba brought to Solomon as a present a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a great quantity of spices and precious stones: "She brought to Christ innumerable souls, more precious than gold and gems."<sup>4</sup> And as that queen introduced into her town and whole land the law of Moses she had learned from Solomon, so Helen introduced the Christian faith into her own city of Treves, into Rome, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and the whole Roman empire from east to west; partly having it preached for the first time, partly spreading and preserving it. Helen was that woman of whom the parable in the Gospel of St. Matthew speaks: "The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."<sup>5</sup> Of which passage St. Ambrose writes thus: The Lord Jesus is the wheat; His gospel teaching, which seemed insipid to the carnal Jews, is the leaven; and who is the woman who hid it within herself, and communicated it to others? "She is Helen, who, of all queens and empresses, was the first to spread throughout the world the holy gospel of Christ, which, on ac-

She spread  
the true  
faith  
throughout  
the world.

<sup>1</sup> Sancta illa Imperatrix ubique pendeat ab ore episcoporum; ubique circumferebat evangelia Christi.

<sup>2</sup> Magistra fidei, religionis, et pietatis.

<sup>3</sup> Hæc regina nostra Helena cum totius mundi gentibus venit ad verum Salomonem Christum, ut quod illa jam didicerat, et omnes gentes discerent.

<sup>4</sup> Hæc Christo animas innumeras auro et gemmis pretiosiores adduxit.

<sup>5</sup> Simile est regnum cœlorum fermento, quod acceptum mulier abscondit in farinae satis tribus, donec fermentatum est totum.—Matt. xiii. 33.

count of its humility, is compared to leaven."<sup>1</sup> "Oh," cries out St. Chrysostom in transports of joy, "how great was the fervor of the early Christians, inflamed as it was by the charity of Helen!"<sup>2</sup> By her were opened schools of Christian wisdom, "and all peoples learned how to live according to the law of Christ, in the cities, and even in the woods and mountains."<sup>3</sup> By her the churches were supplied with bishops, the altars with priests, the pulpits with preachers, "so that all held the word of God in the utmost esteem."<sup>4</sup> For all were ashamed to neglect what they saw practised and listened to so attentively by such a great emperor and such a holy empress. "If you had been present you might have seen as many angels as Christians, and a heavenly life led on earth."<sup>5</sup> So far the words and testimonies of the holy Fathers.

So that she was a true mother in training her children: we should imitate her zeal.

"Behold thy mother;" city and land of Treves, nay, all Christendom, behold thy mother! Behold the spiritual mother who has brought you forth to Christ! See and acknowledge with what holy teaching, with what a godly example she has trained up Christians as her children for heaven! Would to God that a similar zeal for winning souls to Christ and furthering His divine honor burned in us all, and that all of us would do our best to spur on our neighbor, if not by teaching and exhortation, at least by good example, to the service of God! Opportunity enough is offered for this to any one who sincerely loves God, and who is not content with being merely just for himself, but wishes to appear before the Lord in heaven with a great number of souls whom he has gained for God. This is specially meant for you, Christian superiors, parents, fathers, and mothers! You are set by the Almighty as pastors over the souls of your inferiors, children, domestics, that you may do all in your power to urge them to good, restrain them from evil, and bring them with you to heaven. But as I have on other occasions spoken in detail about this obligation I now pass on again to our St. Helen. As we have seen, she was a provident mother of all Christians in the training of her spiritual children; and at the same time she was a beneficent mother on account of the rich inheritance she left her children, as we shall see in the

<sup>1</sup> Helena est, quæ prima omnium sanctum Christi evangelium, quod ob humilitatem fermento comparatur per totum orbem portavit.

<sup>2</sup> O quantus fervor primorum Christianorum, igne Helenæ accensus!

<sup>3</sup> Et omnes gentes didicerunt quæ agenda sunt, in urbibus, in ipsis sylvis et montibus.

<sup>4</sup> Factumque est ut apud omnes sermo Dei pretiosus esset.

<sup>5</sup> Vidisses angelorum choros, et conversationem omnino cælestem in terris micare.



## Second Part.

Generally speaking, the greatest care of parents is to leave their children an inheritance. To this end are directed most of their cares and labors; for this they work day and night; for this they often deny themselves in many things; for this they do without many a comfort and pleasure which they otherwise have means enough to indulge in; their sole desire is to spare expense, that they may have all the more to leave their children and heirs. Yet they cannot know certainly for whom they are saving, and often they leave their property to children who misuse the wealth so laboriously accumulated by their well-meaning parents, and make it serve only as a means to their own eternal ruin by their reckless extravagance. I cannot disapprove of this care on the part of parents. I only wish that they all took as much care as Christians should to leave their children a real legacy of true virtue and the fear of God!

Parents are especially desirous to leave their children a rich inheritance.

How did our holy mother Helen act in this respect? She wandered over the whole Roman empire—nay, so to speak, over the whole world, to collect vast treasures, that she might leave them to her Christians and descendants as an eternal inheritance after her death. What treasures were they? That question is answered by the charitable foundations, the magnificent temples, the beautiful cathedrals and other churches which she erected at her own cost and richly endowed—foundations of which the eastern world has many an instance here and there. The church at the crib in Bethlehem, the church on Mount Thabor, the celebrated temple on Mount Calvary in Jerusalem, the many churches in Constantinople, Rome, and other cities are too far for us to take them in evidence. To come nearer home, we are told of her piety by the dumb pillars and towers of the churches she built in neighboring towns: by the celebrated so-called golden church of St. Gereon in Cologne, which was formerly covered with pure gold; by that of SS. Cassius and Florentius in Bonn; by that of St. Victor in Zante, and, to say nothing of many others, by this great cathedral in which we are now assembled in her honor, dedicated to the holy apostle St. Peter—all so many visible proofs of the motherly generosity of Helen. In a word, as St. Ambrose says: “She adorned the eastern empire with churches;”<sup>1</sup> and we may say that, with her son Constantine,

St. Helen left a rich legacy to Christians in the churches and cloisters she founded.

<sup>1</sup> *Oriente imperium exornavit ecclesiis.*

she did as much in the western parts of the world as far as the empire and her authority extended in that direction. That is an inheritance that will never die out; an inheritance that is for the spiritual good and salvation of her descendants, and their children after them; an inheritance by which the Almighty is daily praised in hymn and prayer by servants consecrated to Him, and by which the Christian people are fed with the word of God, and encouraged to lead Christian lives.

And by providing them with relics.

The same is said by the holy and precious treasures of relics that Helen with great trouble and unwearied diligence collected and placed in the different churches she caused to be built. Again I need not mention foreign lands; here in Treves we have to thank her for the bodies of the holy apostles Matthias and Philip, for the holy nail by which Our Lord was fastened to the cross, and for that costly and invaluable treasure—the holy coat of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—which alone would have sufficed to make the name of Treves known over the whole world if it were not known already; which princes and kings and countless numbers of people from all nations have come here to see, and which makes the archdiocese of Treves an object of holy envy to all other countries. The whole Christian Church must thank Helen for the sacred emblem of triumph—the cross—on which the Son of God suffered death for the salvation of the world, which, as we know, Helen sought, found, and left to the world for its consolation; an inheritance that could not be paid for with all the goods the world has in its possession.

By leaving the good example of her life.

But the best of all the legacies we owe this mother, my dear brethren, and one that we should all succeed to, is the example of her virtues and holy life. “My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you” (so you must imagine the holy Empress and mother Helen calling out to us constantly), “besides the other goods you have received from me, I have left you the example of my life; keep it always before your eyes, that you may regulate your lives according to it. I have left you the example of my zeal for the divine honor and the faith, which I have spread and planted everywhere; of my burning love of God, which drove me over the whole world in order to announce and make known His name and doctrine; of my patience and desire for the cross, for I bore with resignation ill-treatment from my husband, and other crosses, as well; of my humility, for I laid aside my imperial diadem to wait on and

serve on bended knees virgins consecrated to God; of my generosity and liberality to the poor, whom I sought out in every place I went to, and whom I helped with money and in other ways, too. These are the virtues of which I give you the example, that you may imitate them; so that as I have always tried to make my life as conformable as possible to that of Christ, you also may do the same, until Christ be formed in you, and His holiness shine forth in all your behavior and actions.

“Behold thy mother;” behold, I repeat, O Christians of Treves! But let me change those words a little: Holy mother Helen, here are thy children; dost thou recognize them all as thine? Dost thou see in them all the footsteps of thy holy life? the conformity of their manners with thy teaching and example? the holy use of the rich inheritance of foundations thou hast left behind in all those who enjoy them? If that is so, then I wish them all joy from my heart! But perhaps thou mightest complain of some as St. Paul did of the Galatians, whom he called his children: “I would willingly be present with you now, and change my voice,” and say clearly that you are not my children, “because I am ashamed for you.”<sup>1</sup> For there are some of you of whom I am ashamed; some who do not follow my teaching, who show little resemblance to the example I have left them, who belong only in name and outward appearance to the faith I have planted and spread and preserved among you; who attend only to the vain usages of the world, and the false maxims of worldlings, and live according to them, setting aside the humble, holy gospel of Jesus Christ that I always carried about with me. I am ashamed of you! No; I do not acknowledge you as my children! What a disgrace for us, my dear brethren, if we gave reason to our good and careful mother to utter such a complaint of us!

I hope that such is not the case! Changing the words of St. Chrysologus, let us put on the likeness of our mother; let us all endeavor to imitate her virtues and holy life. Holy mother and Empress Helen! what now remains for us to do is to pay thee the debt of deep gratitude we owe thee, and to show thee the homage and give thee the praise that thy whole city of Treves is now occupied in rendering thee; and at the same time show thee constant devotion and love, and a childlike confidence in

Which, however, many do not follow.

Resolution to imitate her virtues

<sup>1</sup> Vellem apud vos esse modo, et mutare vocem meam; quoniam confundar in vobis.—Gal. iv. 20.

thy intercession and protection. Truly, thou canst now do far more as a princess in heaven than when thou wert a mortal empress on earth. We commend to thee, then, this diocese and the whole city of which thou hast in a special manner shown thyself the mother. Obtain for us from the Monarch of monarchs and the Emperor of emperors, by thy intercession, that we may always be true to Him, and be and remain zealous in His service until that happens which thou didst so eagerly long for, namely, until Christ is formed in our lives in the most perfect manner. Amen.

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SEVENTY-SECOND SERMON.

ON ST. HELEN, FINDER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

Subject.

1. St. Helen with great zeal sought for the cross of Christ, and found it, to her great joy; we, too, should seek and take up our cross as a sign of life. 2. St. Helen held the cross of Christ in constant honor and love; so should we, too, esteem our cross. —*Preached on the feast of St. Helen.*

Text.

*Lignum vitæ est his, qui apprehenderit eam, et qui tenuerit eam beatus.*—Prov. iii. 18.

“She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and he that shall retain her is blessed.”

Introduction.

These words are applied by Solomon to wisdom; yet not without reason do SS. Ambrose, Bernard, John Damascene, and other holy Fathers apply them to the cross of Christ. “The cross is precious,” says St. Bernard, “and is indeed the tree of life to those who lay hold of it. Oh, truly, it is a tree of life, since it alone was found worthy to bear the fruit of salvation!”<sup>1</sup> For on what else but the cross is our hope of salvation founded? Happy city of Treves, that in preference to all other places hast brought forth and brought up her who found this precious treasure after it had lain hidden in the earth for a long time, who drew it out

<sup>1</sup> *Crux pretiosa est; lignum vitæ est apprehendentibus eam. O vere lignum vitæ, quod solum fuit dignum portare salutis fructum!*

of the dust and held it up to receive the homage of the world! You understand already, my dear brethren, to whom I address this congratulation. This great festival brings before our minds a daughter of Treves who has brought more honor and glory to this city than all the heroes, princes, and kings who were born or have dwelt here, namely, that dear mother of Treves who now in heaven holds her careful and protecting hands over you, bearing the cross in her arms—the great and holy Empress Helen. This is that blessed woman who has laid hold of the tree of life and retained it to her great good fortune. A renown for her than which none can be greater; a treasure for us and all Christians than which none can be more precious! O more than happy city of Treves, if you, too, on this day lay hold of the cross, with your mother Helen, and retain it! This is to be the exhortation I shall give you now in this panegyric.

#### Plan of Discourse.

*St. Helen sought the cross of Christ with the utmost eagerness, and laid hold of it with joy; we, too, should seek and lay hold of the cross as a sign of life; the first part. St. Helen, after having laid hold of the cross of Christ, retained it in constant love and esteem; so should we, too, honor our cross; the second part; from which will follow that we shall be fortunate, like Helen.*

Do Thou, O God, who wert nailed to that cross, grant us, by the intercession of Thy Mother, who stood by Thy cross, of the angels who wept by Thy cross, and of St. Helen, who honored Thy cross, the grace to lay hold of our cross with zeal and desire, and to bear and retain it with joy; that the words may be verified in us, too: “She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and he that shall retain her is blessed.”

To describe the zeal and joy with which the holy Empress Helen seized and embraced the cross of Christ I believe that all we need do is to remember the desire with which she longed for it, the care and trouble with which she sought it, the great difficulties she had to overcome for the sake of it. For the good that is gained by great desire and labor is always possessed with greater joy. With regard to her desire, it was so strong and intense that she gave herself no rest, night or day, looked on the imperial palace as a gloomy prison and dungeon, the life at court

St. Helen  
desired the  
cross most  
eagerly.



as most wearisome, and all regal pleasures and delights as disgusting and bitter as long as that treasure was hidden from her. Where it was there was her heart also; thither were turned her thoughts; thither flew her sighs, and all the inclinations of her mind; she could not and would not be satisfied until her desire was fulfilled.

And sought  
it with  
much toil.

The trouble and difficulty she had in seeking it were so great and manifold that they might easily have deterred the bravest and most determined hero; nay, at first they were almost enough to make her despair of success. For the object of her search was a rough piece of timber, a tree that was in those days an object of horror to the world—a mean, disgraceful cross, on which one had hung who was esteemed as a criminal and an object of execration. The place where this wood was sought for was in former days the place of public execution, but in her time a place of crime, devoted to the worship of false gods, inhabited by the worst enemies of the cross who, in order to blot out all recollection of it from the minds of men, had erected there a shameful statue of Venus, to whom they offered their impure sacrifices. The way leading to this place was hundreds of miles long; it led over the raging sea, over high and rugged mountains, beset with idolaters, and through Jewish countries in which there were a thousand dangers, discomforts, and annoyances to be met with. The hope of finding it was very small indeed; for it had already lain hidden in the earth for three hundred years, where it had been buried out of diabolical hatred and envy by the enemies of the Christian name; nor were there any means of finding out where it was concealed. Finally, who was the person who sought it? A weak woman, an empress brought up in luxury—Helen, who was at the time in her eightieth year. But, in spite of all, she it was who brought her love and desire for the cross so far as to venture what no one had hitherto attempted. In spite of her advanced age she laid aside all imperial pomp and circumstance, left her home and fatherland, travelled by sea and land, dug through the mountain, and sought, found, laid hold of, and retained the desired wood of the cross.

And found  
it at last,  
to her great  
joy.

Oh, who can describe the joy, the delight that then filled her heart; the consolation that inundated her spirit! O sweet tears that were then forced from her eyes! O love that made her spread out her arms to embrace the cross! who can measure you?

No one unless she who had experience of them. We can form some idea of this from the state of the poor man who has suddenly found a rich treasure; from the joy of the traveller who, after having undergone many dangers of shipwreck, has at last arrived in harbor; from the joy of him who, after long journeying to and fro, at last reaches his fatherland; from the delight experienced by the man who, after much labor and trouble, at last has in his hands the good he so longed for. I leave all this to your own pleasing meditations, and go on to the moral lesson.

My dear brethren, the cross is found; why, then, have I urged you all, in my Plan of Discourse, to seek it with Helen? Why run and toil in search of what lies before us? I am not now speaking of the material cross on which Our Lord died, but of another, which most people hate even more than the Jews and heathens hated that of Christ—of one, the bare name of which excites horror and loathing; of one that, as St. Bernard says, is the most terrible of all things to men;<sup>1</sup> of a sign, namely, that is not less contradicted than the cross of Christ: namely, the cross that is made for us by everything that displeases and troubles us; in a word, I mean the trials and contradictions of the world, which are usually called crosses. It seems to me that I hear myself interrupted by the question: What! shall we seek such crosses with desire? Alas, they come to us daily of their own accord! We need not, like Helen, go long journeys in search of them, nor cross the sea, nor dig in the earth for them; they are with us, although we have not sought them. Sickness and bodily pain, trouble and anguish of mind, poverty and temporal misfortunes, loss of good name by detraction and calumny, and many other crosses of the kind are guests that come uninvited, that we must daily behold with weeping eyes, and bear with sweating hands, and grieve for with sorrowing hearts. Would that we could only free ourselves from them! How easy it is to find them! So it is, my dear brethren, and I acknowledge such to be the truth. What else have we to expect in this miserable, sorrowful life of ours? And I am of the opinion that few are free from these trials. We know only too well by experience, and are sure of what Thomas à Kempis says in that golden book of his on the Imitation of Christ, which I advise all who seek comfort in their afflictions to read daily: “All our mortal life is filled

Most people have crosses enough, as they say.

<sup>1</sup> Nihil formidolosius homini.

with miseries, and is marked round about by crosses." There are few who have not something to suffer and a cross to bear. Many a one laughs outwardly, yet he is wanting in something where we least suspect. Even that most fortunate of men, Solomon, who was, as it were, sunk in a sea of all imaginable pleasures, finds affliction of spirit, as he himself confesses: "I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind."<sup>1</sup> Therefore I will lose no more time in recommending you to seek the cross in sorrow.

And therefore they need not seek them, like others.

Otherwise, if perhaps you have none to bear, I should set before you the example of those holy souls who vied with Helen in seeking troubles and trials with the greatest desire, who prayed for them most fervently, and were almost displeased when they delayed to come, or did not remain long; who went to meet pain, and complained of those who prevented them from suffering; who, as St. Gregory testifies, looked on temporal prosperity and wealth as an evil sign.<sup>2</sup> I should wish to let you hear the sighs of Pope Innocent I., who, although he was full from head to foot of ulcers and sores sent him from heaven, cried out: O my God, send me worse and more painful sicknesses, if Thou wilt only grant me grace to bear them! I should like to tell you of the desire of the holy martyr Ignatius to be eaten up by the lions and tigers: Ye wild beasts, when shall I belong to you?<sup>3</sup> If you refuse to seize me I shall force you to do so, and shall excite all your rage against me; I will rush upon you, that you may open your mouths to devour me; and if you decline, I myself will open your jaws, and will put my head between them, that you may not spare me.<sup>4</sup> I should like to describe for you the cries with which the holy Levite St. Lawrence ran after the holy martyr Xystus, desiring to be beheaded and slaughtered for the honor of Christ; the prayer of that pious old man, of whom Hermetius writes that every year he was visited by grievous trials, but one year passing by in which he had not much to suffer, he complained of it to the Lord in bitterness of heart, saying: O my God, what sin have I committed that Thou hast no mercy on me this year? All these people knew well what a great treasure is hidden under the cross, under trials; therefore they were so eager in seeking and desiring them.

<sup>1</sup> Vidi in omnibus vanitatem et afflictionem animi.—Eccles. ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Sancti viri cum sibi suppetere prospera hujus mundi conspiciunt, pavida suspitione turbantur.

<sup>3</sup> Utinam fruar bestiis!

<sup>4</sup> Ego vobis vim faciam; urgebo vos, ut devoretis me.

But up to this we have not been in need of forming such desires! We have crosses enough! All the better, then! Let us rejoice with David: "I met with trouble and sorrow."<sup>1</sup> Lay hold on them with courage; take up your cross bravely: "It is a tree of life to them that lay hold on it." Have you never remarked when a ship strikes on a rock in mid-stream how it is broken into pieces, and the unfortunates who are on board have nothing but a plank to trust their lives to? What a noise they make! How they fight and quarrel about the possession of the plank! Each one tries to have it for himself. Why? Because it is a means of saving his life. Such is the light in which we should consider the trials and contradictions of the world; for by them we, after that sad shipwreck of original sin, can gain eternal life. "No one," says St. Augustine, "can cross the sea of this world unless he is carried by the cross."<sup>2</sup> And in another place: "It is necessary that they for whom eternal life is prepared should be chastened here."<sup>3</sup> According to the teaching of all the holy Fathers, the cross is the surest ladder to bring us to heaven, the key which will open the door thereof to us. The cross is the sign that God has given to all whom He loves and has selected for eternal life: "For whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth; and as a father in the son He pleaseth Himself."<sup>4</sup> I will not dwell longer on the proof of this, as I have already spoken about it sufficiently. Once for all it is and must be true, as the God of truth Himself says in words I have often quoted for you: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup> Happy they who acknowledge this truth and lay it to heart!

Hence they should bear their cross with joy, as a sign of predestination.

My dear brethren, what, then, shall we do? Shall we look with weeping eyes and saddened thoughts on the cross that we have daily to bear, and that the well-meaning providence of God has sent us? Or shall we not rather take it up eagerly, and retain it as our own property, and not try to pass it on to others, or to leave the desire of it to them? Do we not love eternal life? If so, shall we cast from us the tree of life? If we reject this ladder we shall never be able to ascend into heaven. If we throw away this key we shall never be able to open the door of the

If they wish by means of it to enter heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Tribulationem et dolorem inveni.—Ps. cxiv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Nemo potest transire mare hujus sæculi, nisi cruce portatus.—S. Aug. Tract. 1, in Joan.

<sup>3</sup> Illis quibus paratur vita sempiterna, necesse est, ut hic flagellentur.—Ibid. in Ps. xvii.

<sup>4</sup> Quem enim diligit Dominus corripit: et quasi pater in filio complaceat sibi.—Prov. iii. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Per multas tribulationes oportet nos intrare in regnum Dei.—Acts xiv. 21.



heavenly mansions. It is the tree of life to them that lay hold on it; not to those who merely find it, that is, contemplate it outwardly, but to those who take it up. But why should I go to such lengths to persuade you of this? It seems to me that you interrupt me again: Take up what? you ask; bear what? If that be all that is necessary, we are sure of eternal life! Truly, we must take up our cross; we are compelled to do it, whether we like or not! We cannot cast away the heavy wood; it lays on our shoulders always; we feel only too keenly how hard it presses. Again I believe you. But is that enough for your eternal happiness? No; something more is required: "He that shall retain her is blessed," says the Holy Ghost in the words of my text; and I add that he who shall retain the cross shall be eternally happy.

### Second Part.

St. Helen, having found the cross, held it in great honor.

St. Helen was not satisfied with finding the cross of Christ, nor with laying hold of and taking it up; she always held it in love and veneration, and, according to St. Paulinus, spent all her treasures in building a costly temple in which to preserve it; she spread the veneration of it throughout the world, and placed all her happiness, joy, and fame in the possession of it and in the homage she and all Christians paid it, saying with St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ;"<sup>1</sup> and the same words are read in the Introit of the Mass of this feast in honor of St. Helen.

It is not enough for us to be tried by crosses: shown by smiles.

Do not flatter yourselves, then, O afflicted Christians, if you have laid hold of the cross and suffering, or rather, if the cross has found you and is weighing you down! Trials are indeed the tree of life to those who lay hold on them, that is, to those who are visited by them; for they have in them a salutary means of gaining eternal life. But how can the means help one if he does not keep and use it as he ought? What would it help you, if you have suffered shipwreck, for one to throw you a plank if you do not hold fast to it with both arms? You will certainly go to the bottom as well, nay, quicker with it than without it unless you lay hold of it properly. Take a piece of bread in your hand; look at it well; you have there something that can preserve your life; but if you only look at it, and do not eat it, of what good to you will it be? In spite of the bread you will have to suffer hunger.

<sup>1</sup> Absit gloriari nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi.—Gal. vi. 14.



So, too, how can it help you to be tried in various ways if you ery out and complain? for then you merely consider the outward appearance of trials; you look on them as intolerable; they trouble and displease you; but you do not use the cross in the proper manner for the good of your soul. In that way it will be of as much good to you as the blows are to the stubborn horse that kicks against them; or as the stones thrown at the barking dog, that shows his teeth, and barks back at them; or as the cross was to the wicked thief on Calvary, who had to hang on it against his will, and died in despair. It is the tree of life to them that lay hold on it, and he that shall retain it is blessed. The cross must, after the example of St. Helen, be held in honor, that is, it must be accepted from the hand of God with resignation; it must be kept willingly, readily, constantly, acknowledging that it is for us the surest and best means of salvation; it must be borne with pleasure, joy, delight, and exultation, or, if that is not possible, at least with Christian patience, with resignation of our will to the holy will of God.

If we wish to enter heaven by means of them we must bear them patiently for God's sake, and esteem them.

Oh, now we have come to where the greatest fault lies in us! <sup>Few do that.</sup> Most people are burdened with the cross, but, alas! how few, how few there are who hold it in honor as we have said, and thus gain their souls' salvation! For this reason, perhaps, the Holy Ghost speaks of those who lay hold of it in the plural, saying: "Them that lay hold on her," while in the following clause He speaks of but one: "He that shall retain her is blessed;" thus showing the small number of those who bear their crosses, as they ought—willingly and contentedly. What else is the meaning of that inordinate sorrow, that crying and lamenting that go so far beyond the limits of decency, those despairing thoughts and ideas, those impatient words, sighs, curses, cries, that murmuring and complaining against, as they say, the pitiless Heaven, those imprecations that fall from many who are in affliction? What else but that they bear their trials unwillingly, and because they cannot help themselves, and that if they could they would keep the cross at a great distance. They are like the wheels of a wagon that always keep on creaking and rattling. Is not this a state of things that we may well deplore and bewail? O unhappy and thrice miserable mortals! To have to suffer, and to suffer without merit or profit! To have to suffer, and to suffer without human or divine consolation! To have to suffer, and in suffering only to increase one's sorrow! To have to suffer,

and often by the suffering that was intended as a means of gaining heaven to condemn one's self to hell! A consideration that is enough to make me shed bitter tears when it occurs to my mind. O holy souls, if we were only as enlightened as you, how far different the use we should make of our crosses, and with what pleasure, joy, and love we should lay hold of and embrace them!

Still fewer  
who bear  
with the  
same pa-  
tience every  
cross God  
sends them.

Yet I must acknowledge that there are many who willingly take up the cross, who retain and bear it with joy; not, however, every cross, but only that which they wish to bear; not that which God desires to send them, according to their state, as St. Augustine beautifully remarks, speaking of the words of the psalm I have quoted for you, "I met with trouble and sorrow," "There is," he says, "one kind of trouble that you find yourself; another that finds you."<sup>1</sup> The trouble that you find yourself, that is, the mortifications that many practise voluntarily, out of devotion and the love of God, or the suffering that suits their temperament, they bear readily; but other trials that find them, that is, those misfortunes that God sends, that are not according to their nature and inclination, they can and will not bear; in such trials they show neither patience nor joy nor contentment! Many a woman, hearing others complain of losses, will say: Oh, I should care little for that if I only had my husband still with me; but he is dead, and I am desolate; that I cannot endure. Another says: I could indeed endure that; but this domestic trial, this secret poverty that presses so hard on my children and myself is intolerable! A third: Things might go as they will if I were only quit of this pain, if I only had my health! A fourth: I can bear anything but an attack on my honor; that I cannot stand! A fifth: I do not mind what people say of me, as a general rule; but I cannot understand why so-and-so should plague me to such an extent. The crosses of others appear light to us; but when our own shoe pinches, that is, when we have the cross on our shoulders, we feel it sharply enough. People are often seen going early in the morning and late in the evening to church, through rain and snow, and cold and heat, to assist at public devotions; they spend hours on their knees, watch, pray, and fast often, sleep on the bare ground, emaciate and chastise their bodies, and are heard to cry out with Peter: Lord, I am ready to go even to death with Thee. If you ask

<sup>1</sup> *Alia est tribulatio quam tu invenis; alia quæ te invenit.*—S. Aug. in Ps. cxvi.

the n why do they practise such austerities they have a beautiful answer ready: Oh! they will exclaim, we must suffer something for God's sake; heaven suffers violence; the door leading into it is narrow! There is the cross that one finds himself. Truly, it is a practice that is very laudable, meritorious, and pleasing to God thus to deny one's self. Meanwhile something unforeseen happens to those who are thus austere with themselves; a difficulty or an annoyance comes to them from another; a word is spoken that they do not like; and at once all is upset; patience is changed into discontent, joy into anger and displeasure. But what is the matter? We must suffer something for God's sake! Heaven suffers violence! Yes, but that is quite another matter! What has happened now is more than I can bear! So that in some cases the Lord should ask us beforehand what kind of a cross is most pleasing to us! But not in this does true virtue consist; the great God must not be dictated to; not what we will, but what is pleasing to Him, whatever be its name, we should bear with patience and contentment, and bear it as long as He wills. He is blessed who thus retains his cross. "My brethren," says the apostle St. James, "count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations."<sup>1</sup> Rejoice, not only when you fall into this or that trial, but when all sorts of troubles come upon you.

Oh, what happiness the cross she found and honored brought to our St. Helen! It was not the imperial crown but that cross that made her glorious and illustrious before the whole world. And what happiness did she not find by its means in the next life! "What reward," asks St. Augustine, "will God give to His faithful servant who gave such honor to the instrument of His death?"<sup>2</sup> My dear brethren, how happy we, too, shall be—nay, how happy we are already, if we always honor our crosses! For a time, but how short a time! we shall be miserable and suffering in the eyes of the world; but in the sight of God we shall be as dear children who do Him the greatest honor by bearing His cross, and stand high in His grace and favor. And what happiness will follow in a long eternity! Then we shall know that what we have to suffer here is nothing, as the Apostle says: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with

By that patience we shall earn, with St. Helen, the greatest happiness.

<sup>1</sup> Omne gaudium existimate fratres, cum in varias tentationes incideritis.—James i. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Quid servat fideli suo, qui talem honorem dedit supplicio suo?

the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.”<sup>1</sup> Then we shall know what a grievous injustice we have done the Lord—nay, even ourselves, when we refused and rejected the cross.

Shown by  
an ex-  
ample.

On one occasion Louis XII., king of France, caused the names of all his courtiers and attendants to be written down; when he had read them he took a pen and marked with a cross the names of two of them who were absent. The latter were told of this, and, frightened at the black mark placed after their names, took to flight. The king, hearing of it, began to laugh, and said: What are the good people afraid of? It seems they do not understand the letters of Christ, who makes the cross the beginning of all the favors He confers; I made a cross after the names of these two because it was my intention to confer on them posts of the highest importance.

Regret for  
not having  
known the  
good of  
the cross.

O my God, what a mistake I and many others have made hitherto! what a vain fear we have entertained when Thou didst mark us with the cross! Thou hast marked me with the cross of poverty when Thou didst place me and mine in want by misfortune or scarcity; and I looked on that as a sign of Thy displeasure, and took it with fear and aversion, not thinking of the riches Thou wert preparing for me by means of it, although Thou hast assured me that “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>2</sup> Thou hast marked me with the cross of sorrow when Thou didst take my consolation from me by death, and I have complained of that as if it had been a sign of rejection; nor did I acknowledge what a sweet joy Thou wouldst have prepared for me on account of it, since Thou hast said: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”<sup>3</sup> Thou hast marked me with the cross of persecution when Thou didst permit others to torment me unjustly, to put me to shame, to oppress me; and I have set myself against it as intolerable, with anger, curses, and imprecations; nor did I know what a great honor Thou wert preparing for me, although Thou hast said: “Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you; . . . be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.”<sup>4</sup> In a word,

<sup>1</sup> Non sunt condigne passiones hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam, quae revelebitur in nobis.—Rom. viii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum.—Matt. v. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.—Ibid. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Beati estis cum male dixerint vobis homines, et persecuti vos fuerint, et dixerint omne malum adversum vos; . . . gaudete et exultate, quoniam merces vestra copiosa est in caelis.—Ibid. 11, 12.



every annoyance disturbed me, made my mind uneasy, and my will rebellious; I have avoided the cross as the greatest evil in the world, although I should have rejoiced at it as the chief proof of Thy love, and the best means of increasing my glory in heaven. Oh, what a mistake I have made! how many useless tears I have shed!

In future, O Lord, I will make a more sensible use of the cross. I will let those weep who do not hold with Thee; I will let those fear and dread who have everything they wish for here below; but I will rejoice that by the sign of the cross Thou hast registered me in the number of Thy dear children in the Book of Life. I now offer myself to Thee, ready to bear any cross; I will not refuse any; behold, my hands are stretched out in readiness to seize the cross; my arms are open to embrace it; my shoulders are bent to carry it, as Thou wilt lay it on me, till the end, with joy, or at least with patience. And if perchance no cross comes in my way, like St. Helen I will seek it. I will seek it in the troubles of my daily business, which I will always perform with a good intention in Thy honor; I will seek it in others, whose faults I will bear with patience and charity; I will seek it in myself, in my own inclinations and passions, which I will constantly mortify and restrain, that they may not hinder me from following perfectly Thy divine law; that thus I may find the tree of life, retain it till death, and, with the holy mother of Treves, St. Helen, attain to the possession of that eternal happiness promised by Our Lord to those who seek the cross and retain it. Amen.

Resolution  
in future  
to bear all  
crosses, and  
hold them  
in honor.

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SEVENTY-THIRD SERMON.

ON ST. HELEN, WHO EXALTED THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

Subject.

1. Helen, by honoring the cross of Christ, restored His honor and glory, and spread them through the world; 2. We, too, by bearing contradictions, can increase and spread the honor and glory of God.—*Preached on the feast of St. Helen.*

Text.

*Quicumque glorificaverit me, glorificabo eum.*—I. Kings ii. 30.  
“Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify.”



## Introduction.

According to the old saying, one honor deserves another. If this holds good among men, although they are often guilty of ingratitude, and are very apt to forget benefits received, how much more will it not be true of God, who never allows His creatures to surpass Him in generosity; who receives one, and gives back a hundred; who has promised on His word: "Who-soever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify"? Therefore, my dear brethren, the great honor and glory to which Christ has raised our holy empress and patroness Helen in heaven we can measure to some extent from the sole consideration of the honor and glory to which she exalted Christ before the world. That honor, how she gained it for Our Lord, and how we may imitate her in this respect, shall form the subject of this sermon.

## Plan of Discourse.

*Helen, by honoring the cross of Christ, restored His honor and glory, and spread it throughout the world; the first part.*  
*We can, by patiently bearing contradictions, increase and spread the honor and glory of God; the second part.*

That this latter may happen, we beg, O Lord, Thy light and grace, through the intercession of Mary and of the holy angels, while we rejoice on account of the honor which Thy great and holy servant Helen brought to Thee.

The lower  
 the con-  
 dition of  
 the person  
 exalted, the  
 more does  
 he prize  
 the honor.

The meaner the condition from which one is rescued, the more is the honor prized to which he is elevated. It is an uncommon piece of good fortune for a poor, lowly peasant to be called out of his straw-thatched cabin to court, to be there ennobled and made a great lord. That change of fortune is more appreciated by him than if he had been born in that position. What an honor for Joseph to be brought out of the fetid prison, in which, although innocent, he had lain for some years as a malefactor, and to be suddenly declared viceroy of Egypt! What an honor for Saul to be anointed king by the Prophet while he was seeking his father's asses! What an honor for David to be called from keeping sheep to hold the royal sceptre in his hand! The former lowly condition of these men, and the high position to which they were afterwards elevated, must have largely added to their gratitude to Him who effected that great change in their state.

