SAINT PETER CHRYSOLOGUS

The Sermons of Saint Peter Chrysologus

Sermones

SABBATISMUS

Saint Peter Chrysologus (c. 380–c. 450)
Sermones · The Sermons of Saint Peter Chrysologus

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Sermon I.

On the two sons, the prodigal and the thrifty, and first on the prodigal's going away from his father

Today the Lord has called before us a father with his two sons and brought them out into our midst, to set forth in a beautiful figure the immense proof of his loving-kindness, the savage envy of the Jewish nation, the suppliant return of the Christian people. A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them says to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falls to me. And he divided, he says, the substance between them (Luke 15:11–12). As loving as the father, so impatient the heir: he wearies of his father's living; since he cannot take away his father's time, he strives to carry off his father's substance. He deserved not to have the very prerogative of a son, who would not possess with his father what was his father's. But let us ask what thing swept the son into such ventures, what confidence lifted him to so great a request. What thing? That, of course, by which he knew that the heavenly Father was to be closed by no end, confined by no time, dissolved by no power of death. And so he longs to enjoy the freedom of living, he who had not wished to be enriched by the means of one who dies. Indeed, the begetter's generos-

ity proved that this had been the affront in the request. And he divided, he says, the substance between them. At the request of one, he at once divided the whole substance to both, so that the sons might know that what the father had held before had been held not out of avarice but out of love; that he had not given it out of foresight, not out of grudging. The father held the substance in order to keep it for his sons, not to deny it them; wishing it to remain for his pledges, not to be lost. Blessed the sons whose whole substance is in their father's charity! Blessed those whose possession remains whole in homage to their father, in honouring their father! For the rest, means split unity, part brotherhood, scatter kinship, destroy and violate the charity of parents, as is plain from what follows: Father, give me the portion of substance that falls to me. And he divided, he says, the substance between them.

And not many days after this, having gathered everything together, the younger son set out abroad into a far country, and there he squandered his substance by living dissolutely (Luke 15:13). And after he had consumed everything, a mighty famine came about in that region, and he began to be in want; and he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that region, and he sent him to his farm to feed swine (Luke 15:14–15). And he longed to fill his belly with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one gave to him (Luke 15:16). See what greed does, headlong after wealth. See how wealth without the father laid the son bare and did not enrich him; wealth

carried the son from his father's bosom, cast him out of the house, took him from his fatherland, robbed him of his good name, stripped him of chastity. What there was of life, of conduct, of piety, of freedom, of glory, it left none of it. Indeed, it changed the citizen into a stranger, the son into a hireling, the wealthy into a pauper, the free man into a servant; it joined to swine the one it had parted from a most loving father, so that he who scorned to obey holy piety should serve a filthy herd.

Having gathered everything, he says, the younger. Younger indeed, not in age but in sense; who gathered his father's goods and went far away, far more in mind than in place, so as to sell himself wretchedly into servitude, the price paid, not received. So comes to such a contract the merchant who does not know how to pay the debt owed to his parents, who does not know how to repay in turn the one who begot him. With the father there is a sweet condition, a free servitude, an unfettered guardianship, a joyful fear, a gentle punishment, a rich poverty, a secure possession. For the toil looks to the father, the fruit overflows upon the sons.

He squandered, he says, his substance. What had been set in order while the father governed is squandered when the son plays the prodigal, so that, if only late, he may come to know that his father had been the guardian of the substance, not one who brooded over it. By living dissolutely. That life is mortal, because it dies to the virtues: whoever lives to vices is buried to good name,

perishes to glory; whoever remains for shame grows for infamy.

And after he had consumed everything, a mighty famine came about in that region. Famine is set over dissoluteness, belly and gluttony as their torturer, so that avenging punishment may rage there where guilt deserving punishment had blazed. A mighty famine came about. To such an end voracity always tends, to such a term comes the outpouring of pleasure, which is to be fled. And he began to be in want. Substance given makes the son be in want, which, denied, would have kept him rich: so that he who with his father had abounded by not having fails in himself by having.