But is it my object now to cast Our Lord down to such a low condition, and maintain that Helen raised Him up and made Him illustrious before the world? We know by the faith that Christ was born of a poor mother, in a lowly stable, that He was brought up in a poor workshop, and looked on by men as the son of a carpenter, and that He was put to death as a malefactor. But all this had occurred three hundred years before; He had long ago made His triumphant entry into heaven, and there taken possession of the kingdom that belonged to Him by right; there He is seated on the right hand of the Father as the lawful King of heaven and earth, and as such He was acknowledged by all Christians in the whole world even in the time of Helen; many thousand martyrs of both sexes had already shed their blood and given their lives for Him, and we cannot say that Helen had any share in all that. How, then, is it true that she restored His honor and glory, since He had that already before heaven and earth without any aid from her?

Christ was raised from poverty to the glory of His Father.

St. Ambrose remarks, very appositely to my subject, that Christ sets His honor and glory especially in His holy cross, on which He suffered for the salvation of the world: "The glory and honor of Christ is His cross."<sup>1</sup> And so He Himself calls it in the Gospel of St. John, when speaking to His disciples of His passion and death: "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified."<sup>2</sup> And again, while on His way to the Garden of Gethsemani: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son;"<sup>3</sup> honor Him and make Him illustrious! For this reason Peter did not wish to be crucified upright, but with his head downward, as St. Ambrose says: "Lest he should seem to lay claim to the glory of his Master."<sup>4</sup>

But His cross, in which He set His glory,

In the time of Helen this glory of Christ was hidden and concealed from the world, for the cross was buried deep in the ground, and no one knew where this divine treasure was to be discovered; so that it lay buried, too, as far as the minds and memory of men were concerned, since no one could pay it public homage. Nay, it was not merely forgotten and without honor, but was covered more with shame and reproach than with earth. All nations and peoples still held to the words of the Lord in Deuteronomy: "He is accursed of God that hangeth on

Was still looked on by the world as disgraceful

<sup>1</sup> *Gloria et honor Christi est crux.*

<sup>2</sup> *Venit hora ut clarificetur Filius hominis.—John xii. 23.*

<sup>3</sup> *Pater, venit hora; clarifica Filium tuum.—Ibid. xvii. 1.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ne affectasse gloriam Domini videretur.*

a tree.”<sup>1</sup> In those days crosses were to be seen, as the wheel and gallows is with us, only in the place of public execution, and the name of one who had been nailed to the cross was held in execration and dishonor. The cross was then the instrument of punishment on which thieves, robbers, traitors, assassins, and incendiaries were executed. And as they are now disgraced who are publicly put to death or punished, so Christ, although He enjoyed His glory in heaven, had still in some measure to suffer before the world the disgrace of His cross, on which the Jews had put Him to death as a criminal, His cross being still held in the same dishonor as the gibbets on which notorious malefactors suffered the extreme penalty. Therefore she who rescued the cross from this shameful position, and raised it to a high place of honor before the world, deserves the praise of having, as it were, taken away a disgrace from Christ Himself, and restored and increased His honor in the sight of men.

St. Helen brought this cross into honor before the world.

As every one knows, my dear brethren, Helen did this great work. Hardly had she conceived the heroic design of setting out on her travels to seek the cross of Christ, wherever it might be, to say nothing of the time when she found and exalted it, when at once, by the command of Constantine the Great, her son, the cross ceased to be an instrument of punishment to evil-doers. For through reverence for the holy cross he forbade, under severe penalties, any one to be again crucified, a custom that all Christendom has since observed to the present day. Thus, as St. Augustine says, the cross is rescued from disgrace, since it is no longer used as an instrument of punishment; while its glory commenced, and still remains, and will last for all time.<sup>2</sup> What glory? “It was transferred from the place of execution to the brows of emperors.”<sup>3</sup> From that time Constantine would have no other standard in his kingdom and for his army but the cross; the pearls and precious stones on his crown had to make room for it; the heathenish images of Mars and Hercules were taken from the helmets of the soldiers, the eagles and lions from the standards, and in place of them was everywhere to be seen the glorious and resplendent sign of the cross. From that time we see the cross on the tiara of the popes, on the crowns of kings, on the mitres of bishops, on the vestments of priests, on the

<sup>1</sup> *Maledictus qui pendet in ligno.*—Deut. xxi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Crux finita est in poena, manet in gloria.*

<sup>3</sup> *A locis supplicitorum fecit transitum ad frontem imperatorum.*

spires of churches, and on the summits of altars, everywhere occupying the chief place.

Since that time how many orders of knighthood were established under the sign of the cross, to bear it and the honor due to it publicly through the world—orders, the members of which vowed to defend it at the cost of their lives! In a word, the cross is the standard under which all faithful Christians, as religious of the cross,<sup>1</sup> to use the expression of Tertullian, promise on oath, in holy baptism, to be true to God. The cross is that holy thing that we reverence on bended knee in our churches, in our homes, in the market-place, on mountains and in valleys as the sign of our eternal salvation. “We mark everything with the cross,” says St. Chrysostom, “as with a royal sign.”<sup>2</sup> We sign it on the forehead, on the lips, on the breast; at our going in and out; when eating and drinking; when rising and laying down to rest. A small particle of the true cross is to us Catholics a treasure of such great weight, of such immense value, that no wealth of gold or silver can be compared to it. In the cross we see, like St. Paul, our highest, nay, our sole renown and glory, according to the words of the Introit of the Mass of today: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

And since then it has always been held in the highest honor.

What an honor for thee, O city of Treves, to have brought up her to whom all Christendom must give this praise, that she, by elevating His cross, spread the honor and glory of Our Lord, and made it known to all nations! What a happiness for us, my dear brethren, if, after the example of St. Helen, we, too, by exalting the cross, further the honor and glory of God! This shall be the case if we bear the cross of Our Lord in a moral sense, that is, if we are patient and resigned for His sake in all the trials and contradictions of life; as I shall prove in the

So that Helen made the cross of Christ illustrious.

## Second Part.

Let us see, without further preface, in what consists the honor and glory that God seeks from men. In this, especially, that man fully submits himself to God as his Creator and sovereign Lord, obeys His commands readily, at the least sign, in all imaginable circumstances, gives up his will altogether to the will and provi-

He honors God most who submits his will to Him in all things.

<sup>1</sup> Religiosos crucis.

<sup>2</sup> Omnia cruce quasi signo quodam regio obsignamus.

<sup>3</sup> Absit mihi gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi.—Gal. vi. 14.



dence of God, and thus makes the glory of God known before the whole world. For, as I have often said, God is not in the least need of His creatures, and He places His exterior honor in this, that they are always ready to do, to omit, to suffer what He wills, how, and when He wills.

This submission is not proved so well in prosperity

Never does a man show this complete submission and obedience clearer and better than in trials, when he bears them with contentment, without exception, accepting them from the hands of God, and submitting to them with patience and joy for His sake. If I were to point to a man who has hitherto lived in prosperity, in good health, in the enjoyment of abundant wealth, possessing a high reputation and the esteem of every one, and to say: There is a man who is content with the Almighty in his state of life, who is resigned to the divine will, satisfied with the arrangements of Providence, and always obedient and submissive to the divine law; he is always grateful for the benefits bestowed on him by God—would not that man honor and glorify his Creator by his Christian mode of life and edifying resignation to the divine will? There is not a doubt of it. Meanwhile, however, you will perhaps say to yourselves: I, too, would be satisfied with the will of God, and be grateful to Him, if He acted in the same manner towards me. For it is natural to receive willingly and with pleasure what we desire. So that your remark is not without reason.

As in adversity borne patiently.

But I say to you again: There is a man who has been in misery and wretchedness for a long time past. That poor workman must plague himself the whole day to find enough food for himself and his family. Everything that unfortunate man undertakes is a failure; nothing succeeds with him; wherever he turns he finds a cross. That desolate widow, with her family of little children, is persecuted and harassed on all sides by enemies. That woman, besides the daily want she has to suffer, is exposed to the brutal treatment of a drunken husband, who beats and abuses her. That man has been lying for years on a bed of pain and sickness, etc. Oh, truly, those are troublous circumstances, which have no sweetness in them, nor anything to appeal to our sensuality, for they are, as it were, contrary to nature. And yet all these people are as satisfied with God in their misery as the former in their prosperity; they follow their Lord on this uncomfortable road, over thistles and thorns, as quickly as the former do on roses and flowers; and while the former thank God



for the goods He has given them, the latter praise and bless Him with humble hearts for the sufferings He has sent them, for depriving them of worldly goods, as if those trials were great benefits. Never is there seen in them the least sign of impatience; and although sensitive nature feels the pain, and sometimes forces a tear from their eyes, yet with all their weeping and sighing their only cry is: God's will be done! What think you of them? Oh, you must acknowledge, with the greatest admiration, theirs is indeed a far different case; what great delight must not the Almighty God have in such souls! What an edifying example they give to the whole city! And what a source of secret shame they must be to other tepid, vain, and luxurious Christians! What renown they gain for our religion! What honor and glory for the Lord! One of them does more to honor and praise God and His holy gospel than a hundred of the others in their prosperity.

So it is, my dear brethren. They who serve God in prosperity seem to me to resemble the servants and courtiers of a king who are always in their master's presence, and accompany him in public; they go with him to the chase, they share in his amusements, they sit at table with him, they wait on him in magnificent array early in the morning and late at night; while they who serve God in adversity are like those brave heroes and generals who, far from home, in the field, under the canopy of heaven, lead restless lives, exposed to danger, with death from a hostile sword or spear staring them in the face, ready at any moment to give their lives for their king. Which of the two sorts of servants must the king love best? There is no doubt that the least heroic exploit of a soldier in battle, or at a siege, or in any military expedition gains more glory for the king than all the other courtiers together with their daily and nightly attendance on the person of their sovereign. The latter, with their show and glitter, surround the king with outward pomp and glory; but the others, by their fighting and conquering, spread his name through the world as that of a great victor, and thereby render him terrible to his enemies and to other monarchs. My dear brethren, to pray long and frequently, to hear many Masses daily, to distribute alms to the poor, and perform similar good works, constitutes, according to the opinion of most people, true devotion and piety. And there is no doubt that those are good and praiseworthy actions, whereby we acknowledge what we owe to God, and, as it were, show Him honor

Patience  
further the  
glory of  
God more  
than serv-  
ing Him in  
prosperity:  
shown by a  
smile.

by outward parade. But I do not hesitate to say that a heartfelt *Deo gratias!*—thanks be to God!—a single God's will be done! in suffering and trial, generally speaking, brings more honor and glory to God than praying whole books full of prayers, and performing other works of devotion when things go according to our wishes. By that complete subjection to the divine will in adversity a man gives to God at once all that he has in and outside of himself—his happiness, his goods, his health, his joy and pleasure—all of which he places at the disposal of the Almighty, ready to lose, if such should be His will, his body, his soul, his understanding and will: all of which he gives over unreservedly, in humility and obedience, to the divine will.

Conclusion  
and resolution  
to bear  
trials pa-  
tiently for  
God's sake.

I must conclude, since my time is expired, and I do so in the words of the ancient Origen: "Let no one, then, be so ignorant of the meaning of trials sent by the Almighty as to think them simply misfortunes and punishments;"<sup>1</sup> let no one be so foolish as to complain, on account of them, that God is a hard taskmaster; let no one be so senseless as to turn into still greater trials the crosses sent him by God by impatience and obstinacy! If the cross brought us no other advantage and profit than to enable us to increase the honor and glory of the great God, should we not, with the saints, desire it, and take it as a glorious pledge from the hands of the Lord? Come, then, my dear brethren, as I have often said before, let us bear with patience and contentment for God's sake what we are obliged to bear in any case; and let us do so with this consolation and assured hope, that if we honor God in this world by patience and contentment we shall also be honored and exalted by Him in heaven for all eternity. For "whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify." Let it be so, O Lord, with Thy help. Amen.

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SEVENTY-FOURTH SERMON.

ON ALL THE SAINTS OF GOD.

Subject.

He who does not live and die, with the saints, in a holy manner shall be judged and condemned by the saints.—*Preached on the feast of All Saints.*

<sup>1</sup> Nemo igitur ita ineruditus sit divinæ disciplinæ, ut flagella divina perniciem putet.

**Text.**

*Vidi turbam magnam quam dinumerare nemo poterat, ex omnibus gentibus et tribubus, et populis, et linguis, stantes ante thronum.*—Apoc. vii. 9.

“I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne.”

**Introduction.**

Since to-day the whole heavens are opened before me to the eyes of faith, and I behold, on the one hand, that great multitude of the saints of God of all races, nations, and peoples, standing and rejoicing by the throne, and on the other hand I cannot help thinking how things go with us mortals in this world, I am compelled to exclaim: Ah, how contradictory the objects that are offered to my mental vision! There I see those who have never lost their baptismal innocence, and have brought it with them to heaven; here I see men bartering that grace for some wretched thing, falling from one sin into another, and rejoicing in sin daily. There I behold many thousand martyrs, who endured with the utmost joy, even to death, the most cruel torments for the sake of God and heaven; here I find men to whom the least trial seems intolerable, who do nothing but murmur against the crosses they have to bear, and curse and swear at their fate. There I see a vast crowd of chaste virgins who preferred to lose their lives rather than their purity; here I find men who deliberately seek occasions of indulging in carnal pleasures. There I see countless confessors who, in order to enter on the narrow path to heaven, spent their lives in constant austerities and mortifications, in fasting, watching, and prayer; here I find most men walking on the broad way, pleasantly and cheerily going on the downward path to hell. How is this? I ask. Have, then, these latter given up all hope of heaven? It seems so. For he who earnestly desires to be with the saints in heaven must, like the saints, lead a holy life; otherwise he will be disappointed. Nay, those very saints will judge and condemn him to hell. This is what I mean to show to-day, my dear brethren, to the greater honor of the saints, and to our own spiritual advantage.

**Plan of Discourse.**

*He who does not, like the saints, live and die in a holy manner will be judged and condemned by the saints. Such is the whole*

*subject. Let us, therefore, reverence the saints now by endeavoring to imitate their holiness of life. Such shall be the conclusion.*

Obtain for us the grace to do this, all ye saints of God, and thou, especially, Queen of the saints, Mary, and you, too, O holy angels.

The saints are now our best friends and advocates with God.

What does that mean: to be judged and condemned by the saints? By those saints who wish and desire nothing more than that we, their brethren and sisters whom they have left behind in this vale of tears, should follow them to heaven, and be partakers in their eternal bliss? Shall they judge and condemn us to the everlasting pains of hell? Those saints to whom our wants and miseries, our weaknesses and frailties are only too well known; who, as St. Bernard says, have, as it were, an anxious care for our welfare, lest we should be lost forever: "They are now sure of their own happiness, and anxious concerning ours"?<sup>1</sup> Those saints who stand round the throne of God as so many advocates and intercessors; our protectors and guardians, who by their prayers and merits obtain God's grace and mercy for us who are still on earth; to whom we appeal with an assured confidence in our wants and necessities, and by whose intercession we are often miraculously helped in troubles? Shall these saints one day stand up as judges against us, to pronounce on us the sentence of eternal reprobation: Depart, ye cursed, into eternal fire?

But they will judge and condemn us if we are not holy, like them.

Yes, my dear brethren, yes! Even those chosen friends of God, who are now our best friends and advocates in heaven, we shall one day have to fear as our strict judges, by whom we shall be examined, convicted, and condemned, unless, like them, we lead a holy life and die a happy death. "Know you not," asks St. Paul, "that the saints shall judge this world?"<sup>2</sup> Know you not that their mouldering bones that we now reverence on our altars shall in the general judgment rise from the grave, and that the saints shall then take their places as judges of the wicked? Yes, and this is confirmed by the apostle Jude from the Prophet Enoch: "Behold, the Lord cometh, with thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to reprove all the ungodly for all the works of their ungodliness."<sup>3</sup> Our Lord

<sup>1</sup> De sua felicitate securi, de nostra solliciti.

<sup>2</sup> An nescitis quoniam sancti de hoc mundo judicabunt?—I. Cor. vi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ecce venit Dominus in sanctis millibus suis, facere judicium contra omnibus, et arguere omnes impios de omnibus operibus impletatis eorum.—Jude i. 14, 15.

Himself prophesied the same to His disciples in the words: "Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed Me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."<sup>1</sup> According to the interpretation of the holy Fathers, these words are not to be understood only of the apostles, for otherwise the thirteenth apostle, St. Paul, would be excluded, although he said he should be a judge of the angels; but they are applicable to all the saints who by their virtuous lives have tried to follow the example of Christ. In two ways the saints will judge the wicked: first, as assessors, or assistants to Jesus Christ, the supreme Judge, in which capacity they will give their votes, and approve of and confirm the sentence of condemnation; secondly, and chiefly, as witnesses, who will compare their own lives and virtuous habits with the crimes and sins of the wicked, and with this comparison put the latter to shame, confound, and condemn them.

Oh, what a terrible experience it will be for the wicked to be obliged thus publicly to appear before a multitude of saints of all nations, peoples, and races, seated beside Jesus Christ in their glory and majesty, comparing their virtuous lives with the sinful career of the reprobate! Ciinna, the ambassador of King Pyrrhus, came to Rome to see the Senate about making peace; the majesty of that assembly so impressed him that he almost lost the faculty of speech, and afterwards acknowledged to his sovereign that the city of Rome seemed to him a temple, and the Senate to be a meeting of kings.<sup>2</sup> Such is the image that comes before my mind, my dear brethren, when I think of that day in heaven, and I, too, say: Heaven appears to me as a temple of awful majesty, and the multitude of the saints as an assembly of terrible judges. There I behold Abraham the Patriarch, who will examine and judge each one as to his faith and confidence in God. There I behold John the Baptist, with the prophets, who will examine and judge concerning the many inspirations and lights received from God and in the hearing of the word of God. There I see the apostle St. Peter, who will examine concerning the preaching of the gospel and the manner in which we have conformed our lives thereto. There I see St. Stephen, with count-

A fearful thing to appear before so many judges.

<sup>1</sup> Amen dico vobis, quod vos qui secuti estis me, in regeneratione cum sederit Filius hominis in sede majestatis suae, sedebitis et vos super sedes duodecim, judicantes duodecim tribus Israel.—Matt. xix. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Urbem Romam templum sibi visam, senatum regum esse consessum.



less martyrs, who will examine and judge concerning the patience with which we shall have borne our crosses and trials. There I behold Benedict, Bernard, Dominic, Francis, Ignatius, and other founders of religious orders, with their spiritual children, and all the holy confessors, who will examine and judge us concerning our zeal in the service of God, our humility, temperance, self-denial, mortification; to see whether we have practised those virtues according to the teaching and example of Christ. There I see Catharine, and a great number of virgins, who will examine and condemn the sins committed against purity and chastity. There I see Joachim and Anna, with other saints, who will examine and judge the sins of married people, especially those committed with regard to the training of children. There I see Antony, with all the holy hermits, who will examine and judge the sins committed by the tongue, by the eyes, and the ears in dangerous company and meetings. There I see Magdalene, with the penitents, who will examine and judge concerning the sins that have been concealed in confession, or that have not been duly repented of, or that have been committed by remaining in the proximate occasion. "I saw a great multitude which no man could number." The eyes are dazed by the sight of that vast multitude of saints, all holding up their hands, as David says: "Two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance upon the nations, chastisements among the peoples."<sup>1</sup>

Their lives  
will take  
away all ex-  
cuse from  
the wicked.

Unhappy sinner! how will you feel when you see all those judges sitting against you? What escape will you have, what excuse will you be able to offer when they will all contrast their lives and virtues with your vices? What will you say, proud and vain child of the world, if the supreme Judge questions you about your pride in despising others, about your vanity and indecency in dress, about your extravagance in tricking yourself out in order to catch the eyes of strangers, and secure their admiration? Have I not often enough, the Judge will say, caused My gospel law of humility, modesty, and decency to be preached to you? You will answer: My state in life and noble birth required me to dress in that manner; it was the fashion in my time, and I was obliged to follow it. What! a holy St. Elizabeth, with other saintly kings and queens, will exclaim against you; we were of royal blood, and subjects bent the knee to us,

<sup>1</sup> Gladii ancipites in manibus eorum, ad faciendam vindictam in nationibus, increpationes in populis.—Ps. cxlix. 6, 7.

and yet in order to follow the humble King of glory we clad ourselves with Christian simplicity, and bowed our crowned heads down to the feet of the sick poor. I, holy Tobias will cry out, although I was brought up in the Jewish law, took no notice of the customs and ways of others, but did what God required of me and them: "When all went to the golden calves" to adore them "he alone fled the company of all."<sup>1</sup> I was the only one who shunned all society and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord to adore the God of Israel; you might have done the same, and have been saved with the few, with the small number who walked on the narrow way to heaven. Come here, O avaricious man! Was not My law about almsgiving well enough known to you, and My commands regarding the works of Christian charity and mercy? But you, with your usury, injustice, and cheating, have sucked the blood of the poor. Lord, you will say, I had to keep a large family; without such practices I should not have been able to maintain them in their proper state of life. What! away with you to the judgment-seat of Abraham, who will say to you: I had a far greater family to support; it counted more than three hundred souls; yet I sought out the stranger and the poor man, and entertained them with food and drink. What will you say, unchaste man, who indulged all your carnal desires, and allowed them to rule over you? Lord, I was too weak to withstand temptation! Then behold your judge, a Joseph, an Agnes, a Paul, and many others, who, armed with the fear of God, gained a victory over the most violent temptations and assaults, partly by taking to flight, partly by chastising their bodies. And you, vindictive man, have you not known the command: "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you"<sup>2</sup>? What have you to say? My honor was concerned; if I had allowed the insult to pass by unavenged I should have been looked on as a fool and a coward. Your judges will be a King David, whose honor was worth much more than yours, and who nevertheless carefully spared the life of his sworn enemy Saul when he had him at his mercy; a protomartyr Stephen, who, while the stones were being cast at him, prayed to God for his murderers. And you, O drunkard, who so often sin by excess, how will you bear the sight at the tribunal of divine justice of a

<sup>1</sup> Cum irent omnes ad vitulos aureos; hic solus fugiebat consortium omnium.—Tob. i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Diligite inimicos vestros; benefacite his qui oderunt vos.—Matt. v. 44.

Bernard, a Francis, a Dominic, whose lives were an uninterrupted fast and mortification?

Their holiness will show us that we could and should have lived holly, for they are of the same nature as we.

Finally, what excuse shall we have to offer for our sloth in the divine service when we shall see appearing before the judgment-seat all the elect of God, who, on the one hand, will upbraid us with the words of the Apostle urging us to be holy: "This is the will of God, your sanctification,"<sup>1</sup> and, on the other hand, will point to their own example to prove that we, too, could have been holy as they are? "Wo is me," sighs St. Augustine, considering this; "I shall stand bare before as many judges as there are saints who have preceded me in doing good."<sup>2</sup> I shall be convicted and confounded by as many as have given me the example of a holy life! And shall we then be able to rely on the excuses that we now think serve our turn? Speaking of his own times, St. Chrysostom says: If the example of the apostles is proposed for our imitation, and we are urged to imitate their mode of life and their virtues, we change countenance at once, and say: That we cannot do. And if we are asked why, we have a foolish answer in readiness: "Oh, he was Paul, or Peter, or John;"<sup>3</sup> we are not as they were. Eh, great Saint! you have indeed hit the mark, not only for your own times, but for ours as well! If the virtues of the saints are set before us in pious books, in sermons and exhortations; if we are reminded how zealous the apostles were for the honor and glory of God, how eagerly the martyrs welcomed the most cruel torments, what severe penances were practised by the confessors, how angelical was the purity of the virgins, how other saints constantly did violence to themselves, what wonderful patience they exhibited under trials, how their only wish was to suffer crosses and contradictions, how they lived in the world and yet not according to the maxims of the world, and kept their thoughts always united with God in heaven—oh, then we shrug our shoulders, and our first word is: Yes, but they were saints! What? asks St. Chrysostom, "what do you mean by saying: He was Paul, he was Peter?" they were saints? Were they not men as we are? Were they not born into the world as we are? Have they not been obliged to eat and drink as we are? Have they not lived on the same earth, under the same sky, and breathed the same

<sup>1</sup> Hæc est voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra.—I. *Thess.* iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Væ mihi! tot iudicibus inops stabo, quot me in bono opere præcesserunt.

<sup>3</sup> Ille Paulus erat; ille Petrus erat; ille Joannes erat.—S. Chrysost. L. 1. *De Compunc. Cordis.*

air as we? What, then, is the meaning of saying: They were saints? Perhaps because they worked great miracles that are beyond our power? No, for holiness does not consist in performing miracles; otherwise John the Baptist would not be a saint, for, as Our Lord says, he worked no miracle; and Judas the traitor would be a saint, for he did wonders in the name of Christ. Holiness consists in the works of justice; avoid all sin, as the saints did; keep always in the state of sanctifying grace, like them; live chastely, like them; be meek and patient, like them; be zealous in the love of God and of your neighbor, like them, and then you will be a saint, too. "But," continues St. Chrysostom, "if that is not the case with you, your own will is in fault."<sup>1</sup> We do not wish to live holily, and therefore the saints will judge and condemn us.

Yes, it is easy to talk about that, but not so easy to do it. Truly, I know well that more than mere talk is required to lead a holy and pious life. But we men of the world cannot do that; we have other things to think of; the care of the whole family lies on our shoulders; our state makes it impossible for us to be saints. This, says St. Chrysostom, is the excuse alleged by most people, namely, their state in life; some speak of their marriage, others of their children, others of their numerous domestics, others of their business, their affairs, their work, service, labor; others, again, allege their military duties, others their high position and laborious occupations, others their riches, others their poverty and misery. Thus many a one says: Oh, that I were not married, that I were freed from this duty; then I could live a better life! O Christians, how could such lame excuses help us on that great day when the vast multitude of saints of all races, nations, peoples, and every condition of life, will sit beside the Judge, and, pointing to their own holy lives, condemn and put us to shame! You are married, as you complain; Moses, Joachim, Anna, nearly all the saints of the Old, and many of the New Testament will say: So were we, and yet the married state did not prevent us from attaining sanctity. You have a great number of children; the mother of the Machabees will say: I had seven of them; the Patriarch Jacob will say: I had twelve sons, and yet I lived a holy life. You hold a high position before the world; you have very important business and duties to attend to; David, Josias, Ezechias, Leopold, Henry,

They lived  
in the same  
state as we.

<sup>1</sup> Quod quia non sit, voluntas in culpa est.—S. Chrysost. L. 1. De Compunc. Cordis.

Louis will say: We were nobles, kings, and emperors, who had to rule over many lands, and yet we led humble, zealous, and holy lives. You are a soldier; that centurion of whom Christ said that He did not find such faith in Israel; Cornelius, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as fearing God, with his whole family, and as being always united with God, will say: So were we. You are a tradesman; St. Joseph will say: Did I not practise the same trade as you? and yet I became a great saint! You are a servant; so was Onesimus, whom St. Paul praises so highly as to say of him that he found him most faithful and helpful in his apostolic labors. You are rich in the goods of the world; Abraham, Job, and others will say: We were much richer than you; therefore we were a foot to the lame, an eye to the blind, the fathers of the poor, supporters of orphans, and thus by our riches we have gained heaven and eternal glory. You are poor and needy; Lazarus will say to you: By poverty I became holy; and the holy founders of Orders will tell you that they sought poverty in order to attain to perfect sanctity. There is, then, no state in life in which we do not find saints who will judge and condemn us if we do not live holily, each according to his condition.

In the same  
dangers  
and temptations.

But, we say further, in our state there are too many occasions, dangers, and temptations for us to be able to guard against them. Sometimes business is bad, trade is dull, and one is often deceived by others. We have to go into society, and see dangerous objects, so that we cannot well be as pure as angels; it is necessary to fall now and then. Other people trouble me; the husband is violent, the wife obstinate; the servants go wrong, the children are unruly; we are obliged to commit sin; we must grow impatient, and swear and curse, etc. What! What *must* is there about it? Who compels you to sin? Do you think that excuse will avail you at the tribunal of God? See how Joseph in the bloom of youth was able to defend himself against seduction; how Susanna struggled against the lust of the elders; how St. Jerome used to beat his breast with a stone; how St. Benedict rolled in the thorns; how St. Thomas of Aquin defended himself with a firebrand; how St. Nicetas, deprived as he was of other means of defence, since he was tied hand and foot, bit off his tongue and spat it in the face of the temptress; so did these act in order to overcome impure temptations. They will say: We were not obliged to sin, to fall; why did you not remain away from the dangerous company? Why did you not avoid



the occasion, and keep a better guard on your senses? There you will see the patient Job, who was deprived of all that he once had in abundance, and was, moreover, laughed at and ridiculed by his friends as he sat infected with an ulcer on the dung-hill; a blind Tobias, who was reviled by his own wife; they will say: We were not forced to grow impatient, nor to curse or revile; but the more we had to suffer the more we praised God and blessed the name of the Lord. Why did you not act in the same manner? The whole fault lies in your own wicked will.

Alas, we are weak, corrupt creatures; we have a perverse nature, inclined to all evil, to which faults and failings are as its daily bread. Yes? And even so, could you not have led a holy life? Hear what all the saints will say to this, with holy Job: "My strength is not the strength of stone, nor is my flesh of brass."<sup>1</sup> What are you thinking of? Do you imagine that we were made of marble, and as senseless as our own images? The relics that reposed on your altars are a proof to the contrary, and show that we were neither angels, nor made of wood or iron, but that we were men like you, who had flesh and blood like you, and were not less subject to evil inclinations than you are. That we, too, could have sinned is proved by those great sinners who, having done penance, became great saints. St. Augustine, considering this before his conversion, acknowledges of himself: Alas, I was ashamed in my heart, and knew not where to go to hide my confusion.<sup>2</sup> Why, Augustine? It seemed to me an impossibility to abstain from sin on account of my evil habits; then occurred to me the thought of the innumerable host of saints of all sexes, ages, and conditions who lived chaste and pure in the midst of temptations, and I heard within me a voice saying: If they who lived in the flesh could avoid living according to the flesh, could not you also?<sup>3</sup> To this I knew not what answer to make, and all I could do was to be ashamed of myself in the depth of my heart. The same words will be heard on the last day, when the Judge shall present the multitude of saints to the wicked: See how all these have been able to live in humility, justice, temperance, purity, chastity, patience, meekness; or else they led penitential lives, and became holy; and you could not do it? Why did you not follow their example? No! all the

In the same weakness.

<sup>1</sup> Nec fortitudo lapidum fortitudo mea, nec caro mea ænea.—Job vi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Erubescam nimis.

<sup>3</sup> Potuerunt isti et istæ, et tu non poteris?

saints will exclaim; you could have done as we did; but you did not wish to do so. Depart, you cursed, into eternal flames!

Let us,  
then, imi-  
tate them.

My dear brethren, we do not expect that terrible sentence. Let us, therefore, now honor the saints by treading in their footsteps and imitating their holy lives. Let us avoid sin, like the saints; practise virtue, like the saints; and each one in his state of life do the will of God in all things and in all his concerns, like the saints. Have we done that hitherto? Let each one enter into himself and ask himself with me: If I were now to die, where should I find a place among you, O saints of God? Should I be among the apostolic saints? Ah, where is my zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls? Should I find a place among the holy martyrs? Ah, where is my patience? A fast day, a short interruption of sleep, a word of contradiction is more than enough for me. Should I be with the holy confessors? Where is my humility, mortification, penance? Should I be in the choir of holy virgins? Oh, what filthy thoughts, actions, words, and works prevent me from that! Should I be among the innocent children? Alas, my innocence! long years ago thou hast left me. I acknowledge, then, that there is no room for me among the saints in heaven. All I can do, then, is, with Augustine, to be ashamed of myself. Yet I must go to heaven! What shall I do? I shall try, at all events, to find room among the holy penitents. I will now begin to do sincere penance for my sins, to amend my coldness and tepidity, and for the future to lead a holier life according to the gospel law of Jesus Christ, and to serve God with all possible zeal for the time that remains to me, never more to offend Him by a single sin, and to love Him constantly above all things, no matter what happens. That we may carry out this resolution, do you pray for us, O chosen saints of God, that we may not on that day find in you judges to condemn us, but rather companions, who in eternal joys will with us praise, see, and love God forever. Amen.

#### END OF THE WORK.

To the greater honor and glory of God, of the Blessed Virgin and Queen of heaven, Mary, of all the holy angels and elect, and for the salvation of souls.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF SUBJECTS TREATED IN "THE CHRISTIAN'S MODEL."

## —A.—

### Agnes (Saint).

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
While still a child, she was a teacher of wisdom in her contempt of worldly allurements. - - - - -	68	1 to 6	ii.	368
In her contempt for all the threats of the world. - - - - -	68	7	ii.	372
She was a true, innocent, chaste lamb of Christ. - - - - -	69	1 to 6	ii.	377
She overcame the crafty and the violent wolves. - - - - -	69	7 to end.	ii.	380
In her childhood she was a valiant woman. - - - - -	70		ii.	385

### Andrew (Apostle).

He was the first disciple and follower of Christ. - - - - -	44		ii.	76
He first received the teaching of Christ while Our Lord was still unknown and despised. - - - - -	44	4 to 6	ii.	80
He was the first to lead others to Christ. - - - - -	44	7	ii.	83

### Augustine (Saint).

Was great before the world. - - - - -	62	1 to 4	ii.	312
He was lowly and contemptible in his own eyes. - - - - -	62	5 to end.	ii.	315
His great wisdom appears from the books he has written. - - - - -	62	2	ii.	313
From the heretics he refuted. - - - - -	62	3	ii.	314
From a great sinner he became a great saint. - - - - -	63		ii.	320

### Angels.

They are most perfectly united with the will of God. - - - - -	38	1 to 9	ii.	8
--	----	--------	-----	---

### Avarice.

When it once gets possession of the heart it is almost insuperable. - - - - -	50	3	ii.	170
It was completely vanquished by the holy apostle St. Matthew. - - - - -	50	4 to 12	ii.	171

## —B.—

### Bartholomew (Apostle).

Was, before all the other apostles, in his martyrdom a most glorious witness of the faith of Christ. - - - - -	49		ii.	151 -
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	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
Besides many other torments which he had previously suffered, he endured a most painful death for Christ.	49	5, 6	ii.	157
And that with invincible bravery and constancy.	49	7	ii.	159
How gloriously he was rewarded for this by Our Lord.	49	9, 10, 11	ii.	161
<b>Bernard (Saint).</b>				
A wonder of innocence and penance.	65		ii.	337
One who thoroughly despised the world and himself.	66	1 to 11	ii.	348
<b>Blood of Christ.</b>				
To be guilty of shedding it is a terrible thing.	11	1, 2	i.	132
It was poured out to the last drop.	11	3	i.	133
Examination to find who were guilty of it.	11	7 to 19	i.	134
—C.—				
<b>Clement (Pope and Martyr).</b>				
Was like the apostles in the sufferings he endured.	58	1 to 7	ii.	273
Was like them in the wonders he worked.	58	8	ii.	278
<b>Christian.</b>				
Many Christians do not know what it is to be a Christian.	1	1	i.	8
The profession of a Christian is to lead a holy life.	1	2	i.	9
Most Christians have no sign of holiness in them.	1	5 to 9	i.	11
Christians are bound to order their lives according to the teaching and example of Christ.	2	3 to 5	i.	20
He who does not try to do that has no claim to heaven.	2	6, 7	i.	22
And will not be able to answer for himself at the tribunal of Christ.	2	13	i.	27
<b>Christ.</b>				
Became man to show us how to live by word and example.	2	1, 2	i.	18
He despised all that the world esteems.	2	9	i.	23
In His birth He chose the extreme of humiliation.	3	1 to 6	i.	31
The extreme of poverty.	3	9 to end.	i.	36
An example to all in His circumcision.	4		i.	41
In His manifestation to and calling of the three kings He showed Himself a great God and Ruler of hearts.	5	1 to 8	i.	58

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
He wishes us often to think of His sufferings.	6	1 to 4	i.	74
All that He suffered was for our sake.	6	6	i.	78
Unheard-of love of Christ in dying for us.	9	1 to 4	i.	102
Yet very few love Him in return: a monstrous ingratitude.	9	5 to end.	i.	105
What cruelties were practised on Him in the court of Pilate.	10	1	i.	111
He is our best friend, and yet is often crucified again by us through sin.	10	13, 14	i.	123
And that after having died for us on the cross.	10	15	i.	124
To be guilty of His blood is a terrible thing.	11	1, 2	i.	132
Christ voluntarily accepted death for us.	11	9	i.	136
Yet can do little with most men in spite of that; hence He has just reason for complaint.	11	13	i.	139
	& 14	14	i.	201
Has shed His blood for even the worst sinners.	14	22, 23	i.	146
Died in extreme poverty.	12	1, 2	i.	155
In the greatest agony.	12	9	i.	161
Suffered all kinds of torments in His crucifixion.	12	10, 11, 12, 13	i.	162
Was condemned to a death that in all its circumstances was a most terrible one.	13	2, 3	i.	174
Although He was quite innocent.	13	4	i.	176
Was not granted a hearing either by His earthly judges or by His heavenly Father.	13	5, 6	i.	178
Died without any consolation.	13	7	i.	180
Our sins are the cause of His death.	11	22	i.	146
	& 13	9	i.	182
Christ prayed on the cross for sinners, and that, too, in a most efficacious manner.	16	4, 5, 6, 7	i.	236
Explanation of the last words of Christ when He gave up the ghost.	14	2	i.	190
They were addressed to sinners.	14	3 to 11	i.	191
The sufferings of Christ are renewed in all their circumstances daily by sinners.	15	3	i.	209
The frequent recollection of the passion of Christ is consoling for the just.	6	1 to 7	i.	74
And for sinners.	6	8 to end.	i.	80
It is also useful to the pious to help them to persevere.	7	1 to 7	i.	83
To the wicked to deter them from sin.	7	8 to end.	i.	88
The divinity of Christ proved by His sepulchre.	17		i.	254
The tomb of Christ is to this day an incontrovertible proof of His divinity.	18		i.	264
The truth of the resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith.	19	1	i.	277
The proof of that.	19	2 to end.	i.	277
In it He conquered the rage of hell.	20	1 to 8	i.	289
And the envious Jewish world.	20	9 to end.	i.	295



	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
The resurrection of Christ is a symbol of our resurrection from sin. - - -	21		i.	300
Wonderful love of Christ for men in sending them the Holy Ghost after His Ascension. - - -	23	1 to 10	i.	326
Although they had treated Him so ill when He was on earth. - - -	23	11 to end.	i.	333
The same wonderful love of Christ appears in the Blessed Sacrament. - - -	24		i.	338

### Conformity.

Conformity with the will of God in adversity is a great virtue. - - -	41	1	ii.	40
We have a perfect model of this conformity in Mary, the Mother of God. - - -	33		i.	445
In the holy angels. - - -	38		ii.	7
In St. Joseph. - - -	41		ii.	40

### Cross of Christ.

Was sought by St. Helen with great zeal and desire, and found and received by her with great joy. - - -	72	1, 2, 3	ii.	401
Was held in the highest honor. - - -	72	8	ii.	406
Was exalted by her, whereas it had before then been held in contempt and dishonor. - - -	73	4, 5, 6	ii.	413

### Crosses and Sufferings.

Were eagerly desired by many holy servants of God. - - -	72	5	ii.	404
How the apostle St. Andrew longed for them. - - -	44	9	ii.	85
And St. Lawrence. - - -	54	1 to 8	ii.	234
By means of them our virtue must be tried. - - -	54	9, 10	ii.	239
They are necessary to enable us to enter heaven; therefore they should be accepted with contentment. - - -	12	15	i.	166
	& 72	6, 7	ii.	405
They should be borne willingly and readily. - - -	72	9, 10	ii.	406
Nay, we should rejoice at them. - - -	72	13, 14	ii.	409
By patiently bearing the cross we give most honor to God. - - -	73	8 to end.	ii.	415
The passion of Christ should encourage us to suffer with patience. - - -	12	15 to end.	i.	166
To bear great sufferings and crosses with joy is a great virtue. - - -	54	1	ii.	234
Even small crosses make us impatient, because we have little virtue. - - -	54	11, 12	ii.	242
They shall have a great reward who have suffered much with patience. - - -	49	11	ii.	163
Complaints against those who do not wish to suffer for Christ's sake. - - -	44	13	ii.	88

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
<b>—D.—</b>				
<b>Danger.</b>				
In dangers to the soul that we cannot avoid we must arm ourselves with the fear of God. - - - - -	56	12	ii.	262
It is dangerous to frequent the company of the wicked. - - - - -	56	1	ii.	255
<b>Death.</b>				
The death of the just is joyful. - - - - -	34 & 67	1, 11 6	i. ii.	455 361
We should often think of what our death is like to be. - - - - -	34	10	i.	461
In death we shall know the vanity of earth- ly goods. - - - - -	12	4, 5	i.	157
<b>Dead.</b>				
When extraordinary honors are shown to one who is dead it is a sign of esteem for his virtue. - - - - -	17	1, 2, 3	i.	255
<b>Devil.</b>				
Urged on the condemnation of Our Lord to death. - - - - -	20	1	i.	289
Was deprived of his power by the death of Christ. - - - - -	20	4, 5, 6	i.	291
<b>—E.—</b>				
<b>Enemy.</b>				
We must be patient with our enemies. - - - - -	53	1 to 7	ii.	221
We must love them. - - - - -	53	8 to end.	ii.	227
<b>—F.—</b>				
<b>Faults (Small).</b>				
Should be carefully avoided, because they easily lead to grievous sin. - - - - -	52	13, 14, 15	ii.	215
<b>Felix, Archbishop of Treves.</b>				
Was a special benefactor of the city. - - - - -	64		ii.	320
<b>Friend, Friendship.</b>				
True and constant friendship is rare among men. - - - - -	23	1	i.	326
Christ is our best friend, for He continues to love the poor mortals whom He loved when on earth, although He has as- cended into heaven. - - - - -	23	3 to 8	i.	328
Friends in need are the rarest. - - - - -	42	1	ii.	52
St. Joseph is a friend in the greatest need, namely, in the hour of death. - - - - -	42	2 to end	ii.	53

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
<b>-G.-</b>				
<b>Grace.</b>				
What sanctifying grace is. - - -	29	1	i.	393
What is actual and helping grace. - - -	29	2	i.	393
Mary was filled with both. - - -	29	3, 4, 5	i.	395
Yet she always tried to increase them. -	29	6, 7	i.	397
We have no reason to complain of the want of grace, since it is given to us in abun- dance. - - - - -	29	8 to 11	i.	399
We are careless of increasing it. - - -	29	12	i.	402
Therefore with justice does God withdraw many graces from us. - - - - -	29	13	i.	403
The abuse of the grace of God brought Judas to fall. - - - - -	52	10, 11	ii.	213
<b>Gratitude.</b>				
What gratitude we owe Christ, who suf- fered and died for us. - - - - -	6	6 to end.	i.	78
	& 11	10 to 13	i.	137
	& 13	14	i.	186
	& 14	12, 13, 14, 15	i.	199
<b>-H.-</b>				
<b>Habit.</b>				
The inveterate habit of sin can hardly be cured without a miracle. - - -	63	1, 2, 3	ii.	321
Yet St. Augustine overcame it. - - -	63	4 to 10	ii.	323
<b>Health.</b>				
Is a great good, for the sake of which we will do anything. - - - - -	55	1, 2	ii.	245
<b>Heaven.</b>				
In heaven is everything that can fully satisfy us. - - - - -	22	11	i.	321
There are true, perfect, and eternal goods.	22	12, 13, 14	i.	321
Folly of men who care so little for heaven.	22	15	i.	323
<b>Helen (Saint).</b>				
A mother of Christianity. - - - - -	71	1	ii.	392
Gave her subjects good example. - - -	71	2, 3	ii.	394
Led countless souls to Christ. - - -	71	4	ii.	395
Left to Christendom a rich legacy in the churches she built and founded. - - -	71	7	ii.	397
In the relics she collected. - - - - -	71	8	ii.	398
But especially in the example of her virtues and holy life, which she has left behind for us to imitate. - - - - -	71	9	ii.	398
Helen sought the cross of Christ with de- sire and in spite of difficulties. - - -	72	1, 2	ii.	401
Found and received it with joy. - - -	72	3	ii.	402
Held it in the highest honor. - - - - -	72	8	ii.	406

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
Exalted it, whereas before it was held in contempt and dishonor. - - -	73	4, 5, 6	ii.	413

### Human Respect.

On account of it nowadays much good is left undone and much evil committed.	10	8	i.	118
---	----	---	----	-----

### Holy Ghost.

The sending of Him shows the indescribable love of Christ for the world. -	23		i.	325
--	----	--	----	-----

### Humility.

Christ has given to all in Himself an example of humility. - - -	30	13	i.	417
His wonderful humiliation in His birth.	3	1 to 6	i.	31
It shames the pride of the world. -	3	6, 7, 8	i.	35
Humility of Mary, the Mother of God. -	26	2 to 9	i.	363
	& 30	1 to 7	i.	407
Humility of St. Augustine. - - -	65	5 to end.	ii.	340
Humility in honors is wonderful. -	30	1	i.	407
A rare virtue among men nowadays. -	30	7	i.	411
Is necessary even for lay people, in order to please God and go to heaven. -	30	10 to end.	i.	413

### —I.—

### Ingratitude.

The ingratitude of those who do not think of the sufferings of Christ. - -	6	8, 9	i.	80
Monstrous ingratitude of man in not loving Christ, although He has died for us. - - - - -	9	5	i.	105
	& 11	10, 11, 12	i.	137
	& 14	13, 14, 15	i.	200

### Inspirations (of God).

Are not recognized by many. - - -	5	8, 9	i.	68
Others do not follow them at once. -	5	11	i.	70
Such conduct is very dangerous. - -	5	12, 13	i.	71

### —J.—

### James, St. (the Greater, Apostle).

An unwearied laborer for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. - -	45	1	ii.	90
Undertook great and severe labors for Christ. - - - - -	45	2, 3	ii.	91
Yet he effected little by his work. - -	45	4	ii.	92
But did not on that account give up. -	45	9	ii.	96
What rich fruit of souls God granted his unwearied labors after his death, and how he was made illustrious above the other apostles before the whole world. - - - - -	45	11, 12	ii.	98

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
<b>James, St. (the Less, Apostle).</b>				
Was like Christ in personal appearance. -	48	1	ii.	135
But especially in virtue. - - -	48	2 to 7	ii.	135
<b>John, St. (Apostle).</b>				
A son of Mary. - - - - -	46	12	ii.	116
Not so merely in name. - - - - -	46	3	ii.	107
For he had all the qualities of a true son of Mary. - - - - -	46	4 to end	ii.	108
<b>John, St. (the Baptist).</b>				
A penitent, and therefore a great wonder.	39		ii.	17
He performed the most severe penances, and that from his childhood till his death. - - - - -	39	4, 5	ii.	20
Although he was quite innocent, and con- firmed in grace. - - - - -	39	6, 8, 7	ii.	22
Nor had he seen the example of our suffer- ing Redeemer. - - - - -	39	9	ii.	26
<b>Judas the Traitor.</b>				
Lost his apostolic position and eternal glory by carelessness and the neglect of divine grace. - - - - -	52	10, 11	ii.	213
The beginning of his fall and eternal ruin was the contempt of small faults. -	52	2	ii.	214
<b>Judgment.</b>				
In the last judgment the saints will be our judges, and will condemn us if we have not lived holily. - - - - -	74	1 to end.	ii.	420
A terrible thing to have to appear before so many judges. - - - - -	74	o	ii.	421
<b>-K.-</b>				
<b>Kings, the Holy Three.</b>				
Showed a wonderful obedience when they were called by God by means of the star	5	7 to 7	i.	58
<b>-L.-</b>				
<b>Lawrence, St.</b>				
A wonder of the love of God, because on account of that love he longed for suf- fering. - - - - -	54	1, 2, 3	ii.	234
And rejoiced in it. - - - - -	54	4 to 9	ii.	236
<b>Love.</b>				
Wonderful love of the heavenly Father in giving His only-begotten Son for us.	11	9	i.	136



	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Love of God.</b>				
Must be proved in the fire of tribulation.	54	9	ii.	239
St. Lawrence proved it in enduring torments.	54	1 to 9	ii.	234
St. Paul showed it in word and work.	43	11	ii.	71
In many tribulations borne for God.	43	12	ii.	71
We show by our works the coldness of our love.	43	13	ii.	73
We show it by impatience in adversity.	43	14	ii.	74
We do not wish to bear even a slight trial for God.	54	11, 12	ii.	242
The inconstancy of our love of Christ.	23	8, 9	i.	331

### Love of our Neighbor.

We have very little of it.	43	15	ii.	74
Two kinds of works of love and mercy.	31	1	i.	422
Mary practised both towards John and Elizabeth in the Visitation.	31	2, 4, 5	i.	422
Works of charity surpass all others in merit.	31	6	i.	426
We have abundant occasions of practising them.	31	7	i.	426
And are bound to do so.	31	8	i.	427
The saints show us by their example how to do that.	31	10	i.	428
It is deplorable that our love is so cold nowadays.	31	11	i.	429
Especially where works of charity are concerned, to which all are bound, especially parents, masters, and superiors.	31	12, 13, 14	i.	429

### Love of our Enemies.

Is possible.	53	11	ii.	230
Is commanded by God under pain of sin.	53	12	ii.	231
Should be practised by us, after the example of St. Stephen.	53	8, 9, 10, 13	ii.	227

### —M.—

### Mary, Mother of God.

Not to believe her Immaculate Conception seems in our days hardly to consist with a true and devout love of Mary.	25		i.	350
Countless reasons make us, humanly speaking, certain of it.	25	8	i.	356
Such as the consent of many in different parts of the world.	25	9	i.	357
The testimony of the apostles.	25	10	i.	357
Of the Fathers of the Church.	25	11	i.	357
The authority of the Church herself.	25	12	i.	358
How disadvantageous it would have been for her to have been conceived in original sin.	25	2 to 7	i.	352

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
The truth of the Immaculate Conception proved from the fact that she never by the least sign let it be imagined that she was conceived in sin. - - -	26		i.	360
Mary would rather have renounced all her other privileges than choose to remain for a moment in original sin. - -	27	1 to 8	i.	374
The feast of her nativity is a joyful one for all, especially for the people of Treves.	28		i.	384
The whole world helped in the triumph of her birth. - - - -	28	2, 3, 4	i.	386
She was full of sanctifying and actual grace.	29	3, 4, 5	i.	395
And labored diligently to increase it. -	29	6, 7	i.	397
Mary, in spite of her dignity, was the most humble of all. - - - -	30	1 to 7	i.	407
Never revealed the least of her signal favors. - - - -	26	3, 4, 5, 6	i.	364
Always feared and shunned her own praise.	26	7	i.	367
Embraced every occasion of appearing mean and vile in the sight of men. -	26	8	i.	368
On account of her humility she was chosen as the Mother of God. - - - -	30	5	i.	410
In her Visitation she practised the works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual, towards John and Elizabeth. -	31	1 to 6	i.	422
She was the purest and most beautiful in soul and body. - - - -	32	1 to 4	i.	433
And yet, like a sinner, she fulfilled the law of Purification. - - - -	32	5, 6	i.	435
She was a perfect model of conformity to the will of God. - - - -	33		i.	444
This she showed in the Annunciation. -	33	2	i.	446
When St. Joseph was on the point of sending her away. - - - -	33	3	i.	446
In the birth of Christ in the stable. -	33	4	i.	447
In the flight into Egypt. - - - -	33	5	i.	447
In the passion and death of her divine Son. - - - -	33	7 to 10	i.	448
After His death to the end of her life. -	33	11	i.	451
She thus puts to shame our discontent. -	33	12	i.	452
Mary's death was a joyful one in the recollection of the past. - - - -	34	1 to 5	i.	455
And in the thought of the future. -	34	6 to end.	i.	458
Mary the true Ark of the Covenant. -	35		i.	465
Bestowed more benefits on Christians than the ark did on the Jews. - - - -	35	1 to 4	i.	466
Especially does the city of Treves owe her much. - - - -	35	5	i.	469
She is the refuge of sinners. - - - -	35	6, 7	i.	470
She freed the city of Treves, as Judith formerly did Bethulia, from grievous disasters. - - - -	36	1, 2, 3, 4	i.	474
As the true Esther she freed the world from eternal ruin. - - - -	37	3	i.	481

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
She has frequently saved Christendom from grievous calamities. - - -	37	4	i.	481
To be a son of Mary is a great grace and favor. - - -	46	1	ii.	105
We can and should all endeavor to be true children of Mary. - - -	46	12	ii.	116

### Martyrs.

By their sufferings and death they give the Almighty special honor and glory.	49	1, 2	ii.	153
The grace of martyrdom is one of the greatest, and is therefore eagerly longed for by devout servants of God. -	61	2, 3	ii.	301
It is a proof of a preceding holy life. -	61	4	ii.	302
The holy martyrs teach us how to suffer martyrdom in a moral sense for God's sake. - - - - -	61	11, 12, 13	ii.	308

### Martyrs of Treves.

Have left their descendants the example of a holy life. - - - -	59	5, 6, 7	ii.	286
All, without exception, suffered bravely. &	60 61	6 9, 10	ii. ii.	295 306
Thus gaining for Treves undying glory in the sight of heaven. - - - -	60	7	ii.	296
They also made the name of Treves glorious before the world. - - - -	60	8	ii.	297
They teach their descendants how to live according to the Christian faith. -	61	1 to 8	ii.	301
And at the same time how we can suffer martyrdom in a moral sense for the faith. - - - - -	61	9 to end.	ii.	306

### Masters.

Participate in the sins of their servants if they do not hinder them when they can. - - - - -	10	3	i.	112
---	----	---	----	-----

### Matthew, St. (Apostle and Evangelist).

A heroic conqueror of himself when he subdued avarice. - - - -	50	1 to 4	ii.	169
And that while he was actually engaged in usury. - - - - -	50	5	ii.	172
At a few words of Christ he at once left all things. - - - - -	50	6, 7, 8, 9	ii.	173
And himself as well, and devoted the rest of his life to Christ. - - - -	50	10	ii.	178

### Matthias (Apostle).

On account of his edifying life before men was chosen to fill the place of Judas.	52	2, 4	ii.	202
---	----	------	-----	-----

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
And that, too, in preference to so many holy men who were among the Christians of that time. - - - -	52	3	ii.	203
On account of his interior holiness he was chosen by a lot directed by God even in preference to Barsabas the Just. -	52	5	ii.	206
This preference was given him on account of his humility and zealous love of God.	52	6	ii.	207

### Meditation on the Passion.

Frequent meditation on the passion is most reasonable. - - - -	6		i.	73
Is consoling for the just and for sinners.	7		i.	83
Useful to all. - - - -	8		i.	91

### —O.—

#### Obedience.

Of the three holy kings in following the call of God by the star. - - -	5	1 to 7	i.	57
---	---	--------	----	----

#### Original Sin.

It is a great evil to be in original sin even for a moment. - - - -	27	1 to 5	i.	374
How disadvantageous to the glorious Mother of God if she had been conceived in original sin. - - - -	25	2 to 7	i.	352

### —P.—

#### Parents.

Their chief duty is the training of their children for their last end. - - -	71	1	ii.	393
They participate in the sins of their children if they do not hinder them when possible. - - - -	10	4	i.	113
And must therefore expect severe punishment. - - - -	10	6	i.	115

#### Paul, St. (Apostle).

Showed the zeal of his charity by word and work. - - - -	43	11	ii.	71
By enduring many tribulations for God's sake. - - - -	43	12	ii.	71
He thus puts to shame our coldness and impatience under adversity. - -	43	13, 14	ii.	73

#### Pastors and Preachers.

Should not be downcast if their labors are not successful. - - - -	45	13	ii.	101
--	----	----	-----	-----

#### Peter, St. (Apostle).

Constantly bewailed his denial of Our Lord. - - - -	43	1, 2	ii.	64
---	----	------	-----	----

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
He thus puts to shame our impenitence.	43	3 to 9	ii.	64
<b>Philip, St. (Apostle).</b>				
Was like Our Lord in almost every circumstance of his suffering and death.	48	8 to 14	ii.	141
<b>Pilate.</b>				
Was guilty of all the cruelty practised on Our Lord because, through carelessness, he did not prevent it.	10	2	i.	111
Consented to the death of Christ, whom he knew to be innocent.	10	7	i.	116
Is the chief murderer of Christ, and guilty of shedding His blood.	10	11	i.	120
	& 11	16	i.	142
<b>Pious, Piety.</b>				
The pious generally die joyfully.	34	1	i.	455
	& 67	4, 5, 6	ii.	359
To have lived piously brings consolation at the hour of death.	34	11	i.	462
The piety of others is of no help to us unless we imitate it.	61	7, 8	ii.	305
To preserve piety among the wicked is wonderful.	56	2	ii.	256
<b>Plague.</b>				
Is one of the greatest evils by which God punishes the world.	57	2, 3, 4	ii.	265
St. Sebastian is a powerful patron against this evil.	57	5	ii.	267
<b>Pride.</b>				
Shamed by the humility of Christ in His birth.	3	3, 7	i.	35
The proud have reason to fear that they will have no part with Christ in heaven.	3	8	i.	36
<b>Predestination.</b>				
We should not trouble ourselves uselessly about it.	52	1	ii.	202
But rather by a diligent use of divine grace try to make our salvation sure.	52	8, 9	ii.	209
<b>—R.—</b>				
<b>Repentance.</b>				
Is with many penitents false on account of want of examen of conscience and a defective confession.	21	3, 4, 5	i.	303
On account of the want of sincere contrition.	21	6	i.	305
Therefore we must not trust too much to the repentance of the dying.	21	7	i.	305



	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
Still less to that of those who go to confession at Easter only. - - -	21	8	i.	306
The best proof of true repentance is the avoiding the occasions of sin. - -	21	10 to end.	i.	308
Many saints did severe penance. - -	39	1 to 4, 11	ii.	18
Even the innocent should do penance in order to retain their innocence. -	39	12	ii.	29
The repentance of St. Peter for his denial of Christ lasted all his life. - -	43	2	ii.	64
We are like him in sinning, but not in repenting. - - - - -	43	3 to 9	ii.	64
Repentance should not be put off. - -	47	16	ii.	132

### Revenge.

St. Stephen did not seek revenge on his enemies, although he might have done so. - - - - -	53	2	ii.	222
We seek revenge in many ways, although God has forbidden us to do so. -	53	3 to 8	ii.	223

### Resurrection of Christ.

Is the foundation of our faith. - -	19		i.	276
Triumph of Christ in His resurrection. -	20		i.	288
Therein He conquered the rage of hell. -	20	1 to 8	i.	289
The envious world. - - - - -	20	9 to end.	i.	295
It is a symbol of our resurrection from the death of sin. - - - - -	21		i.	300
Which is false in the case of many who go to confession. - - - - -	21	3 to 9	i.	303
The proof of a true resurrection is the avoiding the occasions of sin. - -	21	10 to end.	i.	308

### Rich.

The rich should give alms out of their wealth, and thus lay up treasure in heaven. - - - - -	50	13	ii.	181
They should detach their minds from worldly goods, and turn them to God. -	50	14	ii.	182

### —S.—

### Sacrament of the Altar.

Herein Christ shows wonderful patience and love for us. - - - - -	24		i.	338
In it the death of Christ is constantly renewed. - - - - -	24	3	i.	341
He endures therein many terrible insults at the hands of heretics. - - -	24	5, 6	i.	342
And even from Catholics as well. - - -	24	8, 9	i.	344
We should show Our Lord in this mystery all possible love and devotion. -	24	13	i.	347

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Saints.</b>				
The saints are now our best friends and advocates with God in heaven. -	74	1	ii.	420
But they will be our judges, and condemn us if we do not live holily, like them.	74	2	ii.	420
Their lives will show the wicked that there is no excuse for them. - -	74	4	ii.	422
Their holiness will convince them that they could have led holy lives, for the saints were of the same nature and lived in the same states of life as we.	74	5, 6, 7, 8	ii.	424
<b>Sebastian, St. (Martyr).</b>				
Is a general and wonderful physician against all maladies. - - -	56	1 to 11	ii.	255
Should therefore be especially honored. -	56	11 to end.	ii.	262
Lived holily in a wicked, godless court. -	56		ii.	254
His intercession is powerful with God to ward off pestilence from us. - -	57	5	ii.	267
<b>Simeon, Confessor of Treves.</b>				
Always led a holy life, and therefore he had reason to rejoice in death. -	67	1 to 7	ii.	357
<b>Simon and Jude, SS. (Apostles).</b>				
Were both truly Christian, that is, zealous and meek promoters of the glory of God and the salvation of souls. -	51		ii.	183
<b>Sepulchre.</b>				
The sepulchre of Christ is glorious, and a proof of His divinity. - - -	17		i.	254
The same holds good nowadays, as His grave is still in the power of the Turks.	18		i.	264
Pious men have always desired to have their graves in holy places. - -	18	1, 2, 3	i.	266
<b>Sin.</b>				
Is the worst of all evils. - - -	27	8	i.	380
Is yet so wantonly committed for some wretched thing. - - -	27	9, 10	i.	380
The malice of sin appears from the passion and death of Christ. - - -	8	7	i.	96
	& 13	10	i.	183
Sin is the worst and chief cause of shedding the blood of Christ. - - -	11	23	i.	146
	& 13	9	i.	182
<b>Sinner, The.</b>				
Never finds consolation anywhere. - -	7	8	i.	88
Yet when he remembers the sufferings of Christ he can comfort himself with the hope of pardon. - - -	16	9 to 13	i.	239

	SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
Should be moved to repent by the consid- eration of the love shown him by Christ in His passion. - - -	16	18	i.	247
And by the fear of the strict justice of God.	16	19, 20	i.	248
Should not despair, no matter how wicked he is, but trust in the blood of Christ.	7	10	i.	89
	& 11	23	i.	148
	& 16	2, 3	i.	234
No sinner is so bad that he may not be converted. - - - - -	16	2	i.	234
Blindness of the sinner in consenting to sin for some trifling thing to his own great detriment. - - - - -	27	8	i.	380
He crucifies Christ, his best friend and benefactor. - - - - -	10	12 to 17	i.	122
Renews His sufferings. - - - - -	15		i.	206
Wo to him if the consideration of the pas- sion of Christ does not induce him to amend. - - - - -	11	26	i.	151
	& 15	14, 15	i.	227
No sinner is so bad as not to be able to repent. - - - - -	63	10	ii.	328
Repentant sinners should not be cast down by the memory of their past sins. -	63	11	ii.	329

**Stephen, St.**

After his example we should love our ene- mies and return good for evil. - -	53		ii.	220
---	----	--	-----	-----

**-T.-****Treves.**

Has cause to rejoice on the birthday of Mary, the Mother of God. - -	28	6, 7, 8	i.	388
Has received great benefits from her. -	35	5	i.	469
	& 36	3	i.	475
The people of Treves are children of the saints, a great honor for them. -	59	1 to 3	ii.	283
They should honor their holy ancestors. -	59	4	ii.	286
What a shame for them not to imitate their ancestors, and to live wickedly in the land of the saints. - - - - -	59	5 to end.	ii.	286
They have from their ancestors the great- est renown before heaven. - -	60	1 to 7	ii.	292
And the greatest glory before the world.	60	8 to 9	ii.	297
Therefore these ancestors should be spe- cially honored and revered. - - -	60	10, 11	ii.	299

**-V.-****Vanity.**

The vanity of worldly things is well known in death. - - - - -	12	4, 5	i.	157
---	----	------	----	-----

SERMON	MARGINAL NOTE	VOL.	PAGE
--------	------------------	------	------

## —W.—

## Words of Christ on the Cross.

Different interpretations of the last words of Our Lord. - - - - -	14	2	i.	190
They were directed to us, especially to sinners. - - - - -	14	3 to end.	i.	191

## World.

Despised by the child Agnes. - - - - -	68		ii.	367
The law of Christ cannot consist with the law of the world. - - - - -	1	9	i.	14
The goods of the world cannot satisfy us. - - - - -	22	1	i.	314
They are empty and imperfect goods. - - - - -	22	2, 3, 4	i.	314
Pass like a dream. - - - - -	22	6	i.	317
They are bitter and full of cares. - - - - -	22	7	i.	317
The joy they give soon vanishes. - - - - -	22	8	i.	318
Therefore we must detach our hearts from them. - - - - -	22	9, 10	i.	319
Their emptiness is seen in death. - - - - -	12	4, 5	i.	157

## —Z.—

## Zeal.

Christian zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of souls must be firm, but at the same time meek. - - - - -	51	1, 2	ii.	184
That zeal was exercised by the holy apostles Simon and Jude. - - - - -	51	3	ii.	187





# GENERAL INDEX OF ALL THE SERMONS OF THE WHOLE WORK

FOR ALL THE

## SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR.

N. B.—Sometimes the same sermon may be preached on different days; when that is the case there is a suitable introduction provided.

The introductions are found either at the beginning or the end of the sermon.

### GENERAL INDEX FOR SUNDAYS.

#### First Sunday of Advent.

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On Adultery. - - - - -	i.	35	421
On the Multiplicity and Malice of Superstitions. -	iii.	29	397
On the Works of Penance. - - - - -	v.	35	465
On the Happiness of Him who Trusts in God. -	viii.	41	36
On Carefully Preparing for Death. - - - - -	ix.	4	47
On the First Reason for the Last Judgment. - -	ix.	22	272
On the Advent and Cruelty of Antichrist. - -	ix.	26	318
On the Terrible Signs that are to Precede the Judgment. - - - - -	ix.	27	329
On the Judge as God. - - - - -	ix.	30	364
On the Summoning of the Dead to Judgment. -	ix.	34	419
On the First Part of the Judge's Sentence on the Guilty: "Depart," etc. - - - - -	ix.	38	472
On the Calling of the Elect to the Kingdom of Heaven. - - - - -	x.	45	85

#### Second Sunday of Advent.

On the Obligations of Masters to their Servants. -	ii.	54	197
On those who Consult Soothsayers and Sorcerers.	iii.	28	382
On an Easy and Indolent Life. - - - - -	vi.	39	7
On Confidence in God alone. - - - - -	viii.	42	49
On Death, that Occurs but Once. - - - - -	ix.	5	60
On Rashly Scrutinizing the Divine Decrees. - -	ix.	23	284
On the Terrible Signs that are to Precede the Last Day of General Judgment. Introd. at end. -	ix.	27	329
On the Causes of these Terrible Signs. - - - -	ix.	28	340
On the Judge as Man. - - - - -	ix.	31	378
On the Accused in Judgment. - - - - -	ix.	35	431
On the Second Part of the Sentence on the Guilty: "Into Everlasting," etc. - - - - -	x.	39	7
On the Triumphal Entry of the Elect into the Kingdom of Heaven. - - - - -	x.	46	98

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
<b>Third Sunday of Advent.</b>			
On the Examen of Conscience in the Evening. -	ii.	75	480
On the Lying Tongue. - - - - -	iv.	73	463
On the Works of Penitence in Prosperity and Ad- versity. - - - - -	v.	36	479
On Confidence in God when Things seem Desperate.	viii.	43	63
On the Uncertainty of the Hour of Death. - - -	ix.	6	70
On the Justice of the Divine Judgments. - - -	ix.	24	295
On the Causes of the Terrible Signs that are to Precede the Last Day of Judgment. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ix.	28	340
On the Unexpected Arrival of the Day of Judgment.	ix.	29	352
On the Judge as our Redeemer. - - - - -	ix.	32	391
On the Guilty One Accused in Judgment. - - -	ix.	36	446
On the Thoughts of the Damned in Hell. - - -	x.	40	21
On the Joy of the Elect in Heaven outside of God.	x.	47	110

#### Fourth Sunday of Advent.

On the Obligation of Subjects to their Spiritual and Temporal Superiors. - - - - -	ii.	52	170
On Superstitions in Holy Things. - - - - -	iii.	30	411
On the Penitential Works of the Innocent and the Just. - - - - -	v.	37	493
On Continual Confidence in God. - - - - -	viii.	44	76
On an Unprovided Death. - - - - -	ix.	7	83
On the Second Reason for the Last Judgment. -	ix.	25	306
On the Judge as Man. Introd. at end. - - - -	ix.	31	378
On the Judge as our Model. - - - - -	ix.	33	405
On the Conviction of the Guilty One in Judgment by Witnesses. - - - - -	ix.	37	459
On the Pain Caused the Reprobate by the Consider- ation of Heaven. - - - - -	x.	43	59
On the Joy of the Elect at the Sight of God. -	x.	48	123

#### Sunday in the Octave of the Nativity.

On the Obligations of the Young towards God. -	i.	13	146
On the Conformity of the Remainder of Life with Youth. - - - - -	i.	14	159
On Redeeming in Old Age of Lost Time. - - -	ii.	70	418
On the Bad Effects of Scandal. - - - - -	iv.	60	292
On the Necessity of the Works of Penitence, be- cause we have a Patient and Penitent God. -	v.	38	506
On Prayer with Childlike Confidence. - - - -	viii.	39	7
On the Happy End of our Years. - - - - -	ix.	16	200
How Christ is Placed for the Ruin of Many Chris- tians, because they do not Live in a Christian Manner. - - - - -	xi.	1	7

#### First Sunday after Epiphany.

On the Necessary Business of Christians. - - -	i.	6	63
On the Respect Due to Parents. - - - - -	i.	15	172
On the Deliberation of the Young in Choosing a State of Life. Introd. at end. - - - - -	i.	20	234
On the Obligation of Subjects to Princes. - - -	ii.	52	170

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On Making Good Use of Present and Future Time, especially for Young People. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ii.	71	432
On the Dangerous State of those who Rarely Hear the Word of God. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	46	107
On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God for Sinners who wish to be Converted. Introd. at end. - - - - -	v.	1	7
On the Peace of Heart in a Good Conscience. - - - - -	viii.	67	369
On the Judge as our Model. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ix.	33	405
On the Happy Society of the Elect in Heaven. Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	50	149
That the Life of the True Christian should be Conformable to the Life of Christ. - - - - -	xi.	2	17

**Second Sunday after Epiphany.**

On the Obedience Due to Parents. - - - - -	i.	16	185
On the Deliberation of those who are about to enter the Married State. - - - - -	i.	26	314
On those who Hear the Word of God without Fruit. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	47	120
On Nightly Gatherings of Different Sexes. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	54	209
On Human Weakness in Dangerous Occasions. - - - - -	vi.	59	296
On the Happiness of a Good Conscience. - - - - -	viii.	68	381
On the Judge as our Redeemer. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ix.	32	391
On the Eternity of the Joys of Heaven. Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	51	163

**Third Sunday after Epiphany.**

On the Love we Owe our Parents. - - - - -	i.	17	199
On the Life of those who wish to Enter the Married State. - - - - -	i.	27	326
On those who Hear the Word of God with a Hard Heart. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	48	135
On the Vanity of Hoping for the Divine Aid in Dangers that we Deliberately Seek. - - - - -	vi.	60	310
On Prayer with Childlike Confidence. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	39	7
On the Comfort of a Good Conscience in Adversity. - - - - -	viii.	69	390
On the Summoning of the Dead to Judgment. - - - - -	ix.	34	419
On the Society of the Damned in Hell. Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	42	48
On the Frequent Meditation on the Kingdom of Heaven. Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	54	196