And he attached himself to one of the citizens of that region, and he sent him to his farm to feed swine. This is what he finds who denies himself to his father, who commits himself to a stranger: he who flees the most indulgent provider comes to feel a severe judge. A deserter of affection, a runaway from piety, he is assigned to swine, he is made over to swine, he is handed to the servitude of swine, he runs through the muddy pastures of swine, he is trampled by the restless herd and soiled by its stampeding, so that he may feel how wretched, how bitter it is to have lost the blessedness of his father's peace.

And he longed to fill his belly with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one gave to him. How cruel a service, when he who lives for the swine does not even feed with the swine! Wretched he who faints and hungers for the

fattening-feed of a filthy herd! Wretched he who craves filthy food of that kind, and does not obtain it!

Taught by these things, instructed by such, let us remain in our father's house, let us persevere in our mother's lap, let us be held fast in the embraces of our kin, let a father's heart hold us fast, so that the pitiable freedom of youth may not drag us to the evils described above. Let a father's reverence hedge us in, a mother's affection compose us, let us be guarded by the affections of our kin. Among the lights of kinsfolk offences cannot go about. As many eyes as kinsfolk have, so many lamps. A mother's look is day: the sun shines red in a father's face. Hence, for one who lives among so many lights of virtues, the darkness of crimes cannot come near. But the father's table feeds us with the food of virtue, the banquet of salvation, the delights of honour and glory.

And since the long run of the reading compels us to speak of this parable at greater length, who the father is, easy in giving, easier in receiving back; who the brother is, most sorrowful at his brother's safety; who the younger son is, foolish in leaving, most wise in returning, we shall inquire in the following sermon, with our common prayers.

Sermon II.

On the same, where it treats of the son's return to his father

The dissolute son, the deserter of a most loving father: what evils struck him down so far that, wasted with hunger, he gave himself to the servitude of swine, we touched upon in the previous sermon, as far as we were able. Now let us follow his return, now his penance, with a better hope now, in gladder words.

Coming back to himself, he says, he said: How many hirelings of my father have loaves in abundance, etc. (Luke 15:17). He came back to himself: he returns first to himself, so that he might return to his father, he who had first withdrawn from himself when he withdrew from his father. He moves away from himself, and passes wholly from man into beast, unmindful of his father's loving-kindness, forgetful of his begetter's grace.

How many hirelings of my father have loaves in abundance, but I am perishing here of hunger. Hunger calls back the one whom fullness had exiled; hunger gave him to savour his father, he from whom plenty had taken the feeling of his begetter. And if hunger, even unwilling hunger, has bestowed so much, prove what a voluntary fast can confer. A loaded belly sets the heart down to vices, presses on the mind, so that it

cannot feel the loving-kindness from above. The body, he says, that is corrupted weighs down the soul, and the earthly dwelling presses down the sense that thinks of many things (Wis 9:15). Whence the Lord too: Take heed lest your hearts be weighed down with surfeiting and drunkenness (Luke 21:34). The belly must therefore be emptied by the moderation of fasting, so that the mind, unburdened, can reach to the heights, climb to the virtues, can fly up, wholly winged, to the very author of loving-kindness. Elijah proves this, who, cleansed of the dregs of the weight of the flesh by keeping without a break a fast of the Lord's, flew up to heaven a conqueror of death (1 Kgs 19:8; 2 Kgs 2:11).

I will rise and go to my father (Luke 15:18). He who said I will rise was lying down: he understood his fall, he felt his ruin, he saw himself lying in the slippery place of shameful dissoluteness, and so he cries out: I will rise and go to my father. With what hope? With what trust? With what confidence? With what hope? With that by which he is a father. I have lost what was a son's; he has not lost what is a father's. With a father no stranger intercedes: within, in the father's breast, is the very one who intervenes and prevails by entreaty, affection. The father's heart is in labour to beget the son again through pardon. I will go to my father as one accused: but the father, on seeing the son, at once covers the guilt; he hides the judge, for he would rather fulfil the begetter; and he quickly turns the sentence into pardon, he who desires the son to return, not to perish.

I will rise and go to my father, and I will say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. Confession lays open the father, repentance speaks of the begetter. I have sinned against heaven and before you. He who is sinned against in heaven is not an earthly father but a heavenly one too; and so he added: Before you. He before whose eyes are all things that are done, in heaven and on earth.