**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.**

On the Deliberation of the Young in the Choice of a State. - - - - -	i.	20	234
On the Necessity of Friendship with God in the Married State, that it may be Happy as far as Salvation is Concerned. - - - - -	i.	28	338
On the Small Number of those who Hear the Word of God well. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	50	158

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On the Necessity of Avoiding the Proximate Occasions of Sin. - - - - -	v.	26	344
On the Joy of a Good Conscience on account of one's Good Works. - - - - -	viii.	71	414
On the Interrogation of the Guilty in Judgment. - - - - -	ix.	35	431
<b>Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.</b>			
On the Necessity of Friendship with God in the Married State, that it may be Happy in Temporal Things. - - - - -	i.	29	350
On the Impure Tongue. - - - - -	iv.	71	439
On the Goodness of God in Protecting Sinners that they may Repent. Introd. at end. - - -	v.	11	143
On the Vain Excuse of the Sinner, that he is not, or will not be in the Occasion of Sin. - - -	v.	27	358
On Avoiding Venial Sin because it is Displeasing to God. Introd. at end. - - - - -	vii.	7	102
On the Great Favor he Enjoys with God who is Content with His Will. Introd. at end. - - -	viii.	50	158
On Lawfully Rejoicing on Account of Good Works. - - - - -	viii.	72	425
On the Accusation of the Guilty in Judgment. - - - - -	ix.	36	446
<b>Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.</b>			
On Divine Providence in the Distribution of States of Life. - - - - -	ii.	66	363
On Sloth in the Divine Service. - - - - -	iii.	27	367
On the Empty Excuse of the Sinner Saying that he cannot Avoid the Proximate Occasion of Sin. - - - - -	v.	28	370
On Avoiding Venial Sin on Account of its Bad Effects. Introd. at end. - - - - -	vii.	9	129
On the Means of Acquiring Conformity with the Divine Will. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	51	172
On the Conformity of the Joy of a Good Conscience with the Words of God. - - - - -	viii.	73	437
On the Conviction of the Guilty in the Judgment. - - - - -	ix.	37	459
<b>Septuagesima Sunday.</b>			
On the Happiness of the Religious State. - - -	i.	22	262
On Adultery. - - - - -	i.	35	421
On the Profanation of Shrove-tide. - - - - -	iv.	51	170
On Confidence in the Divine Assistance in Unavoidable Dangers. - - - - -	vi.	61	325
On the Marks of a Good Conscience. - - - - -	viii.	74	448
On the Sentence of the Judge against the Wicked in the Judgment. - - - - -	ix.	38	472
On Avoiding Idleness, if we seriously wish to go to Heaven. Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	56	227
<b>Sexagesima Sunday.</b>			
How to Go to Hear a Sermon. Introd. at end. -	i.	10	108
On the Grace of Vocation to the Religious State. -	i.	23	274
On the Goodness of God to the Rich. - - - - -	ii.	58	250
On the Nature and Characteristics of Gluttony. -	iii.	17	236

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
<b>On the Merits to be Acquired in the Society of the Wicked, if we cannot Avoid it.</b> - - -	vi.	62	340
<b>On Disturbing the Peace of Conscience.</b> - - -	viii.	75	463
<b>On the Remorse of the Dying on Account of Time Lost through Idleness.</b> Introd. at end. -	ix.	10	121
<b>On the Frequent Hearing of the Word of God.</b> -	x.	71	434
<b>Quinquagesima Sunday.</b>			
<b>On Shrove-tide.</b> - - - - -	ii.	72	445
<b>On those who during Shrove-tide Prefer to Side with the Devil rather than with Christ.</b> -	iv.	52	184
<b>On the Indecency and Bitterness of the Pleasures of Shrove-tide.</b> - - - - -	iv.	53	197
<b>On the Profit of Souls in the Society of the Wicked.</b>	vi.	63	353
<b>On the Manner in which we ought to Pray.</b> -	vii.	37	520
<b>On the Eternal Fire of Hell.</b> - - - - -	x.	39	7
<b>First Sunday in Lent.</b>			
<b>On the Happiness of the Unmarried State.</b> - - -	i.	24	290
<b>On the Ingratitude of the Rich towards God.</b> -	ii.	59	262
<b>On the Nature and Qualities of Gluttony.</b> - - -	iii.	17	236
<b>On the Observance of the Law of Fasting, which is Violated by Gluttony.</b> - - - - -	iii.	19	259
<b>On the Works of Penitence which the Sinner owes to God and to Himself.</b> Introd. at end. -	v.	35	465
<b>On the Obligation of Fasting.</b> - - - - -	vi.	40	23
<b>On the Love of God, because He is Our Lord.</b> -	vii.	2	27
<b>On the Thoughts of the Damned in Hell.</b> - - -	x.	40	21
<b>That the Devil is not to be Feared on the Way to Heaven.</b> Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	62	312
<b>Second Sunday in Lent.</b>			
<b>On the Dangers of the Unmarried State.</b> - - -	i.	25	300
<b>On the Obligations of the Rich towards the Poor.</b>	ii.	60	274
<b>On the Injurious Effects of Gluttony.</b> - - -	iii.	18	249
<b>On the End of the Law of Fasting, which is Violated by Gluttony.</b> - - - - -	iii.	20	271
<b>On the Works of Penitence in Prosperity and Adversity.</b> Introd. at end. - - - - -	v.	36	479
<b>On the Necessity of Fasting in Order to do Penance.</b>	vi.	41	36
<b>On the Love of God who in Himself is Worthy of all Love.</b> - - - - -	vii.	4	56
<b>On the Pain Caused the Damned by the Consideration of Heaven.</b> - - - - -	x.	43	59
<b>On the Utility of the Temptations of the Devil.</b> Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	63	324
<b>Third Sunday in Lent.</b>			
<b>On how we should Act after having Heard a Sermon.</b> Introd. at end. - - - - -	i.	12	132
<b>On Harmony in the Married State.</b> - - - - -	j.	30	364
<b>On the Vain Excuses of the Rich, who say they cannot Give Alms.</b> - - - - -	ii.	61	289
<b>On the Inexcusable Folly of those who Injure their Health by Excessive Drinking.</b> - - - - -	iii.	21	288
<b>On the False Repose of a Bad Conscience.</b> Introd. at end. . . . .	v.	7	88



	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On the Works of Penitence even for the Innocent.			
Intro. at end. - - - - -	v.	37	493
On the Necessity of Fasting, that we may be Kept from Sin. - - - - -	vi.	42	48
On the Fear and Love of the Almighty God. - - -	vii.	3	42
On the Pain of Sense in Hell. - - - - -	x.	41	36
On the Serious Will of God to Save All. Intro. at end. - - - - -	x.	64	339

#### Fourth Sunday in Lent.

On the Obligations of the Husband to the Wife. -	i.	31	375
On how Deserving of Help the Poor are. - - -	ii.	62	304
On the Disgraceful Malice of those who by Excessive Drinking Ruin their Good Name and their Families. - - - - -	iii.	22	294
On the Necessity of the Works of Penitence, because we have a Patient and Penitent God. Intro. at end. - - - - -	v.	38	506
On the Necessity of Almsgiving that we may be Kept from Sin. - - - - -	vi.	43	60
On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God. -	vii.	24	354
On the Society of the Damned in Hell. - - -	x.	42	48
On the Means by which All can be Saved. Intro. at end. - - - - -	x.	65	352

#### Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Instruction for Women whose Husbands are a Cause of Discord. - - - - -	i.	32	386
On the Decent Poor. Intro. at end. - - - - -	ii.	63	318
On the Sinfulness and Evil Effects of Habitual Drunk- enness. - - - - -	iii.	23	306
On the Blindness and Hardness of Heart of the Sin- ner as a Punishment. - - - - -	v.	10	127
On an Easy and Luxurious Life. Intro. at end. -	vi.	39	7
On Keeping the Commandments of God. - - -	vii.	6	89
On the Justice and Mercy of the Judge in Condemn- ing the Wicked. - - - - -	x.	44	72
On the Sufficient yet Unequal Graces given to all, that they may be Saved. Intro. at end. -	x.	66	364

#### Easter Sunday.

*See the following Index for the Feasts of the year.*

#### First Sunday after Easter.

On the Duties of the Wife towards the Husband. -	i.	33	397
On Nightly Gatherings of Both Sexes. - - -	iv.	54	209
On the Dangerous Sign of a Relapse into Sin. -	vi.	50	162
On the Good Reason we have to Keep the Presence of God always before our Minds. - - - - -	vii.	17	243
On Consolation in Trials from the Hope of the Res- urrection. - - - - -	ix.	19	234
On the Hope of Salvation of the Just although they may have formerly Committed many Sins. In- tro. at end. - - - - -	x.	67	376

**Second Sunday after Easter.**

On Practical Considerations Regarding the Choice of a State of Life. - - - - -	i.	21	250
On Jealousy in the Married State. - - - - -	i.	34	410
On the Malice with which Bad Christians Attack the Catholic Church. Introd. at end. - - -	iii.	1	7
On the Punishment of the Ungrateful. - - - - -	iv.	41	43
On the Torment of a Bad Conscience. Introd. at end. - - - - -	v.	6	73
On Trials as a Just Punishment for any Kind of Sin. Introd. at end. - - - - -	vi.	45	86
On the Fruit of Perseverance in Good after having done Penance. - - - - -	vi.	52	191
On Avoiding Venial Sin because it is Slight. - - -	vii.	8	116
On the Fruit to be Derived from the Trials and the Prosperity of the Just. - - - - -	ix.	20	246
On the Hope of Salvation for the Just, although Few shall be Saved. Introd. at end. - - -	x.	69	402

**Third Sunday after Easter.**

On the Respect Due to Parents. Introd. at end. -	i.	15	172
On the Unnecessary Troubles of Married People. -	i.	36	431
On the Impudence of those who Boast of their Sins. -	iv.	74	475
On Guarding the Heart from Evil Thoughts. - -	vi.	54	219
On Consolation in Trials and Mortification. - - -	viii.	64	335
On the Justice and Shortness of the Trials of the Just and th <sup>e</sup> Prosperity of the Wicked. - - -	ix.	21	259
On the Consolation of the Just in not Knowing whether they are Predestined or not. Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	70	419
On Patient Sorrow in Adversity, as a Forerunner of Eternal Consolation. Introd. at end. - - -	x.	74	477

**Fourth Sunday after Easter.**

On the Obedience Due to Parents. Introd. at end. -	i.	16	185
On the Consolation of Married People in Sorrow and Trials. - - - - -	i.	37	445
On the Desperate State of those who Boast of their Sins. - - - - -	iv.	75	485
On Guarding the Eyes. - - - - -	vi.	55	234
On Fidelity to God in Prosperity and Adversity. -	viii.	66	359
On the Consideration of our Last End. - - - - -	ix.	1	9
On Confidently Leaving the Care of our Salvation to the Divine Will. Introd. at end. - - -	x.	75	489

**Fifth Sunday after Easter.**

On the Love we Owe our Parents. Introd. at end. -	i.	17	199
On the Prayer of Married People in Adversity. -	i.	38	456
On Morning Prayer. - - - - -	ii.	73	457
On False and Useless Prayer. - - - - -	iii.	37	502
On Frequent Prayer to God in Order to Obtain the Grace of Perseverance. - - - - -	vi.	56	249
On the Object of Prayer. - - - - -	vii.	36	507
On th <sup>e</sup> Earnest Will of God to Save all Men. - - -	x.	64	339

**Sixth Sunday after Easter.**

On the Benefit of Vocation to the Catholic Faith. -	i.	2	24
On Practical Considerations Concerning the Choice of a State. - - - - -	i.	21	250
On the Usefulness and Nature of Morning Prayer. -	ii.	74	467
On the Malice and Multiplicity of Scandal. - -	iv.	59	279
On the Deformity of the Habit of Cursing. - -	iv.	68	401
On Avoiding Bad and Dangerous Company. - -	vi.	58	282
On the Advantage of Recollecting the Presence of God. - - - - -	vii.	18	258
On the Hope of Salvation for the Just, although they may have Formerly Committed many Sins. -	x.	67	376

**Pentecost Sunday.**

*See the following Index for the Feasts of the year.*

**First Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Life of the Christian as a Child of God. -	i.	4	42
On the Necessity of Correcting the Habit of Cursing.	iv.	70	426
On the Mercy of God towards Sinners, when in the State of Sin and when Converted. - - -	v.	12	157
On the Holiness of the Sacrifice of the Mass. - -	vii.	25	368
On the False Hope of Salvation that Rests on Certain Devotions. - - - - -	x.	58	254

**Second Sunday after Pentecost.**

On a too Busy Life. - - - - -	ii.	56	224
On Unworthy Communion. - - - - -	iii.	32	438
On the Injustice of the Sinner towards God when he Defers Repenting. - - - - -	v.	3	35
On Accompanying the Blessed Eucharist when it is Brought to the Sick. Introd. at end. - -	vii.	22	322
On Frequent Communion. Introd. at end. - -	vii.	23	337
On the Glory given to God in the Sacrifice of the Mass. - - - - -	vii.	26	380
On Receiving Holy Viaticum in Time before Death.	ix.	8	96
On Frequent and Worthy Communion as a Sign of Predestination. Introd. at end. - - -	x.	72	447
On the Love of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.	xi.	24	338

**Third Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Evils of a too Busy Life. - - - - -	ii.	57	237
On Sloth in the Divine Service. - - - - -	iii.	27	367
On the Malice of Detraction. - - - - -	iv.	64	352
On the False Hope of Salvation of those who Defer Repentance. - - - - -	v.	4	48
On the Goodness of God in Preserving Sinners, that they may Repent. Introd. at end. - - -	v.	11	143
On the Goodness of God to the Sinner who does Pen- ance. - - - - -	vi.	47	116
On the Sacrifice of the Mass as a Propitiation. -	vii.	27	391
On the False Hope of Presumptuous Sinners in the Goodness and Mercy of God. - - - - -	x.	60	282

**Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.**

The Truth of the Catholic Religion. Introd. at end.	i.	1	11
On the Benefit of Vocation to the Catholic Faith. -	i.	2	24
On the Vain Labor of the Proud. - - - -	iii.	3	39
On the Vain Labor of the Sinner in the State of Sin.	v.	2	21
On the Sacrifice of the Mass as a Thanksgiving. -	vii.	28	403
On Confidence in God alone. Introd. at end. - -	viii.	42	49
On the False Hope of Salvation which Rests on a Death-bed Repentance. - - - - -	ix.	11	132

**Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Sins of Christians. - - - - -	i.	8	146
On the Irreparable Injury caused by Detraction. -	iv.	65	364
On the Uselessness of Prayer without Repentance. -	vi.	70	453
On the Manner of Hearing Mass with Fruit. - -	vii.	29	416
On Confidence in God when Things seem Desperate.	viii.	43	63
On the Insecurity of Repentance at the End of Life.	ix.	12	148

**Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Necessity of Parents giving Good Example.	ii.	46	92
On the Usefulness of Almsgiving to Secure Temporal Prosperity. - - - - -	ii.	49	131
On the Injurious Effects of Gluttony. - - - -	iii.	18	249
On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God. -	v.	1	7
On the Necessity of the Sacrament of Confession. -	v.	15	200
On the Manner and Motive of Helping the Souls in Purgatory. - - - - -	viii.	59	272
On the Efficacious Means of Salvation given to all Men. - - - - -	x.	65	352

**Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Usefulness of Almsgiving for the Life to come. - - - - -	ii.	50	145
On the Signs of Pride and the Remedy of Humility.	iii.	5	68
On those who Consult Sorcerers. - - - - -	iii.	28	382
On the Manifold Ways of Detracting and the Excuses Made for this Sin. - - - - -	iv.	66	376
On the Facility of Confession as a Remedy. - - -	v.	16	213
On the Sanctifying of our Daily Actions. - - -	vii.	10	145
On Constant Confidence in God. Introd. at end. -	viii.	44	76
On Avoiding Idleness if we wish to go to Heaven.	x.	56	227

**Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Decent Poor. - - - - -	ii.	63	318
On the Happiness of the Poor. - - - - -	ii.	64	332
On the Vain Labor of the Avaricious. - - - - -	iii.	6	84
On the Usefulness of Confession. - - - - -	v.	17	226
On the Order and Manner of Doing our Work. -	vii.	11	159
On the First Reason for the Last Judgment. - -	ix.	22	272

**Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God. -	i.	9	95
On Training Children for their Last End. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ii.	39	7

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On the Sloth of the Avaricious who Neglect God			
During Life. - - - - -	iii.	7	98
On the Multiplicity and Malice of Superstitions. -	iii.	29	397
On the Hardness of Heart and Blindness of Sinners as a Punishment of Sin. Introd. at end. - -	v.	10	127
On the Choice of a Good Confessor. - - - -	v.	29	384
On the Good Intention. - - - - -	vii.	12	171
On the Reasons for Fraternal Correction. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	54	211
On Rashly Scrutinizing the Divine Decrees. - - -	ix.	23	284
<b>Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.</b>			
How to go to Hear a Sermon. - - - - -	i.	10	108
On the Motives for Training Children for Their Last End. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ii.	40	19
On the Unhappy Death of the Avaricious. - - -	iii.	8	112
On Superstitions in Holy Things. - - - - -	iii.	30	411
On the Malice and Punishment of those who are Irreverent in Church. Introd. at end. - -	iii.	35	476
On the Prayer of the Sinner who wishes to Repent.	v.	18	240
On Avoiding Vainglory in our Works. - - - -	vii.	13	185
On the Duty of Fraternal Correction. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	55	223
On the Justice of the Divine Judgments. - - -	ix.	24	295
<b>Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.</b>			
How to Hear a Sermon. - - - - -	i.	11	119
On the Training of Children. Introd. at end. -	ii.	41	31
On the Examen of Conscience in the Evening. In- trod. at end. - - - - -	ii.	75	480
On those who Hear the Word of God without Fruit.	iv.	47	120
On those who Listen to Detraction. - - - -	iv.	67	388
On the Talkative Tongue. Introd. at end. - -	iv.	72	451
On the Examen of Conscience before Confession. -	v.	19	252
On the Signs of Vainglory. - - - - -	vii.	14	199
On the Manner of Correcting our Neighbor. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	56	235
On the Second Reason for the General Judgment.	ix.	25	306
<b>Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.</b>			
On What to do after a Sermon. - - - - -	i.	12	132
On Watchfulness over Children. - - - - -	ii.	42	47
On Injustice as an Effect of Avarice. - - - -	iii.	9	126
On Those who Hear the Word of God with a Hard Heart. - - - - -	iv.	48	133
On Following the Custom in Unlawful Things. -	iv.	57	250
On the Sincerity of the Examen of Conscience. -	v.	20	256
On Doing the Will of God in all Things. - -	vii.	15	213
On Accepting Fraternal Correction. Introd. at end.	viii.	57	248
On the Sufficient yet Unequal Graces given for the Salvation of All Men. - - - - -	x.	66	364
<b>Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.</b>			
On the Correction of Children. Introd. at end. -	ii.	43	58
On the Obligations of the Laity to Priests. - -	ii.	53	184



*For all the Sundays and Festivals of the Year.* 457

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On the Necessity of Restoring Ill-gotten Goods. -	iii.	10	140
On the Common Vice of Ingratitude, so Hateful to God. - - - - -	iv.	38	7
On the Few who Hear the Word of God. - - - - -	iv.	50	158
On the Necessity of Sorrow before going to Confession. - - - - -	v.	21	279
On the Justice of Gratitude to God. - - - - -	vii.	30	428
On the Glory given to God by Conformity with His Will. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	45	91
On Increasing our Future Glory in Heaven during Life. - - - - -	x.	52	174

**Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Duties of Servants to their Masters. - - -	ii.	55	209
On the Presumption of Every Sinner. - - - - -	iv.	76	495
On the Nature of Sorrow before Confession. - - -	v.	22	291
On the Advantage of Gratitude to God. - - - - -	vii.	31	439
On the Easy Means we have of Adding to our Future Glory. - - - - -	x	53	185

**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Training of Children for their Last End. -	ii.	39	7
On the Circumstances of Restitution. - - - - -	iii.	11	154
On the Nature of the Purpose of Amendment before Confession. - - - - -	v.	25	331
On the Usefulness of Adversity as a Means of Satisfaction for Sin. Introd. at end. - - - - -	vi.	44	72
On the many Motives we have for Gratitude. - - -	vii.	32	452
On the Frequent Meditation on Death. - - - - -	ix.	2	22

**Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Motives Urging Parents to Train up their Children for their Last End. - - - - -	ii.	40	19
On the Necessity of Parents Giving Good Example to their Children. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ii.	46	92
On the Folly of the Envious. - - - - -	iii.	15	210
On the Injustice of Fault-finding and Misinterpreting the Acts of Others. - - - - -	iv.	62	323
On the Matter of Confession. - - - - -	v.	30	397
In what True Gratitude Consists. - - - - -	vii.	33	465
On the Advantage of Conformity with the Divine Will. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	47	117
On the Advantage of Meditating on Death. - - -	ix.	3	35

**Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Instruction of Children. - - - - -	ii.	41	31
On the Duty of Feeding and Supporting Children. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ii.	47	106
On the Fewness of those who Love their Neighbor. -	iv.	58	264
On the Advantage of a General Confession with Regard to the Past. - - - - -	v.	33	435
On the Motives for the Love of our Neighbor. -	viii.	52	189
On the Justice of Conforming our Will to the Will of God. Introd. at end. - - - - -	viii.	46	104
On Carefully Preparing for Death. - - - - -	ix	4	47

**Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On Watchfulness over Children. - - - -	ii.	42	47
On the Madness of Impure Love and Lust. - -	iii.	12	170
On Blasphemy. - - - -	iii.	31	425
On the Advantage of a General Confession with Re- gard to the Future. - - - -	v.	34	451
On Conformity with the Divine Will in Adversity. Introd. at end. - - - -	viii.	48	131
On How to Love our Neighbor. - - - -	viii.	53	198
On the Premature Death of the Idle. - - - -	ix.	9	110

**Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Correction of Children. - - - -	ii.	43	58
On the Excessive Care of Parents with Regard to the Support of their Children. - - - -	ii.	48	118
On the Malice and Punishment of Those who are Ir- reverent in Church. - - - -	iii.	35	476
On the Manner of Making a Confession. - - - -	v.	31	410
On Fraternal Correction. - - - -	viii.	54	211
On the Sorrow of the Dying on Account of Time Lost in Idleness. - - - -	ix.	10	121

**Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On How to Correct Children. - - - -	ii.	44	70
On the Duties of Masters towards Servants. Introd. at end. - - - -	ii.	54	197
On the Incurable Disease of Impure Love and Luxury. -	iii.	13	183
On the Appreciation of the Benefit Received by Penance. - - - -	vi.	46	102
On the Duty of Fraternal Correction. - - - -	viii.	55	223
On the First Advantage of Adversity. Introd. at end. -	viii.	62	310
On the Uncertainty of the Hour of Death. - - - -	ix.	6	70

**Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Good Example of Parents. - - - -	ii.	45	209
On the Anger of God against the Vice of Impurity. Introd. at end. - - - -	iii.	14	197
On the Malice of the Envious. Introd. at end. - - - -	iii.	16	223
On the Madness of Anger, and How to Restrain it. - -	iii.	24	320
On the Malice of Him who Sins because he can go to Confession. - - - -	vi.	51	176
On the Manner of Fraternal Correction. - - - -	viii.	56	235
On the Second Advantage of Adversity. Introd. at end. - - - -	viii.	63	322
On the Fear of Purgatory after Death. - - - -	ix.	17	210

**Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Preservation of our Precious Soul. - - - -	i.	18	212
On the Necessity of Parents Giving Good Example. -	ii.	46	224
On the Meanness of Human Respect. - - - -	iv.	55	225
On the Goodness of God to the Repentant Sinner. - -	vi.	47	116
On Accepting Correction. - - - -	viii.	57	248
On a Sudden Death. - - - -	ix.	7	83

**Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.**

On How to Hear a Sermon. Introd. at end. - -	i.	11	119
On the Care of One's Only Soul. - - - -	i.	19	222
On the Temporal Support of Children. - - - -	ii.	47	106
On Charity to the Souls in Purgatory. - - - -	ii.	51	159
On the Injustice of Human Respect. - - - -	iv.	56	237
On Concealing Sins through Shame in Confession. -	v.	32	423
On the Gratitude of the Souls in Purgatory. - - -	viii.	60	283
On the Awful Death of the Wicked. - - - -	ix.	13	161

**Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.**

On the Excessive Care of Parents for the Support of their Children. - - - - -	ii.	48	118
On the Talkative Tongue. - - - - -	iv.	72	451
On Frequent Confession. - - - - -	vi.	53	206
On the Efficacy of Prayer. - - - - -	vii.	38	535
On the Coming and Cruelty of Antichrist. - - -	ix.	26	318

GENERAL INDEX FOR THE FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR.

**Feast of St. Andrew, Apostle.**

St. Andrew the First Disciple of Christ. - - -	xii.	44	76
On the Goodness of God to the Rich. - - - -	ii.	58	250
On Rejecting the Divine Inspirations. - - - -	iv.	43	69
On the Advantage of Trials as a Means of Atoning for Sin. - - - - -	vi.	44	72
On the Usefulness of Adversity in Detaching our Hearts from Earthly Things. - - - - -	viii.	62	310
On the Usefulness of Adversity in Gaining Heav- enly Glory. - - - - -	x.	73	462

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary.**

On Faith in the Immaculate Conception. - - -	xi.	25	350
On the Truth of the Immaculate Conception. - - -	xi.	26	360
On the Esteem She had of Her Immaculate Concep- tion. - - - - -	xi.	27	373
On Redeeming Lost Time. - - - - -	ii.	70	418
On the Madness of Impure Love and Lust. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iii.	12	170
On Avoiding Venial Sin because it is Displeasing to God. - - - - -	vii.	7	102
On Dying Once Only. - - - - -	ix.	5	60

**Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle.**

St. Thomas was most Prompt and Zealous in Believ- ing and Preaching the Resurrection of Christ. -	xii.	47	117
On Making Good Use of Time. Introd. at end. -	ii.	71	432
On the Malice and Multiplicity of Scandal. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	59	279
On the Torments of a Bad Conscience. - - -	v.	6	73
On the Presumption of the Sinner. Introd. at end.	iv.	76	495

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On Avoiding Venial Sin on Account of its Bad Effects.	vii.	9	129
On God as our Judge.	ix.	30	364
<b>Christmas Day.</b>			
Extreme Humility and Poverty of Christ in His Birth.	xi.	3	30
On the Happiness of the Poor. Introd. at end.	ii.	64	332
On the Glory Given to God by Conformity with His Will.	viii.	45	91
On the Hope of the Just, although the Judgment will be Most Rigorous.	x.	68	390
<b>Feast of St. Stephen the First Martyr.</b>			
On Imitating His Love for His Enemies.	xii.	53	220
On the Ingratitude of the Rich to God.	ii.	59	262
How Unbecoming it is to Seek Revenge.	iii.	25	333
On the Injustice of Revenge.	iii.	26	351
On the Reasonableness of Conforming our Will to the Will of God.	viii.	46	104
On the Vocation of the Elect to the Kingdom of Heaven.	x.	45	85
<b>Feast of St. John the Apostle.</b>			
St. John a Son of the Blessed Virgin.	xii.	46	104
On the Divine Decree Allotting to Each One a State.	ii.	65	350
On the Injury Done by Fault-finders to God and Themselves.	iv.	63	336
On the Fewness of Those who Truly Love Jesus.	vii.	5	71
On the Triumphal Entry of the Elect into the Kingdom of Heaven.	x.	46	91
<b>Feast of the Holy Innocents.</b>			
On the Duties of the Young to God.	i.	13	146
<b>Feast of the Circumcision.</b>			
On Jesus Circumcised as an Exemplar and Pattern to All.	xi.	4	41
On the Use of the Present Time.	ii.	76	492
On the Divine Decree Allotting a State to Each One. Introd. at end.	ii.	65	350
On the Old and New Year for the Just and Sinners.	vi.	76	526
On the Value of Time.	viii.	76	474
On the Meditation on Eternity.	x.	76	504
<b>Epiphany.</b>			
The Child Jesus King of the Hearts of Men.	xi.	5	57
On False and True Happiness.	i.	7	74
On the Conformity of Youth with Manhood.	i.	14	159
On Divine Providence in the Distribution of States.	ii.	66	363
On Childlike Confidence in Divine Providence.	ii.	69	402
On Those who do not Wish to Acknowledge the Divine Inspirations.	iv.	44	80
On the Advantage of Conformity with the Divine Will.	viii.	47	117
On the Consolation of the Just in Being on the Right Road to Heaven.	x.	61	297

**Feast of St. Sebastian, Martyr.**

St. Sebastian a Physician against All Kinds of Diseases. - - - - -	xii.	55	244
St. Sebastian unhurt in the Midst of the Plague.	xii.	56	254
On Constant Fervor in Devotion to St. Sebastian and to the Confraternity Erected in His Honor.	xii.	57	263
On Flying to St. Sebastian for Refuge in Our Necessities. - - - - -	vi.	75	513

**Feast of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr.**

St. Agnes in Her Childhood a Teacher of Wisdom.	xii.	63	367
St. Agnes a Lamb among Wolves. - - - - -	xii.	69	376
St. Agnes a Valiant Woman. - - - - -	xii.	70	385

**Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

The Purification of the Most Blessed and Pure Virgin. - - - - -	xi.	32	432
On the Duties of the Young to God. Introd. at end.	i.	13	146
That Each One Should be Satisfied with His State, as far as the Service of God is Concerned. -	ii.	67	378
On the Anger of God against the Vice of Lust. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iii.	14	197
On the Happiness of Him who is in Conformity with the Divine Will. - - - - -	viii.	49	144
On the Consolation of a Good Conscience in Death.	ix.	14	176

**Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle.**

The Election of St. Matthias should be to Us an Encouragement to Fervor; the Reprobation of Judas a Source of Fear and Caution. - -	xii.	52	206
That Each One should be Content with His State, as far as the Dangers of the Soul are Concerned. - - - - -	ii.	68	391
On Those who During Shrovetide Prefer to Side with the Devil Rather than with Christ. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	52	184
On the False Repose of a Bad Conscience. - -	v.	7	88
On Seeking Counsel from God in all Our Affairs.	vii.	16	227
On the Consolation of the Just in Ignoring Their Predestination. - - - - -	x.	70	419

**Feast of St. Joseph, Spouse of the B. V. M.**

St. Joseph a Most Powerful Patron of Our Country.	xii.	40	30
St. Joseph an Example of Conformity with the Divine Will in Life and Death - - - - -	xii.	41	40
St. Joseph the Patron of the Dying. - - - - -	xii.	42	51
On Conformity with the Divine Will in Adversity.	viii.	48	131
On the Happy Death of the Just. - - - - -	ix.	15	186

**Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

Great Humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a Most Exalted Dignity. - - - - -	xi.	30	406
On the Necessary Business of Christians. Introd. at end. - - - - -	i.	6	36



	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On Those who do not at Once Follow the Divine Inspirations as soon as They Recognize Them.	iv.	45	93
On the Favor He Enjoys with God who is Resigned to His Will.	viii.	50	158
On the Hope of the Just, although there are Few Chosen.	x.	69	402
On the Marks of a Good Conscience. Introd. at end.	viii.	74	148
<b>Ash-Wednesday.</b>			
That it is Right for Us Often to Think of the Passion of Christ.	xi.	6	73
On the Happy Death of the Just. Introd. at end.	ix.	15	186
<b>Wednesday of the First Week in Lent.</b>			
The Frequent Remembrance of the Passion of Christ is Full of Consolation to the Just and to Sinners.	xi.	7	93
<b>Wednesday of the Second Week in Lent.</b>			
The Frequent Remembrance of the Passion of Christ is Most Useful to the Just and to Sinners.	xi.	2	91
<b>Good Friday.</b>			
<i>See Eight Sermons on this Subject in the Index to Vol. xii.</i>			
<b>Easter Sunday.</b>			
The Divinity of Christ Proved from His Glorious Sepulchre.	xi.	17	254
The Glory of the Sepulchre of Christ among the Turks an Irrefragable Proof of His Divinity.	xi.	18	264
The Truth of the Resurrection of Christ the Foundation of Our Faith.	xi.	19	276
On the Triumph of Christ in His Resurrection Over the Fury of Hell and the Envy of the World.	xi.	20	288
The Resurrection of Christ an Exemplar of Our Resurrection from the Death of Sin.	xi.	21	300
On Childlike Confidence in the Providence of God.	ii.	69	402
On the Vice of Ingratitude, so Common among Men, and so Hateful to God.	iv.	38	7
On the Difficulty of Getting Rid of the Inveterate Habit of Sin.	v.	5	60
On the Glory Given to God by Patience in Adversity.	viii.	65	348
On the Hope and Truth of Our Resurrection.	ix.	18	222
<b>Easter Monday.</b>			
On the Multiplicity of Sins of the Tongue.	iv.	61	108
<b>Easter Tuesday.</b>			
On the Disgraceful Ingratitude of Those who Owe Most to God.	iv.	89	80
On the Disgrace and Danger of Relapse into Sin.	vi.	49	166

**Feast of SS. Philip and James, Apostles.**

<b>SS. Philip and James Apostles most Like to Christ:</b>			
James in Life, and Philip in Death. - - -	xii.	48	133
n Morning Prayer. - - - - -	ii.	73	457
On the Folly of Envy. Introd. at end. - - -	iii.	15	210
On the Means of Acquiring Conformity with the Divine Will. - - - - -	viii.	51	127
On the Joy of the Elect in Heaven from What They shall See Outside of God. - - - - -	x.	47	110

**Feast of the Ascension.**

On the Ascension of Our Hearts to Heaven with Christ. - - - - -	xi.	22	313
On the Want of Faith in Bad Christians. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iii.	2	23
On the Consolation to be Derived from the Recol- lection of the Presence of God. - - - - -	vii.	19	273
On the Joy of the Elect in the Sight of God. - - -	x.	48	123
On the Want of Faith in Heavenly Glory. Introd. at end. - - - - -	x.	55	212

**Pentecost.**

The Sending of the Holy Ghost a Proof of the Great Love of Christ, after His Ascent into Heaven, for the World who Deserved so Ill of Him. - - - - -	xi.	23	325
On the Dignity of Christians in Being Made Chil- dren of God by the Grace of the Holy Ghost.	i.	3	33
On the Multiplicity of Sins of the Tongue. Introd. at end. - - - - -	iv.	61	108
On the Malice of Cursing. - - - - -	iv.	69	414
On the Recollection of the Presence of God. - - -	vi.	57	265
On the State of Grace. - - - - -	vii.	1	11
On the False Hope of Salvation of Those who do not Keep the Commandments of God. - - -	x.	57	239

**Whit-Monday.**

On the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God. Introd. at end. - - - - -	i.	9	95
On Refusing the Light of the Holy Ghost. - - -	iv.	42	56
On the Ignorance which the Sinner Voluntarily Seeks in Order to Find Peace of Conscience.	v.	8	102

**Whit-Tuesday.**

On Culpable Ignorance as a Cause of Many Sins.	v.	9	114
On the Incredulity of Bad Christians. - - - - -	iii.	2	23

**Corpus Christi.**

The Love of Christ for Us is Proved by His Patience in this Sacrament. - - - - -	xi.	24	338
On Irreverence to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.	iii.	33	450
On Devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. -	vii.	21	305
On Frequent and Worthy Communion. - - - - -	x.	72	447

**Feast of St. John the Baptist.**

St. John the Baptist a Miracle of Penitence. - - xñ.	39	17
How to Act after a Sermon. Introd. at end. - - i.	12	132
On the Conformity of Youth with Succeeding Age. i.	14	159
On the Course to be Followed by Young People in Selecting a State of Life. Introd. at end. - - i.	20	234
On the Folly of the Proud. - - - - - iii.	4	53
On Humility. - - - - - viii.	61	295
On the Society of the Elect in Heaven. - - - x.	50	149

**Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles.**

The Penitence of St. Peter Confounds Sinners; the Charity of St. Paul Many Just. - - - xii.	43	62
On the Truth of the Christian Religion. - - - i.	1	11
On the Wickedness by which Bad Christians Attack the Christian Religion. - - - - - iii.	1	7
On Continual Sorrow for Sin, after the Example of SS. Peter and Paul. - - - - - vi.	48	131
On the Peace of a Good Conscience in Spite of what Men Say. - - - - - viii.	70	402
On the Want of Faith in Heavenly Glory. - - - x.	55	212

**Feast of St. Simeon, Confessor of Treves.**

The Happy Death of St. Simeon after a Holy Life. xii.	67	356
---	----	-----

**Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

On the Works of Mercy Done by the Blessed Virgin to John and Elizabeth. - - - - - xi.	31	421
On the Preservation of Our Most Precious Soul. In- trod. at end. - - - - - i.	18	212
Mary the Refuge of Sinners who Wish to Repent. Introd. at end. - - - - - v.	14	186
On the Happiness of Him who Trusts in God. - - viii.	41	36
On Humility. Introd. at end. - - - - - viii.	61	295

**Feast of St. James, Apostle.**

St. James an Unwearied Worker for the Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls. - - - - - xii.	45	90
On the Respect Due to Parents. Introd. at end. - - i.	15	172
On the Marks of Pride and the Means of Acquiring Humility. - - - - - iii.	5	68
On the Efficacy of the Prayers of the Just. Introd. and Conclusion at end. - - - - - vi.	68	421
On the Goodness of God in not Hearing Our Prayers. viii.	40	21
On Patient Sorrow in Adversity as a Sign of Eternal Joy. - - - - - x.	74	477

**Feast of St. Anne, Mother of the B. V. M.**

On the Preservation of Our Only Soul. Introd. at end. i.	19	222
--	----	-----

**Feast of St. Lawrence, Martyr.**

The Charity of St. Lawrence Proved by Fire. - -	xii.	54	233
On the Obedience Due to Parents. Introd. at end.	i.	16	185
On the Injustice of Revenge. Introd. at end. - -	iii.	26	351
On Adversity as a Just Punishment of Sin. - -	vi.	45	86
On Charity to the Souls in Purgatory. - -	viii.	58	261
On Confidently Resigning the Care of Our Salvation to the Divine Will. - - - - -	x	75	489

**Feast of the Assumption of the B. V. M.**

On the Most Joyful Transit of the Blessed Virgin Mary from this World to Heaven. - - -	xi.	34	454
On the Love Due to Parents. Introd. at end. -	i.	17	199
On Mary the Refuge of Sinners who Wish to Repent.	v.	14	186
On the Pleasures of the Senses in Heaven. - -	x	49	136

**Feast of St. Helen, Empress.**

*See the Index of Vols. xi. and xii.*

**Feast of St. Bernard.**

*See the Index of Vols. xi. and xii.*

**Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle.**

St. Bartholomew the Most Glorious Martyr among All the Apostles. - - - - -	xii.	49	151
On the Use and Nature of Morning Prayer. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ii.	74	467
On Those who do not Practise What They Hear in Sermons. - - - - -	iv.	49	146
On the Necessity of Avoiding the Proximate Occa- sion of Sin. Introd. at end. - - - - -	v.	26	344
On Accompanying the Blessed Sacrament when it is Carried to the Sick. - - - - -	vii.	22	323

**Feast of St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor.**

*See the Index of Vols. xi. and xii.*

**Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary a Joyful Day for All Christians; Most Joyful for the Christians of Treves. - - - - -	xi.	28	384
On the False Hope of Salvation of Those who Trust to False Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. - -	x.	59	270

**Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle.**

St. Matthew a Most Generous Conqueror of Himself.	xii.	50	168
On the Dignity of the Poor. Introd. at end. - -	ii.	62	304
On the Malice of Envy. Introd. at end. - -	iii.	16	223
On the Goodness of God in Protecting Sinners that They May Repent. - - - - -	v.	11	143
On Frequent Communion. - - - - -	vii.	23	337

**Feast of St. Michael and the Holy Angels.**

The Holy Angels Always Most Obedient to the Di- vine Will. - - - - -	xii.	38	7
---	------	----	---

	VOL.	SERMON	PAGE
On the Dignity of Christians who have Guardian Angels. - - - - -	i.	5	52
On the Reasons Why Parents should Bring Up Their Children in a Christian Manner. - - - -	ii.	40	19
On Ingratitude to the Guardian Angels. - - - -	iv.	40	31
On the Evil Effects of Scandal. - - - -	iv.	60	292
On Sorrow for Sin on Account of the Severe Punishment Inflicted on the Rebel Angels by Divine Justice. - - - -	v.	23	306
On Gratitude to the Guardian Angels. - - - -	vii.	34	478
That the Devil is not to be Feared on the Way to Heaven. - - - -	x.	62	312

#### Feast of the Martyrs of Treves.

*See the Index of Vols. xi. and xii.*

#### Feast of SS. Simon and Jude, Apostles.

SS. Simon and Jude True Christian Zelators. - -	xii.	51	183
On the Duty of the Rich to the Poor. Introd. at end.	ii.	60	274
On the Vain Pretext of Custom in Following Unlawful Usages. - - - -	iv.	57	250
On Sorrow for Sin on Account of Offending Our Heavenly Father. - - - -	v.	24	318
On the Use of the Temptations of the Devil. - -	x.	63	324

#### Feast of All Saints.

The Saints will be Our Judges, and will Condemn Those who Refuse to Imitate Their Sanctity. -	xii.	74	418
On Charity to the Souls in Purgatory. - - - -	ii.	51	159
On the Profanation of Holy Days. - - - -	iii.	36	490
On the Use of Adversity. - - - -	viii.	63	322
On the Happiness of Him who is Resigned to the Divine Will. Introd. at end. - - - -	viii.	49	146
On the Eternity of Heavenly Joys. - - - -	x.	51	163

#### Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Blessed Virgin Mary was Full of Grace, and yet was Always Most Anxious to Increase it. - -	xi.	29	391
The Blessed Virgin Mary a Most Perfect Exemplar of Conformity with the Divine Will. - - - -	xi.	33	444
How to Act after a Sermon. - - - -	i.	12	132
On the Excessive Care of Parents with Regard to the Temporal Wants of Their Children. - - - -	ii.	48	118
On the Talkative Tongue. - - - -	iv.	72	451
On Frequent Confession. - - - -	vi.	53	206

#### Feast of St. Clement, Pope and Martyr.

St. Clement an Imitator of the Apostles in Patience and Miracles. - - - -	xii.	58	272
---	------	----	-----

#### Feast of St. Felix.

On St. Felix, Archbishop of Treves. - - - -	xii.	64	330
---	------	----	-----

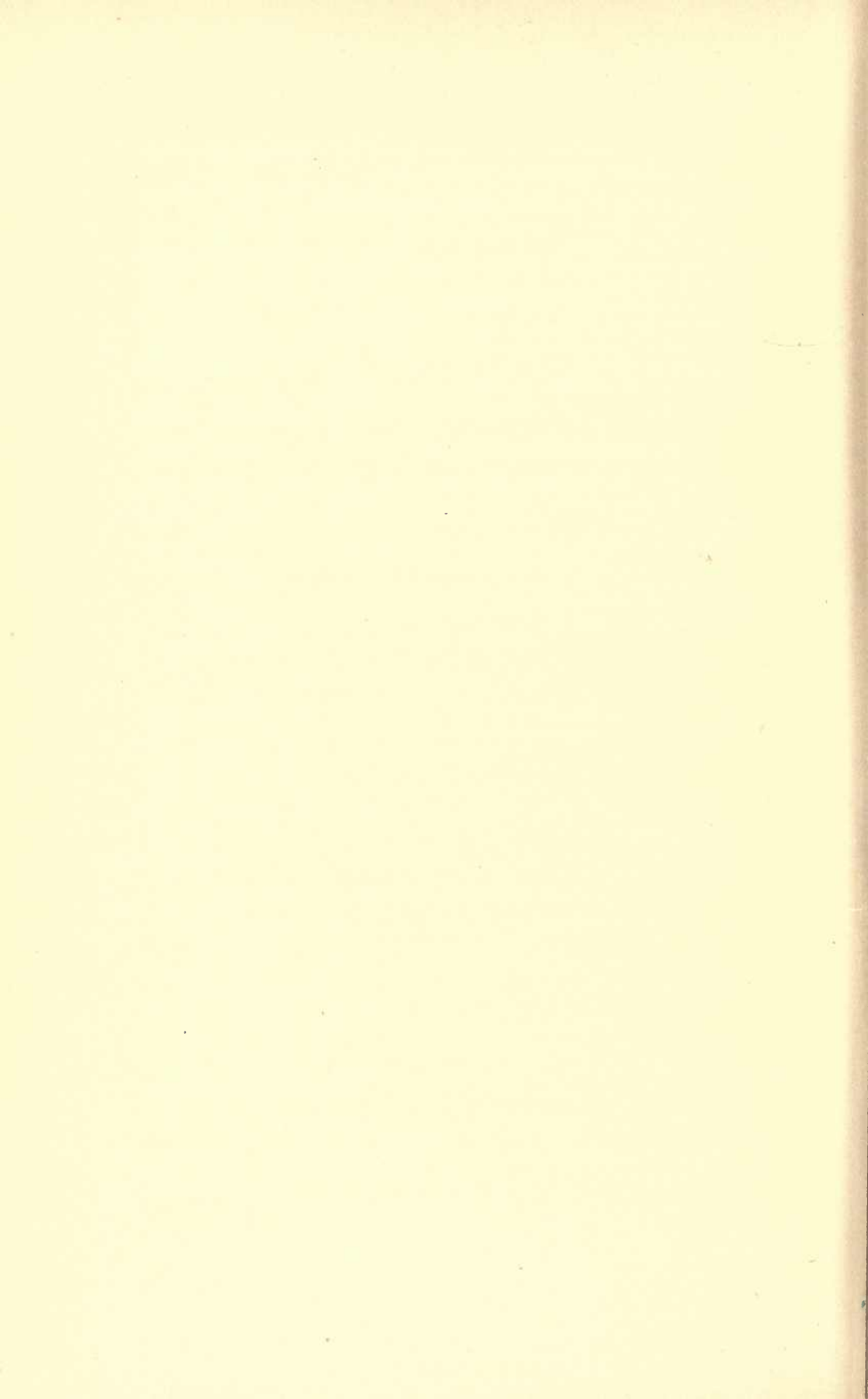


**Feast of the Dedication of a Church.**

On the Vain Excuse of the Rich Saying They Cannot Give Alms. Introd. at end. - - - - -	ii.	61	289
On Irreverence in Church. - - - - -	iii.	34	462
On the Dangerous State of Those who Rarely Hear the Word of God. - - - - -	iv.	46	107
On the Trials with which God Visits Sinners. - - - - -	v.	13	171
On the Use of the Recollection of the Presence of God. Introd. at end. - - - - -	vii.	18	258
On Reverence in Church. - - - - -	vii.	20	289
On the Frequent Meditation of the Heavenly Kingdom. - - - - -	x.	54	196

**On any Indulgenced Feast.**

On the Benefit of the Jubilee and Indulgences. -	vi.	64	370
<i>See Several Sermons on the Jubilee in the Index in Vol. vi.</i>			
On a Solemn Supplication in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. <i>See the Index in Vol. xii.</i>			
On Public Prayers in the Time of General Calamities, Diseases, Wars, Inundations, or other Scourges <i>See the Index in Vol. vi.</i>			



# GENERAL INDEX OF THE SUBJECTS TREATED IN THE WHOLE WORK.

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>—A.—</b>		
<b>Abraham.</b>		
Was ready to sacrifice his son to please God. - -	i.	245
<b>Account.</b>		
In the judgment God will demand a strict account of the sermons deliberately lost through sloth. - -	i.	106
<b>Adultery.</b>		
A terrible sin. - - - - -	i.	423
Hated by every one. - - - - -	i.	423
Most injurious to the general welfare of the whole human race. - - - - -	i.	424
Is the cause of many other sins. - - - - -	i.	424
All Christians should guard against it. - - - - -	i.	425
Is an abomination before God, and draws down severe punishments. - - - - -	i.	426
<b>Age.</b>		
When we consider ourselves, as we should often do, we shall find that we are already aged. - -	ii.	420
Many deliberately avoid this thought. - - -	ii.	422
<b>Agnes, St.</b>		
As a child was already a mistress of wisdom in despising all the allurements of the world. - -	xii.	370
In contemning all the threats of the world. - -	xii.	372
She was a pure, innocent lamb of Christ. - - -	xii.	378
She overcame the crafty as well as the raging wolves. - -	xii.	381
In her childhood she was a strong woman. - - -	xii.	386
<b>Ale-houses.</b>		
In them are generally found dangerous companions. -	vi.	289
<b>Alms.</b>		
Use of alms for temporal prosperity. - - - -	ii.	131
A means of investing capital at usurious interest. -	ii.	134
Is the best means of becoming rich. - - - -	ii.	138
Parsimony to the poor a means of becoming poor. -	ii.	142
By alms we gain eternal treasures. - - - -	ii.	145
Folly of those who give little alms in order to save for their children. - - - - -	ii.	153
Almsgiving is a duty imposed under pain of sin. -	ii.	274

	VOL.	PAGE
Many are lost forever because they did not give alms.	ii.	281
What alms each one is bound to give.	ii.	286
Vain excuse of the rich that they can give little or no alms.	ii.	289
Even the poor can and should give alms.	ii.	296
Almsgiving is a satisfaction for the punishments due to sin.	vi.	61
A means of obtaining all from God.	vi.	62
Sinners should give generous alms.	vi.	64
Alms keep the soul from sin.	vi.	66
And save from hell.	vi.	67

AMBITION. *See Pride.*

### Andrew, St., Apostle.

Was the first disciple and follower of Christ.	xii.	76
Was the first to receive the teaching of Christ, while Our Lord was still unknown and despised.	xii.	80
Was the first to bring others to Christ.	xii.	87

### Angels.

God has given to every one an angel as tutor.	i.	54
Dignity and excellence of the angels.	i.	55
Their beauty.	i.	56
These great princes of heaven are the guardians of our bodies and souls.	i.	57
The benefits we owe them deserve our most heartfelt thanks.	i.	59
Especially as they are far greater and more excellent than we.	i.	60
They bestow those benefits on us although we are unworthy of them.	i.	61
Neither good nor bad angels can detect the secrets of the heart of man.	iv.	453
Terrible punishment of the angels who sinned.	v.	306
The angels are princes of heaven.	v.	308
They are countless in numbers.	v.	310
They protect us in life and death. <i>See Guardian Angel.</i>		
We owe them great gratitude.	vii.	489
They are most perfectly united with the will of God.	xii.	7

### Anger.

Is contrary to sound reason.	iii.	320
Draws down the anger of God.	iii.	327
How they should act who have to deal with angry people.	iii.	327
How the passionate man should control his anger.	iii.	329

### Anti-Christ.

Cruelty of Anti-Christ, and what he will do in the world.	ix.	318
---	-----	-----

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Apostles.</b>		
The Christian religion was spread throughout the world by twelve apostles. - - - - -	i.	17
They had neither authority, money, nor power; nay, were hated everywhere. - - - - -	i.	17
And yet they undertook to spread the Christian religion in the chief cities of the world, and succeeded. - - - - -	i.	18

#### Augustine, St.

Was great in the eyes of the world. - - - - -	xii.	314
Small and lowly in his own eyes. - - - - -	xii.	316
His great wisdom is evident from the books he has written. - - - - -	xii.	313
From the heretics whom he overcame. - - - - -	xii.	314
From a great sinner he became a great saint. - - - - -	xii.	327

#### Avarice, Money.

One can make money and still serve God. - - - - -	iii.	101
The labor of the avaricious man is vain. - - - - -	iii.	85
Money and property are vain goods. - - - - -	iii.	84
How a man may become avaricious. - - - - -	iii.	88
The miser is foolish, and gives himself much trouble to no purpose. - - - - -	iii.	88
Incurs the hatred of men. - - - - -	iii.	92
It is hard for him to leave all in death. - - - - -	iii.	93
Money can make men do anything. - - - - -	iii.	86
The avaricious man neglects his God in this life. - - - - -	iii.	98
Is insensible to all good. - - - - -	iii.	100
Works only for others and not for himself. - - - - -	iii.	102
Looks on money as his god. - - - - -	iii.	103
Has no pity for the poor. - - - - -	iii.	104
Avarice is the source of every vice. - - - - -	iii.	105
The avaricious generally die an unhappy death. - - - - -	iii.	112
Avarice increases till death. - - - - -	iii.	113
The avaricious are hard to convert. - - - - -	iii.	114
And it is very hard to persuade them to make restitution. - - - - -	iii.	118
They are most unhappy men. - - - - -	iii.	122
Happy he who does not love money. - - - - -	iii.	122
Avarice is found even among the poor and people of every state. - - - - -	iii.	123

#### —B.—

#### Bartholomew, St., Apostle.

Was in his martyrdom, before all the other apostles, a most glorious martyr of Christ. - - - - -	xii.	156
Besides enduring other tortures, he suffered a most painful and protracted martyr's death for Christ. - - - - -	xii.	157
And that with admirable constancy and firmness. - - - - -	xii.	159
What a glorious reward he received from Christ for this constancy! - - - - -	xii.	160

#### Beauty.

Personal beauty and comeliness is vanity. - - - - -	iii.	63
---	------	----



	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Benefit.</b>		
The greatness of a benefit is to be measured by its usefulness and necessity for eternal salvation. - -	i.	25
No one should upbraid another with benefits conferred.	iv.	44
<b>Benefits.</b>		
It is only the ungrateful that God upbraids with benefits conferred on them. - - - - -	iv.	45
<b>Bernard, St.</b>		
A wonder of innocence and penance. - - - -	xii.	339
One who had a perfect contempt for the world and himself. - - - - -	xii.	341
BIRTH OF CHRIST. <i>See Christ.</i>		
<b>Blanche, St.</b>		
How she brought up her son Louis in the fear of God.	ii.	31
<b>Blasphemy.</b>		
How many kinds of it there are. - - - - -	iii.	426
It is a terrible sin. - - - - -	iii. & iv.	429, 319
Offends God much more than all other sins. - -	iii.	430
The blasphemy of men is worse than that of the demons and the reprobate. - - - - -	iii.	433
It is a sin committed through the grossest injustice, out of anger and rage. - - - - -	iii.	434
Is justly punished by God with extraordinary chastisements. - - - - -	iii.	435
<b>Blindness, Spiritual.</b>		
We are blind in our understanding even with regard to things that are before our eyes. - - - -	ii.	382
<b>Blood of Christ.</b>		
It is a terrible thing to be guilty of shedding it. -	xi.	132
Was shed for us to the last drop. - - - - -	xi.	133
Examen as to who were guilty of it. - - - - -	xi.	134
<b>Body.</b>		
Is generally better cared for than the soul. - -	i.	218
The body of the sinner must do penance and be chastised. - - - - -	v.	473
The body is almost the sole cause of sin. - - - -	v.	475
<b>Body, Chastising the.</b>		
The sinner has good reason for chastising the body.	v.	480
To no purpose do some excuse themselves from this by saying that they are too weak. - - - - -	v.	481
The same degree of mortification is not required from every one. - - - - -	v.	482
How we may easily mortify our outward senses. -	v.	482
Fasting is the best means of chastising the body. -	vi.	52

**Business.**

Our only business should be to serve God and take care of our souls. - - - - -	iv.	338
--	-----	-----

**Busy.**

A too busy life is an idle and useless life before God.	ii.	224
It is a sinful life. - - - - -	ii.	237
It withdraws the heart from heavenly things. - - -	ii.	240
How to order one's business so that the soul will not suffer. - - - - -	ii.	246

**—C.—****Carnal Sins.**

It is not advisable for those who have committed many carnal sins to repeat a general confession. - - -	v.	461
---	----	-----

**Catholic.**

Catholics nowadays can hardly bear to hear the truths of their religion preached, although the same truths were received in former times by heathens and Jews. - - - - -	i.	16
They owe the greatest gratitude to God for the benefit of vocation to the true faith. - - - - -	i.	24
There are many who do not thank God for this; but it is to their deeper damnation. - - - - -	i.	31

**Children.**

As they are in youth, so, generally speaking, are they in old age. - - - - -	i.	159
They owe their parents reverence in all their actions.	i.	173
Many great faults are committed against this duty. -	i.	178
They who threaten to beat, or actually strike their parents, must expect fearful punishments from God.	i.	182
They are bound to obey their parents. - - - - -	i.	185
They are ignorant, and must therefore allow themselves to be guided by their parents. - - - - -	i.	186
They are commanded by God to obey their parents in all things that are not contrary to the divine law.	i.	190
Many children commit many sins in this respect. -	i.	192
Such children were punished severely in the Old Law.	i.	195
And even in our own days. - - - - -	i.	196
Children are bound to love their parents. - - - - -	i.	199
Of what kind this love should be. - - - - -	i.	203
Many sin against this love by causing their parents sorrow by their vicious lives. - - - - -	i.	204
By refusing their parents help and support when they are in want. - - - - -	i.	205
By forgetting their deceased parents. - - - - -	i.	208
Christians who have no children have cause to rejoice.	i.	438
And those, too, who have too many children. - - -	i.	440

	VOL.	PAGE
And those whose children die prematurely. - -	i.	442
Undutiful children are a sore trial for parents. - -	i.	445
Sickly children should be loved by their parents. -	i.	447
Children should thank their parents for correcting them, and rejoice thereat. - - - - -	i.	68
Children, like monkeys, imitate their parents in every- thing. - - - - -	i.	84
How they are to act in the choice of a state of life. <i>See State.</i>		
Training of children. <i>See Parents.</i>		
Wicked children are a disgrace to their parents. -	iii.	7
Undutiful the child that forgets his mother. - -	iv.	31
Children should shun nightly gatherings. - -	iv.	218
They are naturally inclined to reverence and love their fathers. - - - - -	v.	319
Children who ill-use their father are execrated and punished by God and man. - - - - -	v.	319
Children who wish to see and be seen too much are not far from sin. - - - - -	vi.	247

### Christian.

The Christian who does not mortify himself is not a proper member of Christ. - - - - -	v.	509
He must be ashamed of not following Christ. - -	v.	511
He has reason to fear. - - - - -	v.	519
He who wishes to go to heaven must lead a Christian life. - - - - -	vi.	13
A Christian should live more perfectly than the Jews of old. - - - - -	vii.	250

### Christians.

Pious Christians have reason to rejoice at being in the true faith. - - - - -	i.	20
Wicked Christians should be ashamed of not living according to their religion. - - - - -	i.	21
The Christian Church complains of wicked Christians.	i.	22
In holy Baptism Christians become children of God.	i.	35
What an honor and happiness that is! - - - - -	i.	36
Holy Christians can hardly contain themselves for joy thereat. - - - - -	i.	38
Many tepid Christians think little of that honor. -	i.	39
Christians should live as becomes children of God and brethren of Christ. - - - - -	i.	42
They should order their lives according to the will of their heavenly Father and the example of Christ.	i.	45
Few Christians do that. - - - - -	i.	46
It is a great shame for a child of God to be a slave of the devil. - - - - -	i.	48
Yet many are in that disgraceful condition. - -	i.	49
Christians live in a clearer light and have more knowl- edge than the Jews and heathens of old; therefore their sins are less excusable. - - - - -	i.	86
They have more aids and helps to good. - - - -	i.	90
They have sworn an oath of special fidelity to God. -	i.	92

	VOL.	PAGE
Therefore their sins are more reprehensible than those of the Jews and heathens. - - - - -	i.	93
Wicked Christians disgrace the holy name of the Catholic Church. - - - - -	iii.	12
They are more guilty and less to be excused in the judgment than heathens and infidels. - - - - -	iii.	17
They will be derided by the latter in hell. - - - - -	iii.	20
By their holiness of life the first Christians proved to the heathens the sanctity of our religion. - - - - -	iii.	34
Nowadays many Christians are put to shame by heathens. - - - - -	iii.	35
For they give scandal, and disgrace our religion by their Shrove-tide orgies. - - - - -	iv.	202
Many Christians know not what a Christian is. - - - - -	xi.	8
The duty of a Christian is to lead a holy life. - - - - -	xi.	9
Most Christians have no sign of holiness about them. - - - - -	xi.	11
Christians are bound to order their lives after the example of Jesus Christ. - - - - -	xi.	20
He who does not endeavor to do that will have no part in the kingdom of heaven. - - - - -	xi.	22
And will not be able to answer for himself at the judgment-seat of Christ. - - - - -	xi.	27

CHRISTIAN RELIGION. *See Religion.*

**Christ.**

In Christ alone is true happiness to be found. - - - - -	i.	82
He is a model of childlike obedience. - - - - -	i.	192
He loves His Church. - - - - -	i.	378
He counts it as an honor to treat His enemies with meekness, and all should imitate Him therein. - - - - -	iii.	345
Christ and the devil are always contending with each other, and inviting men to imitate them. - - - - -	iv.	185
He is the advocate for sinners. - - - - -	v.	153
He is our model and teacher. - - - - -	v.	514
Did penance His whole life long. - - - - -	v.	507
He who does not follow Christ can have no hopes of heaven. - - - - -	v.	511
He has loved us with a patient, meek love. - - - - -	viii.	199
With a beneficent love. - - - - -	viii.	203
Which extended itself to all men. - - - - -	viii.	207
He became man to teach us how to live rightly by word and example. - - - - -	xi.	18
He despised all that the world esteems. - - - - -	xi.	23
In His birth He chose the utmost humility. - - - - -	xi.	31
And extreme poverty. - - - - -	xi.	36
In His circumcision He is presented to people of all classes. - - - - -	xi.	41
In the circumcision and in the calling of the three kings He showed that He is Almighty God and the Ruler of hearts. - - - - -	xi.	58
He wishes us often to think of His passion. - - - - -	xi.	74
All that He suffered was for the love of us. - - - - -	xi.	78
Unheard-of love of Christ in dying for us. - - - - -	xi.	102
Yet few love Him in return: a gross ingratitude. - - - - -	xi.	105
What cruelty He had to suffer in the court of Pilate. - - - - -	xi.	111

	VOL.	PAGE
He is our best friend, and yet we crucify Him again by sin. - - - - -	xi.	123
And that after He has died for us on the cross. - -	xi.	124
It is a terrible thing to be guilty of shedding His blood. - - - - -	xi.	132
Christ freely chose to die for us. - - - - -	xi.	136
Yet His love has been able to do little with most men, of which He justly complains. - - - - -	xi.	139
He has shed His blood for the forgiveness even of the worst sinners. - - - - -	xi.	146
He died in extreme poverty. - - - - -	xi.	155
In the greatest agony. - - - - -	xi.	161
In the crucifixion He suffered all kinds of torments. -	xi.	162
He was condemned to a death that was terrible in all respects. - - - - -	xi.	174
Although He was perfectly innocent. - - - - -	xi.	176
He was not allowed a hearing, either by His earthly judges or by His heavenly Father. - - - - -	xi.	178
He died without the least consolation. - - - - -	xi.	180
Our sins are the cause of His death. - - - - -	xi.	146
Christ while on the cross prayed for sinners, and that, too, in the most fervent manner. - - - - -	xi.	236
The last words of Christ with which He gave up the ghost. - - - - -	xi.	190
They were directed to sinners. - - - - -	xi.	191
The sufferings of Christ are daily renewed in all their circumstances by sinners. - - - - -	xi.	200
The frequent recollection of the passion of Christ is consoling to the just. - - - - -	xi.	74
To sinners. - - - - -	xi.	80
It is useful to the pious to keep them in grace. - - -	xi.	83
To the wicked to induce them to repent. - - - - -	xi.	88
The divinity of Christ proved by His burial. - - - -	xi.	254
The sepulchre of Christ is to this day an undeniable proof of His divinity. - - - - -	xi.	264
The truth of the resurrection of Christ is the founda- tion of our faith. - - - - -	xi.	277
The proof of it. - - - - -	xi.	277
He thereby overcame the rage of hell. - - - - -	xi.	289
And the envious Jewish world. - - - - -	xi.	295
The resurrection of Christ is a symbol of our resurrec- tion from sin. - - - - -	xi.	300
Wonderful the love of Christ for men in sending them the Holy Ghost after His ascent into heaven. -	xi.	326
Although He had been so ill-treated by them during His life. - - - - -	xi.	333
This wonderful love of Christ appears from His pa- tience in the Blessed Sacrament. - - - - -	xi.	338
<b>Church.</b>		
What a great sin irreverence in church is. - - -	iii.	462
The magnificence and splendor of the temple in Jeru- salem. - - - - -	iii.	464
God dwells in our churches, and wishes to be specially honored in them. - - - - -	iii.	467



	VOL.	PAGE
Many are irreverent in church. - - - -	iii.	468
And thereby grossly insult the Almighty. - -	iii.	473
By unbecoming behavior in church God is dishonored in a most grievous manner. - - - -	iii.	476
They who misbehave in church are put to shame by heathens and Turks. - - - -	iii.	480
And give joy to the demons. - - - -	iii.	482
Of which God complains. - - - -	iii.	482
How severely He punishes this irreverence. - -	iii.	483
We must be reverent in church. - - - -	vii.	289
How to enter the church. - - - -	vii.	290
How to behave in it. - - - -	vii.	296

**Clement, St.**

Was like the apostles. What he suffered. - -	xii.	273
Was like them in the miracles he performed. What they were. - - - -	xii.	278

**Commandments of God.**

Are required for the welfare of the world. - -	vii.	89
No one can complain of the difficulty of keeping them.	vii.	94

**Communion.**

Christ, Our Lord, is treated most shamefully by an un- worthy Communion. - - - -	iii.	439
It is a terrible sin. - - - -	iii.	445
Is committed by many. - - - -	iii.	445
We should often receive Holy Communion. - -	vii.	337
Frequent Communion leads to holiness of life. -	vii.	338
Helps to holiness of life. - - - -	vii.	344
Frequent and worthy Communion is a sign of predesti- nation. - - - -	x.	447

**Company.**

We must avoid bad company if we wish to persevere in good. - - - -	vi.	282
One bad companion is enough to pervert many. -	vi.	287
The society of the opposite sex is dangerous. - -	vi.	290
Our weakness becomes greater in dangerous company and occasions of sin. - - - -	vi.	296
Company and occasions that lead to impure love are the worst of all. - - - -	vi.	304
To no purpose should we trust in the help of God in dangers that we wilfully seek. - - - -	vi.	310
Seemingly respectable company, even that of relations and religious persons, is dangerous if too much freedom is allowed. - - - -	vi.	321
In the company of the wicked that we cannot avoid we may add to our merits. - - - -	vi.	340
And should then try to gain the souls of others. -	vi.	353

**Conceal.**

How foolish to conceal a sin in confession through shame. - - - -	v.	423
--	----	-----

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Confession.</b>		
We are not allowed to make known the sins of others even in confession. - - - - -	iv.	359
The impure should accuse themselves in confession in a modest manner. - - - - -	iv.	446
It is very hard to acknowledge one's own shame in confession. - - - - -	iv.	480
It is not enough for repentance to declare one's sins in confession. - - - - -	iv.	486
The sacrament of confession is necessary to the salvation of the sinner. - - - - -	v.	200
How reckless the conduct of him who defers confession for a long time. - - - - -	v.	209
Confession is an easy means of gaining pardon for sin. And a very useful one. - - - - -	v.	213
By it the sinner regains all he has lost. - - - - -	v.	226
And becomes richer than before. - - - - -	v.	228
How to examine the conscience before confession. -	v.	234
Many make bad confessions because they do not examine their consciences as they should. - - -	v.	252
<i>See also Contrition, Purpose, Declaration.</i>		
He who sins in the hope of being able to go to confession is in danger of damnation. - - - - -	vi.	176
Frequent confession is a sure means of perseverance. -	vi.	206
He who confesses frequently easily conquers the temptations of the devil. - - - - -	vi.	210
Lessens the punishment due to his sins. - - - - -	vi.	212
Increases sanctifying grace. - - - - -	vi.	213
Gains the grace of a happy death. - - - - -	vi.	213
A general confession cleanses the soul from all stain. -	v.	436
Is necessary to many, highly useful to all. - - -	v.	449
How to make it. - - - - -	v.	450
The best means of keeping the soul in peace and security. - - - - -	v.	451
Who should be advised to make a general confession. -	v.	459
<b>Confessor.</b>		
We should choose a good one. - - - - -	v.	384
Of what kind he should be. - - - - -	v.	387
It is easier to confess to a good confessor than to any other. - - - - -	v.	393
The folly of those who conceal from their confessor a grievous sin. - - - - -	v.	423
<b>Confidence in God.</b>		
It makes us happy to leave ourselves with childlike confidence in the hands of God. - - - - -	ii.	402
How foolish they who have not confidence in God. -	ii.	413
God is forced to make eternally happy those who have confidence in and serve Him cheerfully. - - -	x.	489
<b>Confidence.</b>		
Happy he who in all his needs puts his confidence in God. - - - - -	viii.	48

	VOL.	PAGE
We must put our confidence in God alone. - -	viii.	59
Most people trust to natural means, so that God does not help them. - - - - -	viii.	56
In extreme necessity we should trust all the more in God. - - - - -	viii.	64
Never should we lose that confidence. - - - - -	viii.	84

#### Conformity with the Will of God.

This in difficult matters is a great virtue. - -	xii.	40
We have a perfect example of it in Mary, the Mother of God. - - - - -	xi.	445
In the holy angels. - - - - -	xii.	8
In St. Joseph. - - - - -	xii.	41

#### Contentment.

All should be content with the will of God. - -	i.	444
Contentment of each one in his state. <i>See State.</i>		

#### Contradiction.

Is a wholesome chastisement sent by God. - -	v.	136
By it God seeks the conversion of the sinner. - -	v.	171
How one can and should do penance by it. - -	v.	488
How to bear it willingly and meritoriously. - -	v.	489
In contradictions we become more like to Christ. -	v.	512
They are a gracious punishment for one who has sinned even once. - - - - -	vi.	72
And he should rejoice and thank God for them. - -	vi.	78
How unjust not to bear contradictions patiently. -	vi.	82
All deserve them on account of the malice of their venial sins. - - - - -	vi.	87
And on account of sins forgiven. - - - - -	vi.	95
It is comforting to remember God's presence in contradictions. - - - - -	vii.	278
It is good and useful for salvation. - - - - -	x.	462
Patience under contradictions is a forerunner of eternal happiness. - - - - -	x.	477
Public contradictions are an effect of God's mercy for our amendment. <i>See also Trials.</i> - - - - -	ix.	345

#### Contrition.

How dangerous to sleep in the state of sin without contrition. - - - - -	ii.	488
It is the most necessary part of repentance. - -	vi.	279
In what it consists. - - - - -	vi.	287
Of what kind it must be. - - - - -	vi.	291
How to excite one's self thereto. - - - - -	vi.	302
Contrition for sin on account of God's strict justice. -	vi.	306
On account of offending our heavenly Father. - -	vi.	318
Because we have sinned in the presence of God. - -	vi.	280
The sinner should always have contrition. - - -	vi.	131