I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son (Luke 15:18–19). This son set out abroad and fled into a far country, but he did not flee his accusers, his witnesses, the eyes of the divine father. David opens this more clearly, saying thus: Where shall I go from your spirit? And where shall I flee from your face? If I ascend into heaven, you are there; if I descend into hell, you are present. If I take my wings at dawn, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand will lead me, and your right hand will hold me (Ps 139:7–10). He sees that throughout the whole world offences stand bare to the eyes of God: that not heaven, not earth, not the seas, not the abyss, not night itself can veil sins from God. He feels how great a wickedness, how great an evil it is to sin in God's very sight, and so he cries: Against you alone have I sinned, and done evil before you (Ps 51:6). Whence this younger son too likewise calls aloud and cries: I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. He does not say: "I am not worthy to be your son", but I am not worthy to be called your

son; because to be called belongs to grace, to be belongs to nature. Hear the Apostle saying: From him who called you into his grace (Gal 1:6). So this younger son, because he had lost what was of nature, judges that he does not deserve what is of grace.

Make me as one of your hirelings. See, the son who was in his own power, where has he come to? The pleasure of dissoluteness, the freedom of youth: see, to what have they advanced the son? Make me as one of your hirelings. So that his servitude may be renewed by yearly hire, so that his hired condition may be worn away by unceasing labour, so that all day long at his work he may sigh, the home-born slave of a wretched wage, so that he may always be the seller of himself and never be able to deny his servitude. And he asks this because he who with a stranger had felt his freedom a slave's believes that with his father he will have a free servitude.

Now already, brothers, I should like to open the mystery of this reading, were I not called back by my concern for its usefulness: for I see you hearing these things not as our own, with the pain that is due, but flying over them with a hasty understanding, as though they belonged to others. Ours, ours, and for the good of us all is what Christ always speaks to us; and to correct us the Lord repeats mystical examples, he who willed to be the father of his servants, who willed rather to be loved than feared, who gave himself as the bread of life, who poured out his blood into the cup of salvation. By comparisons from the past

he corrects those now present and those to come, lest, deserting the good father, the loving begetter, we go off to the far and very foreign places of the world, and there, living dissolutely, squander the whole substance of salvation and of life; and, everything consumed, endure a most grievous famine of hope, and so be handed over to the chief man of that region, that is, to the devil, the author of despair; and he send us into his farm, that is, to the alluring valleys of this world; send us to feed the swine, those, namely, who, ever bent towards the earth, live for the belly, and temper the heats of the flesh in a wallow of mud, press them down in the mire, cool them in the whirlpool of vices. That he sends his hirelings to the swine is the doing of an insatiable cruelty, which is not content that men should become criminals unless it makes them leaders of vices and masters of crimes as well. When he has made them such, he does not let them be filled even with the swine's food and fodder: so that, hungering for vices, they may offend the more; satiety cannot contain the dissolute, pleasure does not know how to be filled.

Wherefore let us be with the good father, let us remain with the loving begetter, so that we may both avoid the snares of the devil and enjoy the father's goods without end. The depths we shall search out afterwards, because we owe more to the communion and to conduct.

Sermon III.

On the same, where it treats of the father's running to meet his son

The departure of the dissolute son, his return, his fault, his penance we have run through so far in two sermons: now let us follow the father's running to meet him, the father's goodness, the father's ineffable mercy. Rising, he says, he came to his father; and while he was still far off, his father saw him, and was moved with mercy, and ran to him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him (Luke 15:20).

Rising, he came to his father. He rose from the ruin of mind and body: he rose from the depth of hell, touching the heights of heaven: with the heavenly father the son rises more by pardon than he had fallen by guilt. Rising, he came to his father. He comes not with the step of feet, but with the advance of the mind: he had no need of the long reaches of an earthly journey, because he found the short way of the road of salvation. He does not know how to seek the divine father by running along roads, he who, seeking by faith, at once finds him present to himself.

Rising, he came to his father: and while he was still far off. How is he far off who comes? Because he has not yet arrived. This one who

comes, comes to penance, but has not yet arrived at grace; he comes to his father's house, but has not yet arrived at the glory of his former dress or honour.