#### Conversation.

There are many kinds of evil conversation. - -	iv.	306
--	-----	-----

	VOL.	PAGE
Uncharitable conversation is very mischievous. - -	iv.	314
He who remains silent when he should speak does much harm. - - - - -	iv.	461
<b>Conscience.</b>		
A good conscience is the best comfort in trials. - -	i.	452
Examen of conscience in the evening. - - -	ii.	480
The conscience is disturbed in the danger of sin. -	iv.	206
Still more when sin is committed. - - - -	iv.	208
Intolerable pain of a bad conscience. - - - -	v.	73, 231
How the false repose of a bad conscience is attained.	v.	88
The conscience cannot be deceived. - - -	v.	90
How to examine the conscience before confession. -	v.	252, 265
The peace of a good conscience a great blessing. -	viii.	370
Is sought for in vain from earthly things. - -	viii.	371
It consists in the possession of God alone. - -	viii.	375
It is a perpetual, joyful marriage-feast. - - -	viii.	387
It is a comfort in trials. - - - -	viii.	388
Cares neither for calumny nor detraction. - - -	viii.	405
Can rejoice on account of its good works. - - -	viii.	414
Is disturbed only by sin. - - - -	viii.	468
Signs of a good conscience. - - - -	viii.	454
A good conscience need not fear death. - - -	ix.	174
<b>Constancy.</b>		
Constancy in good is a good sign. - - - -	vi.	191
To remain constant in grace to the end is the greatest gift of God. - - - -	vi.	198
<b>Conversion.</b>		
The conversion of many penitents is merely apparent.	vi.	396
CORRECTION OF CHILDREN. <i>See Parents.</i>		
<b>Correction, Fraternal.</b>		
Every one is obliged to correct his neighbor's faults in a friendly manner. - - - -	ii.	59
All are bound by the duty of fraternal correction. -	vi.	358
This is required of every one by the love of God. -	viii.	212
By the love of our neighbor. - - - -	viii.	217
Many are bound to it under sin by justice. - - -	viii.	224
All are bound to it by a special law of God. - -	viii.	230
How to administer fraternal correction. - - -	viii.	245
How to take it. - - - -	viii.	252
<b>Cursing.</b>		
Cursing and swearing is unbecoming a Christian. -	iv.	310
It is a hellish style of conversation. - - -	iv.	402
It is most scandalous. - - - -	iv.	408
Eternal malediction awaits him who is addicted to it; therefore all should be on their guard against it.	iv.	410
Cursing is of its nature a mortal sin. - - -	iv.	415
A most injurious sin. - - - -	iv.	419
There is no excuse for the habit of cursing. - -	iv.	428
It is very difficult to get rid of that habit. - -	iv.	433
Means of overcoming it. - - - -	iv.	434

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Custom.</b>		
It is in vain to appeal to custom in unlawful things.	v.	91, 272
They are to be bewailed who follow unlawful customs.	vi.	349

**Cross of Christ.**

Was sought with great zeal and eagerness by St. Helen, and found and taken up by her with great joy.	xii.	401
Was held in the highest honor.	xii.	406
Was exalted by her, whereas before it had been held in execration.	xii.	414

**Cross and Suffering.**

Eagerly desired by many holy servants of God.	xii.	404
How the holy apostle St. Andrew longed for it.	xii.	85
And St. Lawrence.	xii.	234
By it our virtue must be tried.	xii.	239
Is necessary in order to go to heaven; must therefore be accepted willingly.	xi.	166
	& xii.	405
We should bear it readily and willingly.	xii.	406
Nay, rejoice at it.	xii.	409
God is highly honored by our patiently bearing the cross.	xii.	415
The sufferings of Christ should encourage us to bear the cross with patience.	xi.	166
To suffer great crosses and pains with joy is a great virtue.	xii.	234
We bear even small crosses with impatience, because we have but little virtue.	xii.	242
They may expect a great reward who suffer much with patience.	xii.	163
Complaint against those who do not wish to suffer for Christ's sake.	xii.	88

**—D.—****David.**

Teaches how we are to guard our only soul.	i.	226
--	----	-----

**Danger.**

We are in constant danger of falling into sin.	vi.	267
God helps His servants in a wonderful manner in those dangers into which He sends them; but not those who seek danger.	vi.	318
In the unavoidable dangers of our state we must trust in God.	vi.	325
What means we must use against the dangers that threaten the soul.	vi.	333
We should often think of what our death is like to be.	xi.	461
In the dangers of the soul that we cannot avoid we must arm ourselves with the fear of God.	xii.	262
To consort with the wicked is very dangerous.	xii.	255



	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Dances.</b>		
In nightly gatherings are very dangerous occasions of sin. - - - - -	iv.	209
<b>Day.</b>		
The first day of the year is especially a day of salvation. - - - - -	ii.	494
Only the present day belongs to us. - - - - -	ii.	497
If that day is ill-spent, a wicked life is the consequence. - - - - -	ii.	498
In what manner people of every condition may use the present day well. - - - - -	ii.	498
<b>Death.</b>		
In death all must leave their property and wealth to others. - - - - -	iii.	92
As we are in life, so we shall be in death. - - - - -	vi.	200
The frequent recollection of death is a powerful means of leading a good life. - - - - -	ix.	23
How this recollection should be made. - - - - -	ix.	35
We should prepare for death our whole lives long. - - - - -	ix.	51
The way and manner of making this preparation. - - - - -	ix.	57
We shall die but once. - - - - -	ix.	60
Uncertainty of the time of death. - - - - -	ix.	70
How liable we are to be surprised by the approach of death. - - - - -	ix.	84
Unhappy death of the wicked. - - - - -	ix.	161
Comfort of a good conscience in death. - - - - -	ix.	174
Joyful death of the just. - - - - -	ix.	186
We can wish for nothing better than a happy death. - - - - -	ix.	200
The death of the just is joyous. - - - - -	xi.	455
	& xii.	361
In death we learn the vanity of earthly things. - - - - -	xi.	157
<b>Death, Hour of.</b>		
Is the most dangerous and terrible hour. - - - - -	vii.	488
The just need not fear it, because they shall be protected by their angels guardian. - - - - -	vii.	488
<b>Debts.</b>		
Not to pay them when one can is an injustice. - - - - -	iii.	134
<b>Declaration of Sins.</b>		
What we must declare in confession. - - - - -	v.	397
Even the number of grievous sins must be declared. - - - - -	v.	407
How we must declare our sins in confession. - - - - -	v.	410
They must be declared with humility; a point in which many are wanting. - - - - -	v.	411
They must be declared with candor. - - - - -	v.	418
DELIBERATION IN THE CHOICE OF A STATE. <i>See State.</i>		
<b>Departed.</b>		
Special honor shown to the departed is a sign of the high esteem in which they are held on account of their virtues. - - - - -	xi.	255
<b>Detraction.</b>		
Is a grievous, dangerous sin. - - - - -	iv.	315

	VOL.	PAGE
Contrary to the love of our neighbor. - - -	iv.	353
Robs him of his good name. - - - - -	iv.	356
Detractors are punished by God. - - - - -	v.	362
It is an almost insuperable difficulty to restore the good name taken away by detraction. - - -	iv.	365
There are circumstances in which one is excused from restoring his neighbor's good name, lessened by detraction. - - - - -	iv.	375
All should avoid this sin. - - - - -	iv.	372
One can detract in many ways. - - - - -	iv.	377
Vain excuses by which the detractor seeks to palliate his sin. - - - - -	iv.	382
How they sin who listen to detraction. - - - - -	iv.	389
How to act so as not to sin by listening to detraction. - - -	iv.	394
Even in confession we must not take away another's good name. - - - - -	iv.	359

#### Descent.

One should not extol himself on account of his noble descent. - - - - -	iii.	60
---	------	----

#### Devil.

Tries to keep people away from sermons. - - -	i.	103
Sets a high value on the human soul. - - -	i.	216
Finds many who help him to ruin their souls. - - -	i.	231
Is readily satisfied with a small service from a man, knowing that in time he will obtain a greater. - - -	iii.	371
It is a terrible thing to ask help from the devil. - - -	iii.	383
It is done by those who seek advice from sorcerers. - - -	iii.	384
The devil is not to be trusted in what he says of the future, and is very apt to deceive. - - - - -	iii.	388
Present hidden and visible things he can know of, but even in such matters he is wont to deceive men. - - -	iii.	389
Why he wishes to have superstitious practices mixed with holy things. - - - - -	iii.	412
How foolish to seek help from the devil through superstition. - - - - -	iii.	421
The devil seeks to distract the minds of the hearers during sermons. - - - - -	iv.	124
Most men take sides with him. - - - - -	iv.	187
It is not allowed to curse him. - - - - -	iv.	417
He endeavors to keep sinners from sermons. - - -	v.	14
His power over sinners. - - - - -	v.	67
He tries to disturb prayer. - - - - -	vii.	543
He is our worst enemy; but the pious need not fear him. Use of the temptations of the devil on the way to heaven. - - - - -	x.	313, 319
He instigated the condemnation of Christ to death. - - -	xi.	289
He was deprived of his power by the death of Christ. - - -	xi.	291

#### Devotion.

To no purpose does the sinner trust his salvation to certain devotions. - - - - -	v.	207
---	----	-----

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Devotion, Works of.</b>		
How false the hopes of heaven that rest on certain works of devotion while the commandments are neglected. - - - - -	x.	254
<b>Dress.</b>		
Indecency in dress a great source of scandal. - -	iv.	289
A point in which there is little hope of amendment.	iv.	289
<b>Drunkeness.</b>		
Many shorten their lives by immoderate drinking. -	iii.	288
How wicked that is. - - - - -	iii.	289
How blind. - - - - -	iii.	289
How wrongly they act who provoke others to excessive drinking. - - - - -	iii.	290
How foolish they who allow themselves to be persuaded thereto. - - - - -	iii.	292
How foolish to drink excessively to the health of others.	iii.	292
The family is brought to ruin by excessive drinking; how wicked and foolish. - - - - -	iii.	295
They who are guilty of such conduct occasion many sins. - - - - -	iii.	300
Drunkards lose their good name. - - - - -	iii.	301
Drunkness is a most shameful vice in woman. -	iii.	304
Deliberate and complete drunkness is a mortal sin.	iii.	308
By it a man runs the risk of losing his soul. - -	iii.	311
Habitual drunkards generally die an unhappy death.	iii.	312
Drunkness is not allowed under any pretext. - -	iii.	313
They who make others drunk commit a grievous sin.	iii.	314
The habit of excessive drinking is in many cases the occasion of many sins. - - - - -	iii.	315
How wives are to act with drunken husbands. - -	iii.	317
<b>—E.—</b>		
<b>Ears.</b>		
The ears sometimes deceive us in what we hear from others. - - - - -	iv.	330
<b>Edmund, St.</b>		
How the mother of St. Edmund instructed him in the fear of God. - - - - -	ii.	38
<b>Elect.</b>		
Hope of the pious although there are few elect. -	x.	402
Signs of election: hearing the word of God. - - -	x.	434
Frequent and worthy communion. - - - - -	x.	447
Patience in trials. - - - - -	x.	477
Confident resignation of one's soul to the hands of God.	x.	489
<b>End.</b>		
We should often consider our last end. - - -	ix.	9

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Enemies.</b>		
Should be borne with patiently. - - - - -	xii.	221
Should be loved. - - - - -	xii.	227
<b>Envy.</b>		
What it is. - - - - -	iii.	211
How common a vice. - - - - -	iii.	212
The envious man is a fool. - - - - -	iii.	215
Envy strives most maliciously against the love of our neighbor. - - - - -	iii.	223
From it come almost all other sins against charity. -	iii.	226
It is a cruelty. - - - - -	iii.	229
It is a diabolical vice. - - - - -	iii.	231
The envious must expect severe punishment. - - -	iii.	233
How they should act who are envied. - - - - -	iii.	234
<b>Eternity.</b>		
We should diligently prepare for eternity, that we may have something to live on when we come there.	ix.	16
The frequent meditation of eternity is useful and necessary to all men. - - - - -	x.	504
<b>Eternal Happiness.</b>		
Hope of the pious to gain eternal happiness, although they may have formerly committed many grievous sins. - - - - -	x	376
<b>Evening.</b>		
Every Christian has good reason to examine his conscience in the evening. - - - - -	ii.	480
The advantage of this practice. - - - - -	ii.	485
<b>Extravagance in Dress.</b>		
How common it is to-day, and how it draws down public calamities. - - - - -	vi.	487
<b>Eyes.</b>		
They deceive us sometimes. - - - - -	iv.	329
Must be carefully guarded if we wish to avoid sin. -	vi.	234
They betray us to evil. - - - - -	vi.	235
Very dangerous to look at another's beauty. - - -	vi.	236
Still more dangerous to look at impure pictures and statues. - - - - -	vi.	245
The eyes must be carefully guarded if we do not wish to lose the grace of God. - - - - -	vii.	23
— F. —		
<b>Faith.</b>		
What is a dead, what a living faith. - - - - -	iii.	24
A dead faith is of no use to salvation. - - - - -	iii.	25
Works must harmonize with faith. - - - - -	iii.	26

	VOL.	PAGE
From the want of a lively faith comes irreverence to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. - - -	iii.	450
<b>Faith, Catholic.</b>		
Is the only true faith. - - - - -	i.	20
Vocation to the true faith is the greatest benefit of God, and lays us under an obligation of the deepest gratitude. - - - - -	i.	24
This faith is necessary to salvation. - - - - -	i.	25
For without it no other benefit of God can help us. - - - - -	i.	25
God has called us to this faith in preference to countless heretics and infidels. - - - - -	i.	26
A special benefit to be born and bred in this faith at a time when the Church enjoys peace and tranquillity. - - - - -	i.	28
<b>Fasting : Lenten Fasting.</b>		
Holy people grew old in fasting. - - - - -	iii.	254
Duty of fasting. - - - - -	iii.	260
Manner of fasting. - - - - -	iii.	263
Vain excuses of those who seek to be dispensed from fasting. - - - - -	iii.	263
Fasting does not injure the health. - - - - -	iii.	267
How rigorously the early Christians fasted. - - - - -	iii.	269
Object of fasting. - - - - -	iii.	271
Many sin against this. - - - - -	iii.	275
Fasting tames vicious inclinations, and strengthens us against temptations. - - - - -	iii.	278
Everything in man should fast. - - - - -	iii.	280
We are bound under sin to keep Lent. - - - - -	vi.	24
The law of fasting is easily observed. - - - - -	vi.	25
To no purpose do people say they cannot fast. - - - - -	vi.	28
Fasting does not injure health. - - - - -	vi.	31
Fasting is the best and easiest of all penances. - - - - -	vi.	41
How wrong to determine to avoid fasting. - - - - -	vi.	44
Fasting is necessary in order to keep from sin. - - - - -	vi.	48
<b>Fashion.</b>		
It is offensive to God to follow unlawful fashions. - - - - -	iv.	251
Such conduct is very wicked, and draws down the anger of God. - - - - -	iv.	259
Many follow the fashion in omitting their prayers and in cursing and swearing. - - - - -	iv.	252
And dress and live extravagantly, while they do not pay their debts. - - - - -	iv.	253
In acts of injustice. - - - - -	iv.	254
In excessive drinking. - - - - -	iv.	255
In neglecting their children. - - - - -	iv.	255
In scandalous dress. - - - - -	iv.	256
<b>Felix, St., Archbishop of Treves.</b>		
Was a special benefactor of the city of Treves. - - - - -	xii.	320
<b>Fault-finding.</b>		
To find fault with and condemn the actions of others is contrary to the love of our neighbor. - - - - -	iv.	324



	VOL.	PAGE
He who does that neglects the advantage of his own soul. - - - - -	iv.	337
He encroaches on the rights of the Almighty. - - -	iv.	344

**Flattery.**

Is a kind of evil conversation. - - - - -	iv.	315
---	-----	-----

**Forgiveness.**

The forgiveness of sins is one of the greatest benefits of God. - - - - -	vi.	102
How readily and joyfully God forgives sins. - - -	vi.	109

**Friend, Friendship.**

Faithful, constant friendship is rare. - - - - -	xi.	326
Christ is the best and truest friend, since He still loves men although He is in heaven. - - -	xi.	328
Friends in need are the rarest. - - - - -	xii.	52
St. Joseph is a friend and helper in the greatest necessity, namely, in the hour of death. - - -	xii.	53

**—G.—****Gatherings.**

Nightly gatherings of both sexes are very dangerous occasions of evil. - - - - -	iv.	209
--	-----	-----

**Gluttony.**

In what this vice consists. - - - - -	iii.	237
How one can sin by it. - - - - -	iii.	238
It is very general. - - - - -	iii.	239
Marks of gluttony. - - - - -	iii.	241
It is punished by God. - - - - -	iii.	247
Injures the health very much. - - - - -	iii.	249
How foolish the gluttonous are. - - - - -	iii.	256

**God.**

The love of God for us men in giving each of us an angel guardian. - - - - -	i.	53
God is the architect of the human soul. - - - - -	i.	213
And has carefully made it to His own image. - - -	i.	214
He has a great esteem for it. - - - - -	i.	214
Without His help no means are of any avail. - - -	i.	351
He orders all according to His pleasure. - - - - -	i.	353
They who act without or against God have no good luck. - - - - -	i.	354
How we must behave to God in all our actions in order to have good luck. - - - - -	i.	360
Confidence in God. <i>See Confidence.</i>		
God can help us in all circumstances. - - - - -	ii.	405
He has a care for us even in the least things. - - -	ii.	406
His omnipotence can do all things. - - - - -	ii.	408
He wishes to turn everything to our greater good. -	ii.	408
He has promised to have a care of those who trust in Him. - - - - -	ii.	411

	VOL.	PAGE
He is the supreme Lord, who must be served in all and above all. - - - - -	iii.	369
That service is not rendered Him by those who are not faithful to Him in small things. - - - - -	iii.	369
He wishes to have our hearts altogether or not at all. - - - - -	iii.	373
They who neglect small things in His service do not render Him a pleasing service. - - - - -	iii.	374
They do not please Him. - - - - -	iii.	375
He does not love God who offends Him even in small things. - - - - -	iii.	376
God is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. - - - - -	iii.	453
He alone can harm us, and is therefore the only one to be feared. - - - - -	iv.	246
He is a great, almighty Lord. - - - - -	iv.	496
What is required to please God. - - - - -	iii.	98
God's patience in bearing with the sinner is, of all His perfections, the most wonderful. - - - - -	iii.	203
He shows His almighty power by patiently bearing the offences offered Him. - - - - -	iii.	343
Contempt of God is the greatest sin. - - - - -	iii.	477
God is our best Father. - - - - -	v.	321
We should be afraid to offend God. - - - - -	v.	313
He forgets forever the offences endured from the sinner when the latter repents. - - - - -	vi.	117
He heaps on the penitent more graces and gifts than on many an innocent man. - - - - -	vi.	123
Most sins come from forgetfulness of God. - - - - -	vi.	269
God sees all things, and no one can hide himself from Him. - - - - -	vi.	275
God uses small things to punish us, that we may know His almighty power. - - - - -	vi.	475
He can easily help us in public calamities. - - - - -	vi.	496
He increases His glory by bearing with the sinner. - - - - -	vi.	341
The mercy of God is great in bearing with and receiving the sinner. - - - - -	v.	157
Hatred of God towards sinners. - - - - -	v.	160
The constant recollection of the presence of God is the best means of avoiding sin. - - - - -	vi.	265
The strict justice of God appears in the punishment of the angels. - - - - -	v.	306
The sinner will be publicly put to shame in the judgment. - - - - -	v.	435
Without the grace of God no sinner can obtain forgiveness. - - - - -	v.	9, 240
God is wont to give His grace only when the heart is prepared to receive it. - - - - -	v.	10
The goodness of God in calling sinners to repentance. - - - - -	v.	36
The goodness of God in protecting the sinner. - - - - -	v.	143
The goodness of God to penitents is wonderfully great. - - - - -	vi.	116
The love of God for him who has done penance. - - - - -	v.	236
The honor of God is the greatest good that God possesses. - - - - -	viii.	92
God has an earnest will to save all men. - - - - -	x.	339
He gives to all men, as far as He is concerned, means enough of salvation. - - - - -	x.	352

	VOL.	PAGE
Even to the most savage people God gives sufficient means of salvation. - - - - -	x.	365
Why He does not give to all the same means of salvation. - - - - -	x.	371
It is presumption to pry into and criticise the decrees of God. - - - - -	ix.	284
We must look on all God's decrees and arrangements as most just, although we do not understand them.	ix.	295

**God, the Lord.**

Must be loved because He is Our Lord. - - - - -	vii.	27
God is an almighty Lord; therefore He must be feared and loved. - - - - -	vii.	42
God is worthy of infinite love. - - - - -	vii.	56
The beauty of God. - - - - -	vii.	58
Few men love their God truly. - - - - -	vii.	71
We should take counsel from God in all things. - - - - -	vii.	227
Outside of God there is no true joy to be found. - - - - -	viii.	340

**Gratitude.**

What great gratitude we owe God for the benefit of vocation to the true faith. - - - - -	i.	24
What great gratitude we should show the holy guardian angels. - - - - -	i.	59
God deserves and requires from us an unceasing gratitude. - - - - -	vii.	429
He requires it that He may do us all the more good. - - - - -	vii.	442
As often as we ask a new favor from God we should thank Him for past favors. - - - - -	vii.	447
The number of benefits we have received should make us always grateful to God. - - - - -	vii.	453
True gratitude consists in the love of God. - - - - -	vii.	466
Most men are ungrateful to God. - - - - -	vii.	71
We should thank God for having been preserved from heresy. - - - - -	vii.	492
The gratitude we owe the holy angels. - - - - -	vii.	478
We owe gratitude to Christ for having suffered and died for us. - - - - -	xi.	78

**Grace.**

What sanctifying grace is. - - - - -	xi.	393
What helping or actual grace is. - - - - -	xi.	393
Mary was full of both. - - - - -	xi.	395
Yet always endeavored to increase them. - - - - -	xi.	397
We complain without cause of the want of grace, for it is given us in abundance. - - - - -	xi.	399
We do not care about increasing it. - - - - -	xi.	402
Therefore God justly withholds many graces from us. - - - - -	xi.	403
The misuse of the grace of God caused the fall of Judas. - - - - -	xii.	213

**Grave, Burial.**

The grave of Christ was glorious and a proof of His divinity. - - - - -	xi.	254
---	-----	-----

	VOL.	PAGE
This is shown in our own days by His grave among the Turks. - - - - -	xi.	264
Pious men have always desired to have their graves in holy places. - - - - -	xi.	266

#### Guardian Angel.

He is an ungrateful man who forgets and grieves his guardian angel. - - - - -	iv.	31
The great care taken of their charges by the guardian angels. - - - - -	iv.	32
Many men are ungrateful to them. - - - - -	iv.	38
Wo to those who are ungrateful to their guardian angels. - - - - -	iv.	41

#### —H.—

#### Habit.

Sinful habits must be laid aside at once. - - - - -	v.	60
It is difficult to amend vicious habits. - - - - -	v.	61
And becomes with the lapse of time all the more difficult. - - - - -	v.	64
The inveterate habit of sin is hardly to be amended without a miracle. - - - - -	xii.	321
Yet it was overcome by St. Augustine. - - - - -	xii.	323

#### Happiness.

In what true happiness consists. - - - - -	i.	76
It is not to be found in worldly goods. - - - - -	i.	76
It is to be found only in Christ, Our Lord. - - - - -	i.	82
And yet is jeast thought about by blind mortals. - - - - -	i.	83

#### Hatred.

Looks only at the faults of others to condemn them. - - - - -	iv.	324
Interprets everything, even the inward intention, in a bad sense. - - - - -	iv.	326

#### Health.

What a great good it is. - - - - -	iii.	284
How carefully it must be looked after. - - - - -	iii.	285
It is a great good, for the sake of which we are ready to use any means. - - - - -	xii.	245

#### Heart.

Should be carefully guarded from evil thoughts. - - - - -	vi.	219
How to guard the heart from evil thoughts. - - - - -	vi.	236

HEARERS. *See Word of God.*

#### Heathens.

The ancient heathens honored their heroes as gods, that they might behave as gods. - - - - -	i.	44
They held it as a dishonor for one who had acted the part of a god on the stage to remain a slave. - - - - -	i.	47

## Heaven.

Most people are brought to heaven by violence by means of crosses and trials. - - - - -	viii.	327
The desire of heaven is inflamed by the trials of the just and the prosperity of the wicked. - - -	ix.	256
Vocation of the elect to heaven. - - - - -	x.	85
Joyful entry of the elect into heaven. - - - - -	x.	98
Joy of the souls in heaven outside of God. - - -	x.	110
Joy in heaven in the vision of God. - - - - -	x.	125
Pleasures of sense of the elect in heaven. - - -	x.	136
Joyful society of the elect in heaven. - - - - -	x.	149
Eternal duration of heavenly joys. - - - - -	x.	163
Increase of heavenly glory during this life. - - -	x.	176
On the easiness of the means of increasing heavenly glory. - - - - -	x.	185
In what this increased glory consists. - - - - -	x.	180
Frequent recollection of heaven and meditation thereon. -	x.	196
Necessity of this. - - - - -	x.	202
Folly of men who take little trouble to gain heaven. -	x.	212
False hope they have of heaven who do not keep the commandments. - - - - -	x.	239
False hopes of heaven that rest on certain devotions. -	x.	254
False hopes of heaven that rest on a false devotion to Mary. - - - - -	x.	270
False hope of the sinner in the mercy of God. - - -	x.	282
Comfort of the just in being on the right way to heaven. -	x.	297
The devil is not to be feared on the way to heaven. -	x.	302
The use of the temptations of the devil on the way to heaven. - - - - -	x.	324
In heaven our hearts shall be fully satisfied. - - -	xi.	321
There are true, eternal, perfect goods. - - - - -	xi.	321
Folly of men who have so little desire for heaven. -	xi.	323

## Helen, St.

A mother of Christendom. - - - - -	xii.	392
Gave her subjects a holy example. - - - - -	xii.	394
Gained countless souls for Christ. - - - - -	xii.	395
Left the Church a rich legacy in the beautiful temples she built. - - - - -	xii.	397
In the relics she collected. - - - - -	xii.	398
But especially in the example of her virtues and life, which she left behind for our imitation. - - -	xii.	398
Helen sought the cross of Christ with desire, and in seeking it overcame all difficulties. - - - - -	xii.	401
She found and received it with joy. - - - - -	xii.	402
Held it in the highest honor. - - - - -	xii.	406
She exalted the cross, whereas before it had been held in execration. - - - - -	xii.	413

## Hell.

The eternal fire of hell. - - - - -	x.	13
Thoughts of the damned in hell. - - - - -	x.	21
Pain of sense in hell. - - - - -	x.	36
Company of the damned. - - - - -	x.	48



	VOL.	PAGE
Pain of the damned in the thought of heaven. - - -	x.	59
God shows His justice in the damned. - - -	x.	73
To us who are still alive He shows His mercy and kindness. - - - - -	x.	78
<b>Heretics.</b>		
Their false doctrine about matrimony. - - -	ii.	327
They can by prayer obtain the grace of the true faith.	vi.	262
<b>Heresy.</b>		
Is the greatest punishment for a country. - - -	vii.	498
<b>Holy Ghost.</b>		
How the Holy Ghost comes to souls. - - -	vii.	12
How we are to know that the Holy Ghost has come to and remains with us. - - - - -	vii.	14
How we are to keep the Holy Ghost with us. - - -	vii.	21
His sending proves the wonderful love of Christ for the world. - - - - -	xi.	325
<b>Holiness of Life.</b>		
Consists in doing the will of God, and in the perfect performance of the duties of state. - - - -	vii.	146
It is easy to live holly. - - - - -	vii	152
<b>Honor.</b>		
Honor and glory of Christians in becoming children of God in baptism. - - - - -	i.	36
This honor is not much esteemed by many. - - -	i.	39
High honors change manners. - - - - -	i.	43
Most men endeavor to grasp at worldly honors. - - -	iii.	40
Honor before the world is nothing of itself. - - -	iii.	41
The ambitious find in honorable positions nothing but chagrin and trouble. - - - - -	iii.	42
To be honored is not wrong, but to seek honor is wrong. - - - - -	iii.	47
What brings us honor before God and the world. - - -	iii.	54
<b>Hope.</b>		
Hope in God must be all the greater, the greater our necessity. - - - - -	vi.	503
<b>Household.</b>		
The welfare of a household depends on the good training of the domestics. - - - - -	ii.	205
<b>Human Respect.</b>		
It is disgraceful to do evil or omit good through human respect. - - - - -	iv.	225
It is very unjust to God. - - - - -	iv.	237

VOL. PAGE

**Humility.**

Without humility purity of heart will not last long. -	i.	307
How one can preserve humility under all circumstances.	iii.	66
Signs of a false humility. - - - -	iii.	71
Signs and effects of true humility. - - - -	iii.	73
It is so rare and yet so necessary to salvation. - - -	iii.	74
Means of attaining it. - - - - -	iii.	75
Without humility no grace is obtained from God. -	v.	411
The sinner must be humble, especially when at confession. - - - - -	v.	412
In many penitents humility is wanting. - - - -	v.	415
It makes men great in the sight of God. - - - -	viii.	296
It brings them honor before the world also. - - -	viii.	304
Christ the example of humility to all. - - - -	xi.	417
His extreme humility in His birth. - - - - -	xi.	31
Puts to shame the pride of the world. - - - -	xi.	35
Humility of Mary, the Mother of God. - - - -	xi.	363
Humility of St. Augustine. - - - - -	xii.	316
Humility in the midst of honors is admirable. - -	xi.	407
Is rare among men nowadays. - - - - -	xi.	411
Is necessary to all men to please God and gain heaven.	xi.	413

**Husband.**

Should be careful not to be led into evil by his wife.	i.	344
Is master of the wife, but it should be a mastery of love. - - - - -	i.	376
Sins if he ill-treats his wife. - - - - -	i.	381
If he does not give her proper support. - - - -	i.	381
If he treats her like a servant. - - - - -	i.	382
If he hates her and loves others. - - - - -	i.	382
How wicked such husbands are. - - - - -	i.	383
They must expect severe punishment. - - - - -	i.	384
There is no excuse for them. - - - - -	i.	384
The husbands are to be pitied who have bad wives. -	i.	407
How they should act. - - - - -	i.	408
How they should act so as not to give their wives an occasion for jealousy. - - - - -	i.	416

**—I.—**

**Idleness.**

A constantly idle, luxurious life is a sinful life. -	ii.	239
An idle man deserves to die prematurely. - - -	ix.	110
Regret of the dying for the time lost in idleness. -	ix.	121
Idleness must be avoided if we wish to go to heaven.	x.	227

**Ignorance.**

Gross ignorance of the sinner. - - - - -	v.	98
Wilfully affected ignorance of the sinner in matters concerning his salvation. - - - - -	v.	102
Culpable ignorance does not excuse sin. - - - -	v.	114
It is widespread among men. - - - - -	v.	117

**Imagination.**

From the imagination come unnecessary troubles. -	i.	434
---	----	-----

	VOL.	PAGE
We should get rid of such images. - - - - -	i.	437
Our happiness or misery in this world consists mostly in the imagination. - - - - -	viii.	147
<b>Impurity.</b>		
In a Christian is less to be excused than in Jews or heathens. - - - - -	i.	90
Wickedness of those who lead the innocent into im- purity. - - - - -	i.	299
No sin is too great for the impure man to commit. -	iii.	188
He is hard to bring to repentance. - - - - -	iii.	190
Even on his death-bed. - - - - -	iii.	195
No vice so arouses the anger of God as impurity. -	iii.	197
It is the vice most frequently punished by God. -	iii.	203
The impure are ungrateful to their guardian angels. -	iv.	59
<b>Impure Pictures.</b>		
Are most treacherous objects for the eyes. - -	vi.	245
<b>Impure Songs and Conversations.</b>		
Give great scandal. - - - - -	iv.	312
Are unbecoming a Christian. - - - - -	iv.	442
Many innocent people are thereby corrupted and ruined forever. - - - - -	iv.	443
Confessors should be cautious in questioning about impurity. - - - - -	iv.	446
Preachers should be very cautious when speaking of this vice. - - - - -	iv.	446
The impure should accuse themselves with decency in confession. - - - - -	iv.	446
They who are given to impure talk have a sure sign of reprobation. - - - - -	iv.	447
It is no excuse for them to say that they have no bad intention. - - - - -	iv.	449
Double meaning words are the most dangerous. -	iv.	449
<b>Impure Things.</b>		
Impure books are dangerous and forbidden. - -	vi.	242
<b>Ingratitude.</b>		
For the grace of vocation to the true faith draws down a deeper damnation. - - - - -	i.	31
Ingratitude to God is an abominable vice most hate- ful to Him. - - - - -	iv.	7
In what it consists. - - - - -	iv.	8
Is put to shame by lifeless things. - - - - -	iv.	13
Most men are ungrateful to God. - - - - -	iv.	13
They will be abandoned by God. - - - - -	iv.	17
Those who owe God most of all are always the most ungrateful. - - - - -	iv.	20
How and in what manner God is wont to punish the ungrateful, even in this life. - - - - -	iv.	43
Ungrateful men die prematurely. - - - - -	iv.	51

	VOL.	PAGE
Ingratitude of those who think seldom of the passion of Christ. - - - - -	xi.	80
Monstrous ingratitude of men in not loving Christ, although He died for them. - - - -	xi.	105

**Inclinations.**

Evil inclinations deceive the conscience. - - -	v.	95
They bring temporal and eternal misfortunes. - -	vii.	96

**Inconstancy.**

In good is common among men. - - - -	iv.	164
--------------------------------------	-----	-----

**Injustice, Unjust.**

Brings on poverty and eternal ruin. - - - -	ii.	124
There is much injustice in the world. - - - -	iii.	126
The unjust must expect a strict judgment. - -	iii.	138
Injustice brings no advantage in temporal things, and hurls one into everlasting damnation. - -	iii.	139
How foolish they who seek to make profit by injustice.	iii.	152
Foolish the parents who seek to enrich their children by injustice. - - - - -	iii.	158

**Inspiration.**

Whence the divine inspirations come. - - - -	iv.	69
The contempt and neglect of them may be the origin of eternal ruin. - - - -	iv.	72
Their conduct is very dangerous to the soul who refuse to look on good thoughts as inspirations from God. - - - - -	iv.	83
In weighty matters one should not take all impulses and ideas as divine inspirations, but seek advice from others. - - - - -	iv.	86
Otherwise one may easily be misled by the devil. -	iv.	88
It is most dangerous not to follow divine inspirations.	iv.	89
Not to follow them at once is to run the risk of an unhappy death. - - - - -	iv.	93
God has fixed a certain number of inspirations for every one. - - - - -	iv.	100
They are not recognized by many. - - - - -	xi.	68
Others refuse to follow them at once. - - - -	xi.	70
They run a great risk. - - - - -	xi.	71

**Insults.**

Should be borne meekly. - - - - -	iii.	345
-----------------------------------	------	-----

**Intention.**

In all our actions should be directed to God. - -	vii.	172
---	------	-----

**Intemperance.**

In eating and drinking leads to impurity. - - -	iii.	277
Makes the mind earthly and brutish. - - - -	iii.	277

**Irreverence.**

Towards Christ in the Blessed Sacrament comes from the want of a lively faith. - - - - -	iii.	450
--	------	-----

	VOL.	PAGE
Irreverence in church comes from the fact that people forget the great Lord who dwells therein. -	iii.	462
<b>Isaac.</b>		
An example of childlike obedience. - - -	<b>i.</b>	191
—J.—		
<b>James the Great, Apostle.</b>		
An unwearied laborer for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. - - - -	xii.	90
Underwent all sorts of toil and difficulties for Christ.	xii.	91
Although his labor was not very fruitful. - - -	xii.	92
But he did not despair on that account. - - -	xii.	96
How God rewarded him during life and after death.	xii.	98
<b>James the Less, Apostle.</b>		
Was like Christ in person. - - - -	xii.	135
But especially in virtues and disposition. - -	xii.	135
<b>Jealousy.</b>		
What it is. - - - -	i.	411
Nothing is worse in the married state. - - - -	i.	412
What evils and sins come from it. - - - -	i.	412
How married people should act so as to avoid jealousy.	i.	414
<b>John, St., Apostle.</b>		
A son of Mary. - - - -	xii.	106
Not merely in name. - - - -	xii.	107
For he had all the qualities of a true son of Mary. -	xii.	108
<b>John, St., the Baptist.</b>		
A penitent, and therefore the greatest wonder. - -	xii.	20
Led a most penitential life from his very childhood to his death. - - - -	xii.	21
Although he was quite innocent and confirmed in grace.	xii.	22
Nor had he the example of the penitent Saviour. -	xii.	26
<b>Joseph, St., Foster-father of Christ.</b>		
The best of patrons. - - - -	xii.	32
His great wisdom appears from the office to which God appointed him. - - - -	xii.	33
His dignity from the fact that he had God as his Son, and therefore after Mary he is above almost all the other saints. - - - -	xii.	34
Hence he is a most powerful advocate for his children in all their necessities. - - - -	xii.	36
Well, then, for those who honor him as their patron.	xii.	38
He had much to suffer in his poor state. - - -	xii.	42
Before and after the birth of Christ. - - - -	xii.	42
Especially in the flight into Egypt. - - - -	xii.	43
in his daily intercourse with Christ; for he was in all things resigned to the will of God. - - - -	xii.	45



	VOL.	PAGE
His death was hard, because it separated him from the Holy Family. - - - - -	xii.	46
Because of his holy desire for a longer life. - - -	xii.	47
Because of his entry into Limbo. - - - - -	xii.	48
Yet in all he resigned himself into the hands of God.	xii.	49
He is a comforter and helper in the extreme necessity of approaching death. - - - - -	xii.	55
Therefore all should honor and call upon him with the utmost devotion. - - - - -	xii.	59

### Joy.

The joy of a good conscience on account of good works is most pleasing to God. - - - - -	viii.	415
Is useful to the soul. - - - - -	viii.	421
Is not vainglory. - - - - -	viii.	426
Is not opposed to the Scripture. - - - - -	viii.	437

### Jubilee.

Is a favorable time of grace, and should not be neglected. - - - - -	vi.	370
Difference between the Jubilee and ordinary confessions. - - - - -	vi.	378
Wickedness of those who are not converted during the Jubilee. - - - - -	vi.	382
Their conduct is deplorable who are not converted during the Jubilee. - - - - -	vi.	396
The Jubilee is an advantageous peace between God and the sinner. - - - - -	vi.	409

### Judas the Traitor.

By his carelessness and abuse of the grace of God lost his apostolic office and eternal glory. - - -	xii.	213
The beginning of his fall and eternal ruin was the neglect of small faults. - - - - -	xii.	214

### Judge.

God will be our judge on the last day. - - -	ix.	366
He will also judge us as man, but He will be quite changed to sinners. - - - - -	ix.	379
The Judge as our Saviour will condemn sinners. - -	ix.	391
The mere sight of the Judge, as of a man like to us, will be intolerable to the sinner. - - -	ix.	411
The pious will have a gracious Lord in this judge. -	x.	390

### Judgment, Last.

Is necessary to vindicate the justice and the providence of God. - - - - -	ix.	272
And to the vindication of His pious servants. - - -	ix.	307
The terrible signs of the last judgment will frighten sinners, and fill the just with consolation. - -	ix.	329
They will be effects of the divine mercy to sinners. -	ix.	341
The last day will come unexpectedly. - - -	ix.	352
Therefore we should be prepared for it even now. -	ix.	359

	VOL.	PAGE
No one can escape the last judgment, in which the proud shall be humbled and the humble exalted.	ix.	419, 425
Strict examination in the judgment. - - -	ix.	432
Every sinful act will then be made manifest, to the great shame of the wicked. - - -	ix.	440
Accusation of the sinner in judgment. - - -	ix.	446
Conviction of the sinner in judgment. - - -	ix.	459
Terrible sentence on the sinner. - - -	ix.	472
On the last day the saints will be our judges, and condemn us, if we do not live holily, like them. -	xii.	420
Terrible to have then to appear before those judges. -	xii.	421

—K.—

**Kings, the Holy Three.**

Were wonderfully obedient when called by God by the star. - - - - -	xi.	58
---	-----	----

**Knowledge.**

Of things pertaining to salvation is rare among men. -	iv.	161
Many have it, but do not live according to it. -	iv.	162

—L.—

**Laborers.**

It is a great sin to defraud laborers of their wages. -	iii.	133
---	------	-----

**Last End.**

We should not consider whether we wish to attain it or not, but rather see what means we must use to attain it. - - - - -	i.	251
---	----	-----

**Law of God.**

Should be the only guide of our lives. - - -	iv.	261
--	-----	-----

**Lawrence, St.**

A wonder of the love of God, because that love made him desire torments. - - - - -	xii.	234
And he rejoiced in them. - - - - -	xii.	236

**Lay People.**

Should hold the priest in honor. - - - - -	ii.	184
Many sin against this duty. - - - - -	ii.	195

**Life.**

The life of the Christian should be such as becomes a child of God and a brother of Christ. - - -	i.	42
It must be modelled after the will of our heavenly Father. - - - - -	i.	45
And after the example of Christ. - - - - -	i.	46

**Love.**

Impure love does not attain what it seeks. - -	iii.	170
How foolish they are who allow themselves to be entangled by impure love. - - - - -	iii.	172
Impure love has more of pain than of pleasure. - -	iii.	175

	VOL.	PAGE
It makes men hardened in sin. - - - -	iii.	183
Hinders the working of the word of God. - -	iv.	150
What the law of the love of our neighbor requires. - -	iii.	224
Love should show itself in time of need. - - - -	iv.	178
The love of our neighbor is rare among men. - - -	iv.	264
What it means to love our neighbor as ourselves. - -	iv.	274
Sinful love of our neighbor. - - - -	iv.	273
Love puts the best interpretation on everything. - -	iv.	331
In what true love consists. - - - -	vii.	73

LOVE OF CHRIST FOR MEN. *See Christ.*

**Love of Enemies.**

Is possible. - - - -	xii.	230
Is most strictly commanded by God. - - - -	xii.	231
Should be practised, after the example of St. Stephen.	xii.	227

**Love of God for Us.**

Wonderful the love of the heavenly Father in giving His own Son for us. - - - -	xi.	136
--	-----	-----

**Love of God.**

Must be proved by suffering and trial. - - - -	xii.	239
St. Lawrence proved it in the midst of torments. - -	xii.	234
St. Paul proved it by word and work. - - - -	xii.	71
And in the many hardships he endured for God's sake.	xii.	71
We show by our acts the coldness of our love. - - -	xii.	73
By impatience under contradictions. - - - -	xii.	74
We do not wish to suffer even a slight inconvenience for God's sake. - - - -	xii.	242
Inconstancy of our love for Christ. - - - -	xi.	331

**Love of Neighbor.**

Is very small with us. - - - -	xii.	74
Two kinds of works of love and mercy. - - - -	xi.	422
Mary exercised them both in favor of John and Eliza- beth in the Visitation. - - - -	xi.	422
These works surpass in merit all other good works. - -	xi.	426
We have constant occasions of doing them. - - - -	xi.	426
Are bound to them. - - - -	xi.	427
The saints show us by their example how to do them.	xi.	428
Deplorable that love has grown so cold nowadays. - -	xi.	429
Especially where the spiritual works of love and mercy are concerned, to which all are bound: fathers, heads of families, superiors. ( <i>See Neighbor.</i> ) - -	xi.	429

**Luxury.**

Is not the way to heaven. - - - -	vi.	7
Is a sinful mode of life, that leads to sin. - - - -	vi.	9, 54
Is not a Christian life. - - - -	vi.	13
Will have an unhappy end. - - - -	vi.	19

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Lying.</b>		
Is a disgraceful vice, hateful to God and men. - - -	iv.	463
Is necessarily forbidden by God and men. - - -	iv.	465
Is a common vice. - - - - -	iv.	466
Brings no temporal advantage. - - - - -	iv.	466
Opposes the divine truth. - - - - -	iv.	470
Is not allowed under any circumstances. - - -	iv.	470
Pious Christians would prefer to die rather than save themselves by a lie. - - - - -	iv.	473
To hide the truth is not lying. - - - - -	iv.	474
—M.—		
<b>Man.</b>		
Is poor and lowly in himself. - - - - -	iii.	56
Human weakness and inconstancy in good are great.	iv.	164
Human weakness is great, especially in dangerous occasions. - - - - -	vi.	298
All are bound to help to the amendment of their fellow-man. - - - - -	vi.	358
<b>Marriage, Married State.</b>		
He who wishes to enter the married state must seek advice from God. - - - - -	i.	315
Difficulties of the married state. - - - - -	i.	316
Troubles of it. - - - - -	i.	320
Since many do not seek counsel from God there are many unhappy marriages. - - - - -	i.	322
Advice for married people who have not sought advice from God. - - - - -	i.	325
False teaching of heretics about marriage. - - -	i.	327
Matrimony is a holy sacrament. - - - - -	i.	328
Must be entered into with a pure conscience. - - -	i.	328
Who are they who sin in this respect. - - - - -	i.	329
There can be no happiness in a marriage unworthily entered into. - - - - -	i.	332
The principal end and object of marriage. - - -	i.	332
They who enter on that state through mere carnal lust are often given over to the devil. - - - - -	i.	333
Marriage should be entered into with a pure love. -	i.	335
Since this is not always the case there are many unhappy marriages. - - - - -	i.	336
Lesson for those who have erred in this respect. -	i.	336
Dangers of the soul in the married state. - - -	i.	340
Dangerous duties of that state. - - - - -	i.	341
In spite of those dangers married people can remain pious if they have God as their friend. - - -	i.	348
They who wish to secure temporal prosperity in the married state must have God as their friend. -	i.	350
It is not lawful to remain in the proximate occasion of sin under pretext of future marriage. - - -	v.	379
<b>Married People.</b>		
Unity amongst them is very necessary. - - - - -	i.	364

	VOL.	PAGE
Their state is pleasing to God when they are united. - - -	i.	367
It is a happy state when they are united. - - -	i.	368
The devil seeks to disturb this union. - - -	i.	369
Unhappy the state of married people when union is wanting. - - -	i.	369
This want of union may be traced to the time before marriage. - - -	i.	372
How married people are to comfort themselves in the trials caused by children. - - -	i.	445
And when one of them is sick or dies. - - -	i.	451
In trials married people and their families learn to pray. - - -	i.	460

### Martyrs.

They honor God in a special manner by their lives and death. - - -	xii.	153
The grace of martyrdom is one of the greatest, and is therefore longed for by holy servants of God. - -	xii.	301
It is a sign of a holy life. - - -	xii.	302
The holy martyrs teach us to endure a moral martyrdom for the love of God. - - -	xii.	308

### Martyrs of Treves.

Have left their descendants the example of a holy life. - - -	xii.	286
All suffered death with the utmost bravery. - - -	xii.	295, 306
Thereby they gained great glory for the city of Treves before God and heaven. - - -	xii.	296
And made the name of Treves illustrious. - - -	xii.	297
They teach their descendants how, after their example, they are to lead a Christian life. - - -	xii.	301
They teach them also how to suffer a moral martyrdom for the faith. - - -	xii.	306

### Mary, the Mother of God.

Is a refuge of sinners. - - -	v.	186
All should love her with a tender devotion. - - -	v.	196
False hope of heaven founded on a false devotion to Mary. - - -	x.	270
The belief in her Immaculate Conception is most closely connected with a devout love for her. - - -	xi.	350
Countless proofs of the Immaculate Conception. - -	xi.	356
The unanimous voice of all men in all parts of the world testifies to it. - - -	xi.	357
The holy apostles testify to it. - - -	xi.	357
The holy Fathers. - - -	xi.	357
The authority of the Catholic Church. - - -	xi.	358
How disadvantageous it would have been for her to have been conceived in original sin. - - -	xi.	352
The truth of the Immaculate Conception confirmed by Mary herself. - - -	xi.	360
She would have preferred to lose all her other privileges than to be for a moment in original sin. -	xi.	374
Her Nativity is joyful for all, especially for the people of Treves. - - -	xi.	384



	VOL.	PAGE
The birth of Mary brought joy to the whole world.	xi.	386
She was full of sanctifying and actual grace. - -	xi.	395
She endeavored most strenuously to increase them both.	xi.	397
Mary the most humble in spite of her dignity. - -	xi.	407
She never sought to make the least show of her special graces. - - - - -	xi.	364
She always avoided praise. - - - - -	xi.	367
She always wished to be looked on as lowly. - -	xi.	368
Through her humility she was chosen to be the Mother of God. - - - - -	xi.	410
In her Visitation she performed the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in favor of John and Elizabeth. - - - - -	xi.	422
She was the most beautiful and pure of all in body and soul. - - - - -	xi.	433
And yet, like a sinner, submitted to the law of purification. - - - - -	xi.	435
Mary a perfect example of conformity with the will of God. - - - - -	xi.	444
This she showed especially in the Annunciation. - -	xi.	446
And when Joseph was about to leave her. - - -	xi.	446
In the birth of Christ in the stable. - - - - -	xi.	447
In the flight into Egypt. - - - - -	xi.	447
In the passion and death of her divine Son. - - -	xi.	448
After His death till the end of her life. - - - -	xi.	451
She thus puts to shame our discontent. - - - -	xi.	452
Mary's death was full of joy in the consideration of the past. - - - - -	xi.	455
In the consideration of the future. - - - - -	xi.	458
Mary the true ark of the covenant. - - - - -	xi.	465
She has done more good to Christians than the Jews received by means of the ark. - - - - -	xi.	466
Especially has the city of Treves much to thank her for.	xi.	469
She is a refuge of sinners. - - - - -	xi.	470
Like Judith of old, Mary saved the city from many calamities. - - - - -	xi.	474
By Mary, the true Esther, the world has been saved from eternal ruin. - - - - -	xi.	481
She often freed Christendom from calamities. - -	xi.	481
To be a child of Mary is a great grace and happiness.	xii.	105
We should endeavor to be true children of Mary. -	xii.	116

#### Mass.

It is not lawful to get Masses said with the money of others when we know the lawful owner. - -	iii.	162
---	------	-----

#### Mass, Sacrifice of.

Is infinitely holy. - - - - -	vii.	368
The priest who offers is Christ. - - - - -	vii.	372
The gift offered is also Christ. - - - - -	vii.	376
We should hear Holy Mass every day with reverence.	vii.	375 to 415
In the Mass infinite honor is offered to God. - -	vii.	383
It is an infinite atonement for our sins. - - - -	vii.	394

	VOL.	PAGE
An infinite thanksgiving for benefits received. - -	vii.	404
The source from which fresh benefits are to come. -	vii.	408
Punishment of those who despise the Holy Mass. -	vii.	414
How to hear Mass profitably. - - - - -	vii.	416
How it is that not all receive the same advantage from it.	vii.	417

**Masters and Mistresses.**

Are bound to look after the eternal welfare of their domestics. - - - - -	ii.	198
Must encourage them to good and give them good example. - - - - -	ii.	200
Many sin in this respect. - - - - -	ii.	200
They are guilty of the sins of their domestics when they do not prevent them through carelessness. -	xi.	112

**Matthias, St., Apostle.**

Was raised to the place of Judas on account of his exemplary life. - - - - -	xii.	202
Was preferred to many other holy men. - - - - -	xii.	203
Even to the just Barsabas. - - - - -	xii.	206
This privilege he gained chiefly by his humility and zealous charity. - - - - -	xii.	207

**Matthew, St., Apostle and Evangelist.**

A heroic victor over himself when he conquered avarice. - - - - -	xii.	169
And that at a time when he was actually engaged in usury. - - - - -	xii.	172
At a few words of Christ he left all things. - -	xii.	173
And himself, too, and gave all the remainder of his life to Christ. - - - - -	xii.	178

**Meditation on the Passion of Christ.**

Frequent meditation on the passion is only right. -	xi.	73
Very consoling for the just and for sinners. - -	xi.	83
Useful for all. - - - - -	xi.	91

**Men.**

Are strangers and pilgrims in this world, and are surrounded by countless dangers. - - - - -	i.	53
God has given them all different protectors against these dangers. - - - - -	i.	54
And moreover given each one an angel guardian. -	i.	54
Most men are ignorant of the art of living and dying well. - - - - -	i.	97
Therefore they must hear sermons to learn it. - -	i.	99

**Mercy of God.**

To sin because God is merciful is a sign of reprobation.	x.	282
--	----	-----

**Moment.**

On a single moment depends our eternal happiness or misery. - - - - -	ix.	60
---	-----	----

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Morning Devotions.</b>		
When many assemble together for them their prayer is the best, most useful, and pleasing to God. -	ii.	474
<b>Morning.</b>		
The best time, and that most pleasing to God, is the morning; therefore it should be especially devoted to God. - - - - -	ii.	457
Vain excuse of many that they cannot devote this time to prayer. - - - - -	ii.	463
In what morning prayer consists, and which is the most useful. - - - - -	ii.	473
<b>Mortal Sin.</b>		
They who keep for a long time from mortal sin can be sure that they are in the state of grace. - -	vi.	173
<b>Mortification.</b>		
How to mortify the outward senses. - - - - -	v.	482
Without mortification of the senses one cannot keep from sin. - - - - -	vi.	10
<b>Money, Greed of.</b>		
Leads men into all kinds of vice. - - - - -	vi.	65
Once it has taken hold of the heart it is almost invincible. - - - - -	xii.	170
But was overcome by the holy apostle St. Matthew.	xii.	171
<b>Mothers.</b>		
Sin if they do not, when able, nurse their children. -	ii.	111
—N.—		
<b>Name.</b>		
A good name is the greatest and best good. - -	iv.	356
God has a care for the good name of men. - -	iv.	358
A good name is more prized than life. - - - -	iii.	301
<b>Neighbor.</b>		
Very few love their neighbor as themselves. - -	iv.	264
Who is our neighbor. - - - - -	iv.	265
Every one is worthy of love. - - - - -	viii.	196
Christ wishes us to love our neighbor for His sake. -	viii.	190
We must love our neighbor as Christ loves us. -	viii.	198
The love of our neighbor must be patient and meek.	viii.	199
It must be beneficent. - - - - -	viii.	203
It must be general. - - - - -	viii.	207
<b>Night.</b>		
Nightly gatherings and dances are very dangerous occasions of sin. - - - - -	iv.	206

## —O.—

VOL. PAGE

**Oaths.**

Malice of unnecessary oaths. - - - - - iv. 311

**Obedience.**

Children owe obedience to their parents. - - - i. 185

The three holy kings obeyed at the first sign given by  
God. - - - - - xi. 57**Obstinacy.**In what the obstinacy of the sinner consists, and what  
a terrible punishment of sin it is. - - - v. 127**Occasion.**The occasion of sin must necessarily be removed and  
avoided forever. - - - - - v. 344Useless to think that one runs no risk of sin in the  
proximate occasion. - - - - - v. 358Under no pretext is it allowed to go into the proxi-  
mate occasion of sin. - - - - - v. 370**Original Sin.**

It is a great evil to be in original sin even for a moment. xi. 374

How disadvantageous it would have been for the  
Mother of God to have been conceived in orig-  
inal sin. - - - - - xi. 352

## —P.—

**Parents.**Hold to their children the place of kings and princes,  
nay, even of God Himself. - - - - - i. 173

They must be honored by their children in all things. i. 176

They are the best guides for their children. - - - i. 187

They are specially enlightened by God to train their  
children well. - - - - - i. 188

They are the greatest benefactors of their children. - i. 200

Therefore they must be specially loved by them. - i. 202

Their children should take more care for their sup-  
port than for that of their own wives and children. i. 208How they are to act in choosing a state for their chil-  
dren. *See State.*

They have great trials with their children. - - - i. 320

They should train up their children for their last end. ii. 7

Most of them look after the bodies, but not the souls  
of their children. - - - - - ii. 9

On the training of the children depends their salvation. ii. 13

Cries for vengeance of lost children against their par-  
ents. - - - - - ii. 16The temporal happiness of parents consists in the  
good conduct of their children. - - - - - ii. 21Children will not behave well if they are not trained  
up to piety. - - - - - ii. 21

	VOL.	PAGE
Grief caused parents by wicked children. - - -	ii.	23
Just punishment of parents when they have to suffer temporal and eternal misery for not having well trained their children. - - - - -	ii.	25
Evil training is a grievous sin in parents, and God and all heaven will demand vengeance for it. -	ii.	25
Many are lost on account of it. - - - - -	ii.	29
What good lessons they should teach their children. -	ii.	31
Many teach their children evil. - - - - -	ii.	41
What watchfulness they should exercise over their children. - - - - -	ii.	47
To what it should be extended. - - - - -	ii.	50
Great faults committed in this respect. - - - -	ii.	51
Parents should punish and correct their children when they do wrong. - - - - -	ii.	58
Most parents err in this respect. - - - - -	ii.	62
And thus bring their children to eternal ruin. -	ii.	66
They must therefore expect to be severely punished. -	ii.	67
How paternal correction is to be administered. -	ii.	70
Great faults committed by parents in this respect. -	ii.	72
Chastisement should be given with moderation and love. - - - - -	ii.	76
Parents should give their children good example. -	ii.	80
When they sin they kill many other souls. - -	ii.	87
If all parents were holy the whole world would be holy. - - - - -	ii.	90
Without the good example of parents all other means of training children are of no avail. - - -	ii.	92
Parents should pray daily for their children, and for themselves, that they may do their duty. - -	ii.	103
They are bound to provide sufficient nourishment for their children. - - - - -	ii.	106
Many faults committed by parents in this respect. -	ii.	111
Folly of parents who are too careful in providing for the temporal welfare of their children. - -	ii.	118
They should first of all look after their own souls. -	ii.	122
Unhappy the parents who seek to provide for their children by unjust means. - - - - -	ii.	124
Parents who have many children should be generous in giving alms. - - - - -	ii.	131
They should be careful not to excite envy among their children. - - - - -	iii.	233
Should keep them from nightly gatherings. - - -	iv.	221
Should especially guard against cursing. - - -	iv.	411
The curses of parents on their children have a special power. - - - - -	iv.	422
Parents are bound to look after the spiritual welfare of their children and domestics. - - - -	vi.	356
They should keep their children from bad company.	vi.	288
Their chief care is to leave their children a rich inheri- tance, instead of training them for their last end.	xii.	397
By their carelessness they participate in the sins of their children. - - - - -	xi.	113
And must expect severe punishment on that account.	xi.	115



	VOL.	PAGE
<b>PASSION OF CHRIST. See Christ.</b>		
<b>Pastors and Preachers.</b>		
Should not be cast down if with all their labor they effect but little. - - - - -	xii.	101
<b>PATIENCE. See Trials.</b>		
<b>Paul, St., Apostle.</b>		
Proved the zeal of his charity by word and work. -	xii.	71
By suffering many hardships for the love of God. -	xii.	71
He puts to shame our tepidity, our want of charity, and our impatience under contradictions. - -	xii.	73
<b>Peace.</b>		
In peace of heart consists true happiness. - - -	ii.	334
The peace of man-with God is the highest happiness.	vi.	410
How unjust he is who will not make peace with God.	vi.	419
<b>Penance.</b>		
He who has sinned grievously must do penance. - -	v.	465
	& vi.	37
Penance wrongly rejected by heretics. - - -	v.	466
The body especially should do penance. - - -	v.	473
What penances may be practised during the time of prosperity. - - - - -	v.	480
How to suffer contradictions instead of penance. -	v.	488
Even the just and innocent should do penance. - -	v.	493
Penance keeps men from sin. - - - - -	v.	497
All should do penance because we have a penitent God.	v.	506
<b>Peter, St., Apostle.</b>		
Bitterly deplored his denial of Christ. - - -	xii.	64
He thus puts to shame our impenitence. - - -	xii.	64
<b>Persecution.</b>		
In spite of persecutions the Christian religion was spread throughout the world. - - - - -	i.	18
<b>Philip, St., Apostle.</b>		
Was like Christ in almost all circumstances of his life and death. - - - - -	xii.	141
<b>Philosophers.</b>		
The heathen philosophers looked on the Christian religion as opposed to human reason. - - -	i.	13
<b>Pilate.</b>		
By his carelessness was guilty of all the cruelty practised on Christ. - - - - -	xi.	111
He consented to the death of Christ, although he knew Him to be innocent. - - - - -	xi.	116
He is the chief murderer of Christ, and is guilty of shedding His blood. - - - - -	xi.	120

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Pious, Piety.</b>		
Brings every blessing and grace. - - - - -	i.	358
To have lived piously brings happiness in the hour of death. - - - - -	xi.	462
The piety of others will not help us unless we imitate it. - - - - -	xii.	305
It is a wonderful thing to live piously among the wicked. - - - - -	xii.	256
The pious can rejoice at being on the right road to heaven. - - - - -	x.	297
They need not fear the devil on that road. - - - - -	x.	312
They need not fear the judgment of God. - - - - -	x.	390
Hope of salvation of the pious, although they may have formerly committed many grievous sins. - - - - -	x.	376
Hope of salvation of the pious, although there are but few chosen. - - - - -	x.	402
Comfort of the pious in not knowing anything of their predestination. - - - - -	x.	419
The pious generally die a joyous death. - - - - -	xi.	455
	& xii.	359
<b>Plague.</b>		
Is one of the worst evils with which God punishes the world. - - - - -	xii.	265
St. Sebastian is a powerful protector against it. - - - - -	xii.	267
<b>Poor, Poverty.</b>		
They who become poor through their own fault may thank themselves for their misfortunes. - - - - -	i.	449
Comfort for those who have become poor by divine decree. - - - - -	i.	450
All the poor, no matter who they are, are worthy of help, because they represent the person of Christ. - - - - -	ii.	304
Even impudent, deceitful, ungrateful, and wicked beggars deserve our help. - - - - -	ii.	308
The decent poor are in greater need than others, therefore they are especially worthy of help. - - - - -	ii.	318
He who persecutes and oppresses the poor must expect severe punishment. - - - - -	ii.	325
Advice and consolation for the poor. - - - - -	ii.	328, 346
How happy the poor are if they are content with God. - - - - -	ii.	332
They live in repose and peace of heart. - - - - -	ii.	335
They live more comfortably, eat, drink, and sleep better than the rich. - - - - -	ii.	339
They are more like to Christ. - - - - -	ii.	340
Therefore many choose voluntary poverty. - - - - -	ii.	341
The poor who are content with God are more certain of their salvation than the rich. - - - - -	ii.	342
The poor can be avaricious. - - - - -	iii.	123
It is not allowed to give the goods of others to the poor if one knows the rightful owner. - - - - -	iii.	159
Comfort for the poor and industrious. - - - - -	vi.	18
<b>Poverty of Spirit.</b>		
Should be united with the care of temporal wealth. - - - - -	i.	346

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Prayer.</b>		
The gift of prayer is a great grace of God. - - -	i.	457
Contradictions help us to this, and are the best teachers of prayer. - - - - -	i.	458, 462
Prayer should be humble. - - - - -	i.	462
Should be fervent. - - - - -	i.	464
Fervent prayer is a means of preserving purity. -	i.	309
Prayer directed to the Mother of God is very powerful.	i.	311
The best prayer is that of many assembled together. -	ii.	474
Prayer is false and useless when one does not really wish for that for which he prays; such, however, is the prayer of most men. - - - - -	iii.	502
God is dishonored thereby. - - - - -	iii.	513
Prayer is necessary for the conversion of the sinner. -	v.	249
Is for all a necessary means of avoiding sin. - - -	vi.	249
God allows us to be in the danger of sin that we may learn to pray. - - - - -	vi.	252
Without prayer God will not give us His grace. -	vi.	253
Prayer is a necessary means of dying a happy death.	vi.	256
No one can complain that the grace of God is wanting to him, since all can pray. - - - - -	vi.	256
He who does not pray is in a very miserable state. -	vi.	263
The prayer of the just has the greatest power. - -	vi.	421
Especially powerful is the united prayer of many. -	vi.	429
Prayer of him who is in the state of sin has no effect.	vi.	430
The prayer of the just in time of public calamities is of no use unless the wicked are converted. - -	vi.	444
In public calamities prayer without penance is fruitless.	vi.	453
The nature of prayer. - - - - -	vi.	455
The prayer of the sinner who refuses to be converted is not as it should be. - - - - -	vi.	456
Prayer without repentance embitters the anger of God.	vi.	459
Necessity of prayer. - - - - -	viii.	173
When praying to God we should ask for great goods.	vii.	509
First for heavenly, then for earthly things. - - -	vii.	515
Prayer should be humble. - - - - -	vii.	521
And fervent. - - - - -	vii.	527
It always brings profit. - - - - -	vii.	535
We can and should pray always. - - - - -	vii.	544
Prayer should be confident. - - - - -	viii.	8
God cannot refuse confident prayer. - - - - -	viii.	14
We do not always know what we pray for. - - -	viii.	24
God often shows us His favor by not hearing our pray- ers. - - - - -	viii.	28

**Preachers.**

Should be careful when speaking of impurity. - - -	iv.	446
Generally speaking, they can do little against the vices of the age. - - - - -	vi.	441

**Predestination.**

We should not trouble ourselves excessively about it.	xii.	202
But seek to make our salvation certain by a diligent use of grace. - - - - -	xii.	209

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Presence of God.</b>		
We should often remember it. - - - -	vii.	245
How we may always keep in the presence of God. -	vii.	255
This constant remembrance tends to make us zealous in the divine service. - - - -	vii.	261
Brings men to heaven. - - - -	vii.	265
Gives comfort in the trials of soul and body. - -	vii.	273
<b>Pride.</b>		
Pride is less to be excused in a Christian than in a Jew or heathen. - - - -	i.	86
The proud man does not obtain what he desires either from God or man. - - - -	iii.	39
The contrary almost always falls to his lot. - -	iii.	44
Of all vices there is none more intolerable to God than pride. - - - -	iii.	48
The proud man robs God of His honor. - - - -	iii.	49
From pride come many sins. - - - -	iii.	50
The proud man is a fool. - - - -	iii.	53
Foolish to be proud on account of one's riches. -	iii.	59
Or on account of noble birth, or great knowledge or skill. - - - -	iii.	60
Or even on account of success in business. - - -	iii.	62
Or on account of personal beauty. - - - -	iii.	63
Or even on account of one's good works. - - -	iii.	64
It is hard to distinguish between pride and humility.	iii.	69
Marks of a proud man. - - - -	iii.	71
Put to shame by the humility of Christ in His birth. -	xi.	35
The proud must fear that they will have no part with Christ in heaven. - - - -	xi.	36
<b>Priests.</b>		
Should be held in great honor. - - - -	ii.	184
Are raised by God to a great dignity. - - - -	ii.	185
Have the most excellent office to fill. - - - -	ii.	187
Represent the Person of Jesus Christ. - - - -	ii.	189
Even crowned heads have bowed down before them.	ii.	193
Even wicked priests should be held in honor. - -	ii.	193
<b>Promises.</b>		
What to think of the promises held forth by some pray- er-books to those who say certain prayers. - - -	iii.	419
<b>Property.</b>		
The property of others brings neither grace nor bless- ing. - - - -	iii.	151
<b>Prosperity.</b>		
In time of prosperity most men forget their God. -	vi.	471
It is a rare and difficult virtue to love God in temporal prosperity. - - - -	viii.	361
God has decreed that, generally speaking, the wicked should live in prosperity, and the pious in adver- sity; but that lasts but a short time. - - - -	ix.	259, 267

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Providence of God.</b>		
Rules the world. - - - - -	ii.	351
Has appointed a state of life for each one. - -	ii.	354
Folly of those who complain of this providence. -	ii.	357, 373
The most wise providence of God in arranging different states. - - - - -	ii.	363
We must admire and praise it. - - - - -	ii.	368
Resignation to providence for people of all states in general and particular. - - - - -	ii.	373
Happy he who confidently resigns himself to the care of Providence. - - - - -	ii.	402

### Purgatory.

It is a work of the greatest charity to help the souls in purgatory. - - - - -	ii.	159
They are in great straits. - - - - -	ii.	160
Sigh and long unceasingly for deliverance. - -	ii.	163
Wonderful love of holy Christians for them. - -	ii.	165
All the torments of this world are nothing compared to the pains of purgatory. - - - - -	vi.	75
The souls in purgatory are in great need, therefore we should help them. - - - - -	viii.	262
Generosity to them brings great profit. - - - -	viii.	268
It is an effect of the love of God. - - - - -	viii.	273
How we may help the poor souls. - - - - -	viii.	277
Wonderful gratitude of those souls to their benefactors. - - - - -	viii.	284
We all have reason to dread a severe purgatory. -	ix.	211
Therefore we should help the poor souls. - - -	ix.	219

### Purpose.

Of what nature should be the purpose of amendment before confession. - - - - -	v.	331
It must be heartfelt. - - - - -	v.	332
Many have not an earnest purpose. - - - - -	v.	333
Many have only a half-hearted purpose. - - - -	v.	340

### —R.—

#### Relapse.

Into sin is abominable. - - - - -	vi.	148
Shows gross ingratitude. - - - - -	vi.	151
Is coupled with the danger of damnation. - - -	vi.	156, 201 & 404
When one relapses easily into his former sins it is a sign that his repentance was not sincere. - - -	vi.	162

#### Religion.

When we consider all the circumstances, the spread of the Christian religion throughout the world is the greatest wonder. - - - - -	i.	11
This religion alone comes from God, and is the only true one. - - - - -	i.	20
The Catholic religion is the holiest of all. - - -	iii.	9



	VOL.	PAGE
It had a most holy founder. - - - - -	iii.	8
Prescribes the holiest laws. - - - - -	iii.	10
From its holiness its truth is known. - - - - -	iii.	4
It is the only religion in which salvation can be found. - - - - -	iii.	15
Will only tend to the deeper damnation of the wicked Christian. - - - - -	iii.	15

### Religious State.

How happy it is. - - - - -	i.	262
According to the judgment of the world it is not happy. - - - - -	i.	263
It might be compared with the happiness of heaven. - - - - -	i.	264
Everything in it tends to make one remember and know God. - - - - -	i.	265
There you will most surely find a perfect love of God. - - - - -	i.	266
In the religious state the soul tastes an undisturbed peace in God. - - - - -	i.	268
What moral lesson we are to draw from this. - - - - -	i.	270
How great the grace of vocation to this state. - - - - -	i.	274
It has every sign of predestination. - - - - -	i.	275
The life of a religious is esteemed a martyrdom. - - - - -	i.	276
A religious suffers this martyrdom with joy. - - - - -	i.	279
Religious vocation is a sure sign of predestination. - - - - -	i.	283
Happy they who are called to it. - - - - -	i.	283
What parents, children, and other Christians should learn from this. - - - - -	i.	284

### Repentance.

He who defers it acts very unjustly towards God. - - - - -	v.	35
He places himself in the danger of losing his soul. - - - - -	v.	48
Future repentance is treacherous. - - - - -	v.	49
Repentance, when deferred, always becomes more difficult. - - - - -	v.	52
Until at last it never takes place. - - - - -	v.	55
The sinner should at once earnestly repent on account of the goodness of God. - - - - -	v.	154
How easy it is to obtain forgiveness by repentance. - - - - -	v.	167
The vain hope of those who defer repentance to the last moment. - - - - -	ix.	132
Such repentance is generally false. - - - - -	ix.	148
The repentance of many who go to confession is false on account of a faulty examen of conscience, or a want of candor in declaring their sins. - - - - -	xi.	303
On account of a want of true sorrow. - - - - -	xi.	305
Therefore we must not trust too much to the repentance of the dying. - - - - -	xi.	305
Still less to that of those who confess only at Easter. - - - - -	xi.	306
The best proof of repentance is the avoiding the occasion of sin. - - - - -	xi.	308
Many saints have done severe penance. - - - - -	xii.	18
Even the innocent should do penance in order to preserve their innocence. - - - - -	xii.	29