And while he was still far off, his father saw him. He saw, that Father who dwells on high, and looks upon lowly things, and knows high things from afar (Ps 113:5–6). His father saw him. The father saw him, so that he too could look to the father; the father's sight lit up the face of the son as he came, so that all the darkness that had been poured round him from his guilt might be put to flight. The darkness of night is not like the darkness that comes from the confusion of sins. Hear the Prophet saying: My iniquities have laid hold of me, and I could not see (Ps 40:13). And elsewhere: My iniquities have weighed heavy upon me (Ps 38:5). And afterwards: And the light of my eyes is not with me (Ps 38:11). Night buries yesterday's light; sins, the sense; the members confound the mind. Unless, then, the heavenly father had shone upon the face of the returning son, and taken away the whole fog of confusion by the light of his regard, this son would never have seen the brightness of the divine face.

He saw him from afar, and was moved with mercy. He is moved with mercy who cannot be moved from his place; he runs, not by the advance of the body, but by the affection of loving-kindness. He fell upon his neck. Not by a sinking of his inward parts, but of compassion. He fell upon his neck, so as to raise up the one who lay so low. He fell upon his neck, so as to take away the burden

of sins by the burden of love. Come to me, he says, all you who labour and are burdened. Take my burden upon you, for it is light (Matt 11:28–30). You see that the son is helped by this father's burden, not burdened.

He fell upon his neck, and kissed him. So the father judges, so he amends, so he gives a sinning son kisses, not scourges. The force of love does not see offences, and so the father redeemed the son's sins with a kiss, shut them in with an embrace, lest the father should lay bare the son's crimes, lest the father should disfigure the son. Thus the father heals the son's wounds, so as to leave the son no scar, the son no blemish. Blessed, he says, are they whose iniquities are remitted, and whose sins are covered (Ps 32:1).

If this youth's deed displeases, if his departure horrifies, let us by no means depart from such a father. The father's look puts crimes to flight, drives out harm, drives away all wickedness and temptations. Surely, if we have departed; if by living dissolutely we have scattered the whole substance of the father; if we have committed any misdeed and offence anywhere; if we have come to the very precipice of impiety, to utter ruin, let us rise at last, and, invited by such an example, return to such a father. But when he saw him, he was moved with mercy, and ran to him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him. What place, I ask, is there here for despair? What occasion here for excuse? What pretence here of fear? Unless perhaps the meeting is feared, the kiss terrifies, the embrace disturbs, and the father is believed

to seize him for vengeance, not to receive him back for pardon, when he draws the son with his hands, shuts him in his lap, binds him with his arms. But this thought, the destroyer of life, the enemy of salvation, is overthrown, utterly, utterly done away with by what follows: And the father said to his servants: Quickly, bring out the first robe, and put it on him, and put a gold ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come back to life; he was lost, and is found (Luke 15:22–24). Having heard this, do we still delay? Do we still not return to the father?

Quickly, bring out the first robe, and put it on him. He who could not bear the son's nakedness bore his crimes: hence it is that he wished the son to be clothed by the servants before he was seen, so that the nakedness might be known to the father alone: because the father alone could not see the son's nakedness. Quickly, bring out the first robe. This father, who did not allow the sinner to stay in the second place, wishes to have joy from pardon more than from justice. Quickly, bring out the first robe. He did not say: "Where do you come from? Where have you been? Where are the things you took? Why have you exchanged such glory for such shame?" but: Quickly, bring out the first robe, and put it on him. You see that the force of love does not see offences. A father does not know a tardy mercy. He who examines offences exposes them.

And put a ring on his hand. A father's loving-kindness is not content to restore innocence alone, unless it restores the former honour as well. And put shoes on his feet. How poor he returned who had gone away enriched, and out of the whole substance brings back not even shoes on his feet! Put shoes on his feet. So that not even on his foot should the disgrace of nakedness remain; surely, so that, shod, he might return to the course of his former life.

And bring the fatted calf. A common calf is not enough, unless it be fat, unless it be fatted; the fat calf bears witness to the fatness of a father's charity. And bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and feast: because this son of mine had been dead, and has come back to life; he was lost, and is found.