	VOL.	PAGE
The repentance of St. Peter for denying Christ lasted the whole of the remainder of his life. - -	xii.	64
We resemble him in sinning, but not in repenting. -	xii.	64
Repentance should not be deferred. - - -	xii.	132

**Reserve.**

A means of preserving purity. - - - - -	i.	308
---	----	-----

**Respect, Human.**

On account of it nowadays much good is omitted and much evil done. - - - - -	xi.	118
--	-----	-----

**Restitution.**

Of another's property is very hard. - - - - -	iii.	118
Especially for the unjust man on his death-bed. -	iii.	119
When possible it is necessary for salvation, nor is any excuse for not making it available. - - -	iii.	140
Parents damn themselves and their children if they do not make restitution. - - - - -	iii.	150
To whom, what, and when restitution should be made, and who should make it. - - - - -	iii.	154
How foolish they act who defer restitution. - -	iii.	166

**Resurrection.**

We shall all rise again from the dead. - - -	ix.	222
The resurrection should make all difficulties easy for us. - - - - -	ix.	234
This resurrection is proved by the prosperity of the wicked and the trials of the just. - - -	ix.	246

**Resurrection of Christ.**

Is the foundation of our faith. - - - - -	xi.	276
Triumph of Christ in His resurrection. - - -	xi.	288
In it He conquered the rage of hell. - - - -	xi.	289
The envious world. - - - - -	xi.	295
It is a symbol of our resurrection from the grave of sin. And is not verified in the case of many who go to confession. - - - - -	xi.	303
The proof of such a resurrection is the avoiding the occasions of sin. - - - - -	xi.	308

**Revenge.**

St. Stephen did not take revenge on his enemies, although he might have done so. - - -	xii.	222
We seek revenge in all kinds of ways, although God has forbidden it. - - - - -	xii.	223

**Reverence.**

Should be shown by children to their parents. - -	i.	172
Of the angels to the Blessed Sacrament. - - -	iii.	457
Of pious Christians, and even great monarchs, to the same holy Sacrament. - - - - -	iii.	458
Nay, even of unreasoning beasts. - - - - -	iii.	459

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Rich.</b>		
The rich spend their money on unnecessary things, and forget the poor. - - - - -	ii.	155, 290
Kindness of God to the rich. - - - - -	ii.	250
Who is threatened to the rich. - - - - -	ii.	251
Riches may be used for evil as well as for good. - - - - -	ii.	252
They serve for the welfare of the body and the soul. - - - - -	ii.	254
The rich can save themselves from all spiritual anxiety. - - - - -	ii.	257
They should therefore be grateful to God. - - - - -	ii.	261
Most rich people are the most ungrateful to God. - - - - -	ii.	262
They are bound under sin to help the poor. - - - - -	ii.	274
What alms one is bound to give. - - - - -	ii.	286
Vain excuse of the rich, saying they can give little or no alms. - - - - -	ii.	289
They must expect severe punishment if by their extravagance they leave themselves unable to help the poor. - - - - -	ii.	324
Still more severe if they oppress and persecute the poor. - - - - -	ii.	326
The rich generally live an uneasy life. - - - - -	ii.	336
It is hard for them to enter heaven. - - - - -	ii.	341
They are fools if they are proud. - - - - -	iii.	59
They should give alms of their wealth, and thus amass treasure in heaven. - - - - -	xii.	181
They should detach their hearts from worldly goods and turn them to God. - - - - -	xii.	182

—S.—

**Sacrament, Blessed.**

Irreverence towards it comes from a want of faith. - - - - -	iii.	450
What reverence the angels have for it. - - - - -	iii.	457
And pious Christians, and even great potentates. - - - - -	iii.	458
Nay, even unreasoning animals. - - - - -	iii.	459
It should be held in the highest honor. - - - - -	vii.	305
It is a great mystery. - - - - -	vii.	306
In it Christ shows us the greatest love. - - - - -	vii.	309
We should accompany it publicly when it is borne to the sick. - - - - -	vii.	322
In it Christ shows an astonishing patience, and therefore an astonishing love for us. - - - - -	xi.	338
In it the death of Christ is constantly renewed. - - - - -	xi.	341
In it He bears with countless insults from unbelieving heretics. - - - - -	xi.	342
And even from Catholics. - - - - -	xi.	344
We should have all possible love and devotion for Christ in this mystery. - - - - -	xi.	347

**Saints.**

The intercession of the saints will not help us if we do not repent of our sins. - - - - -	vi.	521
He who has lived a saintly life up to the present may easily become changed. - - - - -	vi.	527
The saints are now our best friends and advocates with God. - - - - -	xii.	420
But they will be our judges, and condemn us, if we do not live holly, like them. - - - - -	xii.	420

VOL. PAGE

Their lives will upbraid the wicked, so that the latter will have no excuse. - - - - -	xii.	422
Their holiness will prove that the wicked might have lived holily, for the saints had the same nature and weakness, and lived in the same states of life, and in the same dangers. - - - - -	xii.	424

**Salvation.**

We men are blind and stupid in things that concern our salvation. - - - - -	iv.	59
---	-----	----

**Scandal.**

The scandal given by a Christian by indecency in dress is less to be excused than if it were given by a Jew or heathen. - - - - -	i.	90
Scandal-giving is a diabolical vice, and he who gives scandal is an agent of the devil. - - - - -	iv.	280
Scandal may be given in many ways. - - - - -	iv.	285
Wo to him by whom scandal comes. - - - - -	iv.	291, 303
In what it consists. - - - - -	iv.	293
He who gives scandal strives against Christ and the holy angels for the ruin of souls. - - - - -	iv.	295
He is worse and more to be feared than the devil. - - - - -	iv.	296
He spreads sins and vices abroad. - - - - -	iv.	298
Warning to those who give scandal. - - - - -	iv.	304
How to guard against scandal-givers. - - - - -	iv.	305
He who gives scandal is ungrateful to the holy angels. - - - - -	iv.	40
How wicked it is to give scandal. - - - - -	vi.	367

**Season.**

We should leave the fruitfulness of the seasons to the providence of God, since we do not understand it. - - - - -	vi.	434
--	-----	-----

**Sebastian, St., Martyr.**

Is a powerful helper, especially in time of war. - - - - -	vi.	519
Is a wonderful physician against all diseases. - - - - -	xii.	255
Should therefore be devoutly honored. - - - - -	xii.	262
He lived holily in a wicked, heathen court. - - - - -	xii.	264
His intercession is very powerful with God against the plague. - - - - -	xii.	267

**Secrets.**

He who reveals secrets acts very wickedly. - - - - -	iv.	451
Secrets are a man's own property. - - - - -	iv.	451
God alone has reserved to Himself the right to examine into them. - - - - -	iv.	453
He who is obliged to silence by his office does great mischief by revealing secrets. - - - - -	iv.	456
A man who does that is most despicable, and is put to shame by women. - - - - -	iv.	460

**Sermons.**

The frequent hearing of sermons is for most Christians necessary to salvation. - - - - -	i.	96
--	----	----

	VOL.	PAGE
Very useful for those who are in sin. - - - -	i.	101
And for the just as well. - - - -	i.	104
They who seldom hear sermons are in a deplorable state. - - - -	i.	105
And will have to render a strict account. - - - -	i.	106
How one should go to the sermon. - - - -	i.	108
For this is required a well-prepared heart. - - - -	i.	111
In what this preparation consists. - - - -	i.	111
To come too late to the sermon is an irreverence to God. - - - -	i.	113
An ingratitude to God. - - - -	i.	115
A want of love of God. - - - -	i.	115
They who come too late derive little or no profit. - - - -	i.	116
How to hear sermons. - - - -	i.	119
God speaks to us in sermons, and about most important things. - - - -	i.	121
Therefore we owe Him constant attention. - - - -	i.	122
We should hear the sermon for our own profit. - - - -	i.	127
What to do after the sermon. - - - -	i.	132
We should take to heart what we have heard, and set about doing it at once. - - - -	i.	133
The truths we learn in sermons and do not observe draw down reprobation from God in this life. - - - -	i.	139
And subject us to a stricter account in judgment. - - - -	i.	142
And to a deeper damnation in eternity. - - - -	i.	143
The sinner should be diligent in hearing sermons in order to be moved to do penance. - - - -	v.	7
The devil tries to hinder sinners from this. - - - -	v.	14
Sinners hate sermons. - - - -	v.	106
Frequent hearing of the word of God. <i>See Word of God.</i>		

#### Servants.

How they are bound to serve their masters. - - - -	ii.	209
In what their fidelity consists. - - - -	ii.	210
In how many ways they may sin against it. - - - -	ii.	211
They must obey their masters. - - - -	ii.	215
Many sin against this obedience. - - - -	ii.	217
They should obey with patience. - - - -	ii.	222
They should leave the house in which there is the proximate occasion of sin. - - - -	v.	373

#### Service of God.

In what it consists. - - - -	ii.	384
It consists in doing the will of God. - - - -	ii.	384
And is attended to by all who do the duties of their state. - - - -	ii.	386
To omit duties and do better things that are not required is not to serve God. - - - -	ii.	387
A joyful and confident service is the most agreeable of all to God, and is a sign of predestination. - - - -	x.	490, 496

#### Shrove-Tide.

Belongs to God, and should in all reason be more sanctified to Him than other seasons. - - - -	iv.	171
--	-----	-----



	VOL.	PAGE
The heathens devoted these days to the devil; therefore Christians should do the contrary. - -	iv.	173
The Catholic Church cannot tolerate the Shrove-Tide orgies. - - - - -	iv.	174
In this time no one is allowed to sin. - - - -	iv.	175
During those days Christ has much to suffer; therefore pious Christians should show Him all the more love. - - - - -	iv.	179
During this time most men take sides with the devil.	iv.	187
Pious Christians should be faithful to Christ, even during Shrove-Tide. - - - - -	iv.	190
How disgraceful during those days to leave the service of God. - - - - -	iv.	191
Shrove-Tide orgies are not at all allowed. - - -	iv.	193
They are indecent, and not fit for a Christian. - -	iv.	197
Heathens and Turks are not worse than many Christians on such occasions. - - - - -	iv.	201
The latter give scandal in that way. - - - -	iv.	202
Shrove-Tide orgies bring on uneasiness of conscience.	iv.	205
During this time things that are wrong are no more allowed than at any other time. - - - -	ii.	445

#### Sickness.

Is a general punishment. - - - - -	vi.	474
------------------------------------	-----	-----

#### Simeon, St., Confessor of Treves.

Always led a holy life, and therefore could await death with joy. - - - - -	xii.	357
---	------	-----

#### Simon and Jude, SS., Apostles.

Were both true Christians, that is, firm, and, at the same time, meek zelators of the honor of God and the salvation of souls. - - - - -	xii.	183
--	------	-----

#### Sin.

There is no sin that somewhere or other is not looked on as small. - - - - -	i.	442
The sins of Christians are greater and more inexcusable than those of Jews or heathens. - - - -	i.	85
Means of avoiding the danger of sin. - - - -	ii.	400
Past sins may be made the occasion of greater glory in heaven. - - - - -	ii.	429
The malice of sin consists in this, that it turns the heart of man away from the Creator to creatures.	iii.	198
It loses all shame on account of scandal given. - -	iv.	299
By sin a man brings great shame on himself. - -	iv.	478
It is the greatest evil. - - - - -	v.	214
It is a most dangerous illness. - - - - -	v.	215
Venial sin is worse than all natural evils. - - -	vi.	88
Is severely punished by God. - - - - -	vi.	90
It drives God out of the heart and the conscience. -	viii.	468
Venial sin should be more hated and shunned than any natural evil. - - - - -	vii.	107
It should not be committed because it is small. - -	vii.	116

	VOL.	PAGE
He who thinks little of it does not love God. - -	vii.	125
It gradually separates God from the human soul. -	vii.	134
It gradually separates the soul from God. - -	vii.	135
The saints did severe penance on account of their venial sins. - - - - -	vii.	140
To sin on account of the mercy of God is a sign of reprobation. - - - - -	x.	282
Sin is the worst of all imaginable evils. - - - -	xi.	380
Yet is often so wantonly committed for the sake of a miserable pleasure. - - - - -	xi.	380
The wickedness of sin appears from the passion and death of Christ. - - - - -	xi.	96
Sinners are the first and chief cause of shedding the blood of Christ. - - - - -	xi.	146

#### State of Sin.

In this state no good works are of any avail for merit.	v.	21
Yet they should not be omitted on that account. -	v.	31

#### Sinner.

Most useful for the sinner to hear sermons often. -	i.	101
Sinners should not refuse the proffered grace of conversion. - - - - -	iv.	104
How the sinner becomes hardened. - - - - -	iv.	138
Many hardened sinners are converted by hearing sermons. - - - - -	iv.	142
They who boast of their sins are the most shameless sinners. - - - - -	iv.	475
They make their own disgrace public. - - - - -	iv.	478
They are in a desperate state. - - - - -	iv.	485
They do not acknowledge the malice of their sins. -	iv.	487
They do not repent of them, and will with difficulty repent. - - - - -	iv.	489
They are guilty of treason to the divine majesty, and are in open rebellion. - - - - -	iv.	491
Therefore with difficulty shall they find grace from God.	iv.	493
Presumption of the sinner who despises his Lord and God. - - - - -	iv.	495
He entices others to forget God. - - - - -	iv.	502
All creatures are ready to take vengeance on the sinner.	iv.	504
From this appears the terrible malice of sin. - - -	iv.	504
Which is justly punished in hell forever. - - - -	iv.	505
It is hateful to God. - - - - -	v.	24
It is senseless. - - - - -	v.	33, 81 & 247
How unjustly he acts towards God who defers repentance. - - - - -	v.	35
Deceitful hopes of the sinner who defers repentance. <i>See Repentance.</i>		
Uneasiness and anguish of the sinner. <i>See Conscience.</i>		
How he seeks to deceive himself to keep his conscience quiet. - - - - -	v.	88
Gross ignorance of the sinner. <i>See Ignorance.</i>		
The sinner avoids sermons, lest they should disturb him.	v.	105
Blindness of the sinner. - - - - -	v.	128

	VOL.	PAGE
Obstinacy of the sinner. - - - - -	v.	129
It is the most terrible punishment. - - - - -	v.	135
All creatures are ready to take vengeance on the sinner.	v.	147
Presumption of the sinner. - - - - -	v.	164
Misfortune of the sinner when he is not chastised. -	v.	182
The sinner acts like a despairing man when he puts off repentance. - - - - -	v.	209
He should fly to Mary for refuge. - - - - -	v.	186
He should beg of God the grace of conversion. - - -	v.	249
He offends God, his heavenly Father. - - - - -	v.	318
In the commission of sin consists its shame. - - -	v.	424
He has to expect severe punishment in this life or in the next. - - - - -	vi.	74, 95
He is in an unhappy state. - - - - -	vi.	103
Presumption of the sinner who sins before the eye of God. - - - - -	vi.	275
He is a slave of the devil. - - - - -	vi.	373
Has bartered all the treasures of his soul. - - - - -	vi.	375
He acts wickedly when he refuses the grace of con- version. - - - - -	vi.	385
One sinner may bring down general chastisements. -	vi.	388
The sinner should not defer repentance. - - - - -	vi.	393
He is dead before the Lord. - - - - -	vi.	530
He is in danger of eternal death. - - - - -	vi.	533
He should do penance. <i>See Penance.</i>		
God tries to convert the sinner. - - - - -	vi.	355
He is presumptuous, because he offends the Almighty God. - - - - -	vii.	55
He acts disgracefully towards God, his sovereign bene- factor. - - - - -	vii.	463, 473
He can find no consolation. - - - - -	xi.	88
Only in the recollection of the passion of Christ can he find the hope of being forgiven. - - - - -	xi.	239
He should be moved to repentance by the considera- tion of the love shown him by Christ in the pas- sion. - - - - -	xi.	247
And also by the fear of the strict justice of God. -	xi.	248
He should not despair, no matter how great a sinner he may be, but trust in the blood of Christ. -	xi.	89
Blindness of the sinner, who for a trifling pleasure, and to his own great loss, consents to sin. - - - - -	xi.	380
He crucifies Christ, his sovereign benefactor and friend.	xi.	122
He renews the sufferings of Our Lord. - - - - -	xi.	206
Wo to him if the meditation of the passion of Christ does not move him to repent. - - - - -	xi.	151
The presumption of the impenitent sinner appears from the passion of Our Lord. - - - - -	xi.	234
No sinner is so bad that he may not be converted. -	xii.	328
They who have been sinners should not be downcast when they remember their former sins. - - -	xii.	329

### Slavery.

Is disgraceful to a man. - - - - -	iv.	226
The most shameful slavery is that which leads a man to do evil and omit good through human respect. -	iv.	227

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Sloth in the Divine Service.</b>		
Is very displeasing to God. - - - - -	iii.	367
The slothful render God a false service. - - - - -	iii.	373
They do not act honestly with God, and therefore do not please Him. - - - - -	iii.	374
They love God only with the lips. - - - - -	iii.	377
They cannot have true peace of conscience. - - - - -	iii.	378
<b>Small Faults.</b>		
Should be carefully avoided, because they easily lead to great ones. - - - - -	xii.	215
<b>Small Things.</b>		
Eternal ruin may be the result of contemning small things in the divine service. - - - - -	vii.	214
<b>Sorrow.</b>		
Vain and unnecessary sorrow of married people. - - - - -	i.	431
How manifold it is. - - - - -	i.	432
Many are sorry for things that do not concern them. - - - - -	i.	433
Through a mere effect of the imagination. - - - - -	i.	436
Others are sorry when they have reason rather to rejoice. - - - - -	i.	438
<b>Soul.</b>		
Is a most precious image, whose artist is the Almighty God. - - - - -	i.	213
Is made most carefully to the image of God. - - - - -	i.	214
Is held in the highest esteem by God. - - - - -	i.	214
And even by the devil. - - - - -	i.	216
Holy servants of God are ready to give their lives to save even one soul. - - - - -	i.	216
Yet most people think nothing of it. - - - - -	i.	217
Generally speaking, the body is better looked after than the soul. - - - - -	i.	218
It is bartered for a wretched price. - - - - -	i.	219
Blindness of men in thinking so little of the soul. - - - - -	i.	220
We have only one soul; therefore we should guard it with the greatest care. - - - - -	i.	223
With this one soul many act as if they had a thousand to dispose of. - - - - -	i.	227
Many sacrifice their souls to the devil, nay, help him to ruin the souls of others. - - - - -	i.	230
Prayer to God to keep our souls. - - - - -	i.	234
The soul loves its body. - - - - -	i.	377
It cost the Son of God much trouble to redeem souls. - - - - -	iv.	282
<b>Soul's Salvation.</b>		
Is the only necessary business of the Christian. - - - - -	i.	63
All other things must give way to this. - - - - -	i.	66
All depends on it. - - - - -	i.	67
If it is once neglected the loss is irreparable. - - - - -	i.	68
Yet it is most frequently neglected. - - - - -	i.	69

	VOL.	PAGE
They who help to the salvation of others are men of God. - - - - -	iv.	280

**Spirit of God.**

Many are not enlightened by the Spirit of God because they do not wish to have His light. - - -	iv.	56
---	-----	----

**State.**

The choice of a state is a very important business; for, generally speaking, salvation or reprobation depends on it. - - - - -	i.	236
Should not be made without deliberation. - - -	i.	237
No man can give certain advice on this matter; God alone can. - - - - -	i.	238
Not to follow the advice of God in this is to run the risk of damnation. - - - - -	i.	239
Many children take the first state that offers, without thought. - - - - -	i.	241
They seek advice, but not from God. - - - - -	i.	243
Many parents fix on a state for their children according to their own whims. - - - - -	i.	243
They thus sin against God and against their children. - - -	i.	246
How to act in the actual choice of a state. - - -	i.	250
A certain state is the means to our last end. - - -	i.	251
Therefore each one should consider what state is the best for him to secure his last end. - - -	i.	252
And whether he has the abilities necessary for that state. - - -	i.	254
In this many children and parents do wrong, to their own great detriment. - - - - -	i.	254
We should consider whether the state is in conformity with the will of God. - - - - -	i.	256
The furtherance of our salvation consists in conformity with the will of God. - - - - -	i.	257
How to find out the will of God in this matter. - - -	i.	257
Young people should be careful not to risk their salvation by entering on a state without or against the will of God. - - - - -	i.	259
Advice for those who have chosen a state, either without seeking advice from God, or without being called to it by God. - - - - -	i.	261
In every state there are temptations and dangers. - - -	i. 301, & ii.	339 395
God has appointed a state for each one, therefore each one should be content in his state. - - - - -	ii.	350
Folly of those who complain on this head, yet there are many such. - - - - -	ii.	357, 373 & 380
God has appointed the different states with a view to the welfare of each individual and of all in general. - - - - -	ii.	363
This difference of states is necessary for the preservation of the world. - - - - -	ii.	364
No state is better for salvation than that in which one is by divine decree. - - - - -	ii.	378



	VOL.	PAGE
No one could serve God better in another state than that allotted him. - - - - -	ii.	380
In any other he would not at all serve God. - - -	ii.	383
How each one is to serve God according to his state.	ii.	390
Every one should be content with his state, even with its spiritual dangers. - - - - -	ii.	391
Unjustly does a man blame his state for his sins. -	ii.	394
In any other state he would sin worse in far less dangers. - - - - -	ii.	393
How each one is to spend the present day in his state.	ii.	498
<b>Stephen, St.</b>		
After his example we should love our enemies and return good for evil. - - - - -	xii.	220
<b>Subjects.</b>		
Duties of subjects to their spiritual and temporal superiors. - - - - -	ii.	170
God punishes disobedience and disrespect to superiors.	ii.	180
<b>Sundays and Holy-Days.</b>		
God wishes them to be altogether sanctified. - - -	iii.	491
How they are to be sanctified. - - - - -	iii.	493
These days are profaned in all sorts of ways. - - -	iii.	494
How unjust that is to God and the soul. - - - -	iii.	499
Punishment of those who work on these days. - - -	iii.	500
Much greater punishment do they deserve who sin on these days. - - - - -	iii.	501
<b>Superiors.</b>		
It is necessary for the general welfare that there should be superiors. - - - - -	ii.	172
They have their power from God. - - - - -	ii.	175
They rule in the place of God. - - - - -	ii.	176
Must be held in honor, no matter what sort they are.	ii.	177
They are bound to look after the faults of their subjects. - - - - -	iv.	344
<b>Superstition.</b>		
What it is. - - - - -	iii.	398
It is a common sin. - - - - -	iii.	399
Consists of different vain observations. - - - -	iii.	400
Of superstitious belief in dreams. - - - - -	iii.	402
Of observing the hour of one's nativity. - - - -	iii.	404
Of superstitious means of recovering lost property, or increasing what one has. - - - - -	iii.	405
Of finding hidden treasure. - - - - -	iii.	406
Of healing illnesses. - - - - -	iii.	407
Every superstition is an abominable sin, because by it the name of the devil is invoked. - - - - -	iii.	408
How superstition is carried on by means of prayers, devotions, and holy things, and from what we may know that devotions are superstitious. -	iii.	411

	VOL.	PAGE
How foolish to expect help from the devil by means of superstitious practices. - - - - -	iii.	421

—T.—

**Tale-bearing.**

Is a grievous and mischievous sin. - - - - -	iv.	318, 454
--	-----	----------

**Temple.**

What great expense was incurred in building the temple of Jerusalem. - - - - -	iii.	464
--	------	-----

**Temporal Cares.**

Shut out the divine light from the heart. - - - - -	iv.	147
---	-----	-----

**Temperance.**

In eating and drinking is meritorious. - - - - -	iii.	257
Every one should be temperate. - - - - -	iii.	258

**Temptation.**

All men must suffer temptation. - - - - -	i.	301
Means against temptation. - - - - -	i.	306
In temptations we should remember the presence of God. - - - - -	vii.	274

**Thanks.**

The penitent sinner owes God thanks for his conversion. - - - - -	vi.	102
---	-----	-----

**Thanksgiving.**

Should be offered for benefits received. - - - - -	ii.	481
--	-----	-----

**Thieves.**

There are many kinds of thieves in the world. - - - - -	iii.	126
Small thieves generally make restitution, but not great ones. - - - - -	iii.	155

**Thomas, St., Apostle.**

Did not deny the resurrection of Christ, but believed in it firmly. - - - - -	xii.	119
He only refused to believe that Christ had really appeared to the disciples. - - - - -	xii.	123
He should not be condemned for obstinacy or presumption on that account. - - - - -	xii.	124
And even if in the beginning he did not believe the resurrection of Christ, he was afterwards the most zealous in his faith in it. - - - - -	xii.	127

**Thoughts.**

One commits more grievous sins by bad thoughts than by works. - - - - -	vi.	222
The dying are plagued by bad thoughts. - - - - -	vi.	225

	VOL.	PAGE
When these thoughts are sinful. - - - -	vi.	227
How to keep the heart from them. - - - -	vi.	232
<b>Time.</b>		
How to redeem lost time in old age. - - - -	ii.	413
In a short time a zealous man may merit more than another in a long time. - - - -	ii.	428
Present and future time should be well looked after.	ii.	432
Value of time. - - - -	ii.	434
Time is squandered, especially in youth, in idleness, wickedness, and frivolity. - - - -	ii.	436
At no time is it allowed to sin. - - - -	iv.	175
Time of need is the right time to show friendship and love. - - - -	iv.	178
What a precious good time is, and how it should be spent by each one. - - - -	viii.	475
Pain of the dying caused by time lost in idleness. -	ix.	121
<b>Tobias.</b>		
How he instructed his son. - - - -	ii.	37
<b>Tongue.</b>		
There are many kinds of bad tongues in the world. -	iv.	308
We should guard our tongues carefully. - - - -	iv.	321
<b>Torments.</b>		
The martyrs found joy in their torments. - - -	i.	280
<i>TRAINING OF CHILDREN. See Parents.</i>		
<b>Treves.</b>		
Has reason to rejoice at the birth of Mary, the Mother of God. - - - -	xi.	388
Has received great benefits from her. - - - -	xi.	469
The people of Treves are children of the saints; a great honor for them. - - - -	xii.	283
They should honor their holy ancestors. - - - -	xii.	286
A shame for them if they do not imitate their ances- tors, and if they live wickedly in the land of saints. - - - -	xii.	286
They have gained the greatest renown before Heaven through their holy ancestors and martyrs. - - -	xii.	292
And great honor on earth. - - - -	xii.	297
Therefore they owe them honor and devotion. - - -	xii.	299
<b>Trials.</b>		
In general as well as in private trials we learn to pray.	i.	456
We should thank God for trials as for a great benefit.	i.	467
They detach the heart of man from worldly goods and creatures. - - - -	viii.	312
They draw the heart to the love of God. - - - -	viii.	331
Patience in trials brings the servants of God supernat- ural joy. - - - -	viii.	336
And true natural peace of mind. - - - -	viii.	343

	VOL.	PAGE
Thereby God is especially honored. - - -	viii.	349
Therein consists true virtue. - - -	viii.	351
A good conscience gives comfort in trials. - -	viii.	392

## —U.—

**Understanding.**

No one should be proud on account of a good understanding. - - -	iii.	61
--	------	----

**Unity.**

Unity is the foundation of great happiness. - -	i.	365
---	----	-----

**Unmarried State.**

How happy it is. - - -	i.	290
Not all unmarried people belong to this state. - -	i.	290
Who belong to it? - - -	i.	292
Praise of this state. - - -	i.	292
Dangers and graces of it. - - -	i.	300
The unmarried suffer temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh. - - -	i.	302
They are protected by Christ. - - -	i.	304
Means for the unmarried to preserve purity. - -	i.	306

## —V.—

**Vainglory.**

Brought many so far that they strove for divine honors. - - -	i.	34
It takes the merit from our good works. - - -	vii.	185
What it is, and how we seek it. - - -	vii.	187
Marks of vainglory. - - -	vii.	200
Means against vainglory. - - -	vii.	208

**Vanity.**

The vanity of worldly goods shows itself properly in death. - - -	xi.	157
---	-----	-----

**Viaticum.**

Should be administered to the sick in time. - -	ix.	96
---	-----	----

**Vices.**

Generally decrease with age. - - -	iii.	112
------------------------------------	------	-----

**Vindictiveness.**

In a Christian is less to be excused than in a Jew or heathen. - - -	i.	88
Dishonors God and man. - - -	iii.	335
The meek man who does not seek revenge gains honor from all. - - -	iii.	239
He who seeks revenge acts against all right, human and divine. - - -	iii.	351

	VOL.	PAGE
<b>Virgins.</b>		
Have God as their spouse. - - - - -	i.	295
Folly of those who lose their virginity in youth. - -	i.	297
What a great treasure they have lost. - - - - -	i.	298
Means of preserving it. - - - - -	i.	306
<b>Virtue.</b>		
Is tried in the society of the wicked. - - - - -	vi.	348
VOCATION TO THE TRUE FAITH. <i>See Faith.</i>		
VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE. <i>See Religious State.</i>		
<b>-W.-</b>		
<b>Want.</b>		
General want may be inflicted on a country on account of one sinner. - - - - -	vi.	338
The proper cause of such want are the vices of the people. -	vi.	440, 485
In time of want we cannot do without penance. - -	vi.	444
He who is not converted in such a time incurs a curse. -	vi.	450
Prayer without penance is useless in time of want. -	vi.	453
It is a paternal punishment to make us amend. - -	vi.	460
It forces us to acknowledge God, and to beg His help. -	vi.	469
God threatens us with that scourge in order to warn us. -	vi.	478
If we will not amend He will punish us still more severely. - - - - -	vi.	480
We must humbly acknowledge that we deserve that chastisement. - - - - -	vi.	495
When things are at their worst we should have all the more confidence in God. - - - - -	vi.	503
<b>War.</b>		
Is the worst of all temporal chastisements. - - -	vi.	412
Is ordained by God on account of sinners. - - -	vi.	414, 485
How to avert it. - - - - -	vi.	482
<b>Wives.</b>		
Are in danger of being perverted by their husbands. -	i.	344
Many have just reason to complain of their husbands. -	i.	383
How they are to act when their husbands give occasion to disunion. - - - - -	i.	386
Duties of wives to their husbands. - - - - -	i.	397
They must be obedient to their husbands. - - -	i.	399
In what and how they are to obey. - - - - -	i.	401
Thus they will rule their husbands. - - - - -	i.	402
They must be faithful in their housekeeping. - - -	i.	402
They must love their husbands constantly. - - -	i.	403
Many do quite the contrary. - - - - -	i.	405
How they are to act when their husbands give occasion for jealousy. - - - - -	i.	414
A drunken wife is a shameful sight. - - - - -	iii.	304
How wives are to act when their husbands are drunkards. - - - - -	iii.	27



	VOL.	PAGE
Many put their husbands to shame as far as holding their tongues is concerned. - - - - -	iv.	460

#### Will of God.

The state I choose must be in accordance with the will of God. - - - - -	i.	256
The merit of a good work consists in its accordance with the will of God. - - - - -	i.	256
Way and means of knowing the will of God. - - - - -	i.	257
It is dangerous not to fulfil the known will of God even in the least thing. - - - - -	vii.	223
Conformity with the will of God gives God the greatest honor. - - - - -	viii.	94
With every right does God require that conformity of us. - - - - -	viii.	107
By conformity with the will of God we have a sure pledge that things shall go well with us. - - - - -	viii.	119
And thereby, too, all pains in trials will be lessened. - - - - -	viii.	127
This conformity makes us bear all contradictions with patience. - - - - -	viii.	133
And accept them with joy. - - - - -	viii.	139
He who is completely in conformity with the will of God is the happiest man on earth. - - - - -	viii.	155
And stands high in favor with God. - - - - -	viii.	160
It is not against God's will to make use of natural means to free ourselves from troubles. - - - - -	viii.	166
How to resign one's self daily to the will of God. - - - - -	viii.	169
Means of obtaining conformity with the will of God. - - - - -	viii.	175
It should be learned in youth in order to be practised perfectly. - - - - -	viii.	177

#### Words of Christ.

Different interpretations of the last words with which Our Lord gave up the ghost. - - - - -	xi.	190
They were directed to us men, especially to sinners. - - - - -	xi.	191

#### Word of God.

Many neglect or misuse the word of God heard in sermons. - - - - -	iv.	65
Others receive it, but not in everything. - - - - -	iv.	67
Those whose souls are in a bad or dangerous state are wont to hear the word of God seldom or never. - - - - -	iv.	107
But for that reason they should hear it diligently. - - - - -	iv.	110
Vain worldlings seldom hear the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	111
They are in a dangerous state. - - - - -	iv.	112
They, too, who are pious according to their own fancies seldom hear the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	113
No work of devotion should prevent us from hearing the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	114
Those who are too busied with temporal things seldom hear the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	118
They who hear the word of God with distractions derive no profit. - - - - -	iv.	122
But give joy to the devil, who tries to distract people during sermons. - - - - -	iv.	124

	VOL.	PAGE
They who hear the word of God out of curiosity derive no profit. - - - - -	iv.	125
Nor do they who immediately forget what they have heard. - - - - -	iv.	128
How to remember the truth preached. - - - - -	iv.	130
Many sinners are quite hard-hearted while hearing the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	134
The word of God is powerful against all sins and vices. - - - - -	iv.	135
But can do nothing with a hard heart. - - - - -	iv.	136
Many allow themselves to be moved in one thing or the other, but not in all. - - - - -	iv.	140
Such people should be diligent in hearing sermons, and then they would not fail to be moved at last. - - - - -	iv.	142
Many hardened sinners have been converted by the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	142
All the good done by a sermon must come from God. - - - - -	iv.	147
Temporal cares hinder the fruit of sermons. - - - - -	iv.	148
Impure love interferes with the fruit of sermons. - - - - -	iv.	150
They who do not fulfil what they hear in sermons bring on themselves a deeper damnation. - - - - -	iv.	155
How to distinguish between real and false hearers of the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	159
In sermons we learn the knowledge of things conducive to our salvation. - - - - -	iv.	163
And are strengthened in virtue. - - - - -	iv.	164
And purified. - - - - -	iv.	165
Hearing the word of God is comforting. - - - - -	iv.	166
There are few good hearers. - - - - -	iv.	167
How wicked to keep others from hearing the word of God. - - - - -	iv.	167
The hearing of it is necessary for the sinner to bring him to conversion. - - - - -	v.	7
It is the usual means of converting the sinner. - - - - -	v.	11
Without the word of God he can hardly be converted. - - - - -	v.	14
The neglect of it is a punishment and a sign of reprobation. - - - - -	v.	17

### Works.

The accumulation of many works, even if they are good in themselves, may be sinful. - - - - -	ii.	238
The perfection of good works consists in their merit, and not in their duration. - - - - -	ii.	427
The good works of the just are precious in the sight of God. - - - - -	v.	26
Works done in the state of sin have no merit. - - - - -	v.	21
Need not be mentioned in confession. - - - - -	v.	399
He who wishes to be pious must diligently perform the daily duties of his state. - - - - -	vii.	152
Our daily duties should be performed in an orderly manner. - - - - -	vii.	160
And with due zeal. - - - - -	vii.	165
Especially with a good intention for God's sake. - - - - -	vii.	171
One may and should feel secure on account of his good works. - - - - -	viii.	425, 427