We are still speaking the history, and already we are thinking of laying bare the hidden mystery. The dead son is raised from the death of the calf, and one calf is poured out as a fattening feast for the whole household. But it must be put off, so that we may follow the old pain of the elder, the brother's still older envy.

Sermon IV.

On the same, where it treats of the elder son's spite against the returning prodigal

Rejoicing at the return and the safety of the younger son, we set forth with tears, and are pained by, the envy of the elder, who lost the highest good of thrift by the uttermost evil of jealousy and spite. Now his elder son, he says, was in the field, and as he came and drew near the house, he heard music and choirs, and he called one of the servants, and asked what these things were. And he answered: Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him back safe. But he was indignant, and would not go in (Luke 15:25–28).

Now his elder son, he says, was in the field. He was in the field tilling the earth, laying himself waste; he loosens the hardness of the sod, he hardens the affection of the heart; he roots out thorns and grasses, he does not pluck out the goads of envy. So in the crop of greed he gathers the fruit of jealousy and spite.

And as he came, he says, and drew near the house, he heard music and choirs. The music of loving-kindness puts the envious man to flight, the choir of charity shuts him out; and him whom the order of nature calls to come to his brother

and draw near the house, jealousy does not let arrive, spite does not allow to go in. Envy: an ancient evil, the first stain, an old poison, the venom of the ages, the cause of death. In the beginning it cast out the angel himself, and cast him down from heaven. It shut out of paradise man, the first of our race. It shut this elder brother out of his father's house. It armed the offspring of Abraham, the people of holiness, for the slaughter of its own author, for the death of its Saviour. Envy, an enemy within, does not shake the walls of the flesh, does not batter down the fences of the members, but rams the very citadel of the heart; and before the inward parts feel it, the robber seizes the soul itself, the mistress of the body, and leads it away shut in. If, then, we wish to deserve heavenly glory, to possess the blessedness of paradise, to dwell in the house of the eternal Father, if we wish not to be held guilty of a parricide against heaven, let us with watchful faith, with the light of the spirit, drive away the black snares of envy and shut them out, let us crush envy with all the strength of heavenly arms: because, as charity joins us to God, so envy sunders us from God.

So his father came out and began to entreat him. The father's anxious heart is straitened by the divers movements of his sons, and between the different fortunes of his pledges the begetter's loving-kindness runs to and fro, astounded; because he sees the one brother put to flight at once by the other's return, and the one lost to him at once through the other's safety; and

a long grief, outweighed by a brief joy, thrown into turmoil by the spite of envy. O swelling of jealousy: a spacious house cannot hold two brothers! And what wonder, brothers? Envy did it, it made the whole breadth of the world too narrow for two brothers; for it raised up Cain to the death of the younger, so that the spite of jealousy made him alone whom the law of nature had made first (Gen 4:8).

But he answered and said to his father: Father, see, so many years I serve you (Luke 15:29). So thinks one who dares to judge his father's loving-kindness. See, so many years I serve you. See with what servitude a son repays his father for the benefits of being born! I have never disobeyed your command. This was given you not by your innocence but by your father's pardon, because with great charity he chose to cover his son's offences rather than lay them bare.

And you never gave me a kid, that I might feast with my friends. A mind envious of a brother cannot be grateful to a father; and he is not mindful of a father's generosity who is unmindful of a brother's charity. He denies that a kid was given him who at the time of the division received his whole part of the substance. For then, when the younger brother asked that the portion of the substance be given him, the father at once divided the whole between the two brothers, as the Evangelist says: And he divided the substance between them. But the envious man always dissembles: the envious man always lies. And you never gave me a kid, that I might feast with my

friends. He does not count his father's friends as his own: he believes those to be not friends but strangers by whom he saw himself loved for his father's sake.

But after this son of yours, who devoured his substance with harlots, came, you killed the fatted calf (Luke 15:30). He is pained that his brother has returned, he is not pained that the substance has perished; nor does he complain on account of the loss, but of spite: he who ought to have adorned his returning brother from his own goods ought not so to have disfigured him over what was lost. In the son is the father's whole substance; and so the father lost nothing when he received his son back. The brother thought it a loss, seeing that a co-heir had returned. And when is the envious man not avaricious, when does he not reckon that he has lost whatever another has?

But he said to him: Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours; but it was fitting to feast and rejoice, because this brother of yours had been dead, and has come back to life; he was lost, and is found (Luke 15:31–32). O what the force of love does! Even to a bad son he does not know how not to be, he cannot not be, a father; he sees that the son has degenerated in mind; he sees that he has nothing of a father's loving-kindness, nothing of his father's stock, and yet he calls him son; he urges him to the deed; he calls him back to grace, or at least to the hope of his generosity, saying: You are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. That is to say: allow the son

to have returned to his father, permit the father to have received his son; nor did he seek anything other than his father, he who on coming wished to be placed not in a son's place but in a hireling's, saying: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; and I am no longer worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hirelings. Let all things be yours; for him the father is enough; and lest you think anything taken from you of the things present, of the things of old, for him I will seek out things new and things to come. Surely, if you follow your father's counsel and command, share the present things with your brother, so that the things to come may be common to you with him. Rejoice, then, and rejoice in him who was found, so that he may rejoice that you have not perished. But let us now close the sermon on the history, so that afterwards, as Christ reveals it, we may set forth what is mystical, what is deep.

Sermon V.

On the same, as they figure the Jew and the Gentile

It is the way of a crafty and shameless debtor often not to pay what he has agreed, and to put off a most patient creditor with long and artful quibbling. This is our fifth sermon on the departure, on the return of the dissolute son, in which we shall try, as we promised, to lift the historical sense to a mystical and singular understanding of the Godhead. Pray that, since for so great a credit I am of myself a debtor not able enough, through God I may prove able to pay you.

A certain man had, he says, two sons (Luke 15:11). After Christ took up the burden of our flesh, and God put on human spoils, God truly calls himself man; the Lord truly names himself the father of two sons, because the Godhead intermingled with manhood, the loving-kindness associated with the Godhead, mingled man and God; and this united the Lord into a father. This man, then, this father, had two sons by the Maker's kindness, not by the necessity of one who begets; he had two sons, whose being he did not merit, but commanded: because Christ was man in our eyes in such a way that he always remained God in the secret of his majesty. He had two sons. Two peoples, that is, the Jewish and the Gentile;

but the wisdom of the Law made the Jewish the elder; the folly of paganism rendered the Gentile the younger. Because, as wisdom gives grey hairs, so folly takes away whatever belongs to a man. This one, then, his ways made the younger, not his age; not the times made that one the elder, but his sense.

And the younger of them, he says, said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falls to me (Luke 15:12). This one asks him who knows the heart, not with his voice but with his wish; because it is our own will in us that brings back good things or evil from God. Indeed, this one, who with his father was the possessor of the whole lot, by his own will came down to a part, saying: Give me the portion of substance that falls to me. And what is that portion? What is it? Bearing, speech, knowledge, reason, judgement, which fall to man above the other living creatures in his earthly dwelling: that is, according to the Apostle, the law of nature. And so he divided the substance between them, giving the younger these five gifts of nature that we have named; inscribing for the elder, by God's hand, the five books of the Law: through which the substance would be unequal in merit, equal in number; the one would keep to the human order, the other would stand by divine institution; yet each law would lead both sons to the knowledge of the father, would keep them in reverence for their author.

And not many days after, he says, the younger, having gathered everything together, set out

abroad into a far country; and there he squandered his substance by living dissolutely (Luke 15:13). We have said that not the times made the younger, but his ways; and so he said: Not many days after. Because with the very beginning of the world the Gentile world hastened to the homeland of idols; it went abroad to the devil's far region in mind, not in place; it wandered through the elements in vain thoughts, it was not tossed about the lands by bodily movements: for in the father's presence it was without the father; and while it was in itself, it was not with itself. Hence it is that the dissolute one, through the desire of worldly eloquence, through the brothels of the schools, through the crossroads of the sects, squandered the substance of God the Father in mad disputation.

And when by conjectures he had consumed whatever there was of speech, of knowledge, of reason, of judgement, the most wretched one endured the utmost want, a great famine of knowing the truth: because philosophy imposed the labour of seeking divinity, and conferred no fruit of finding the truth. Hence it is that he attached himself to the chief man of that region, by whom he was sent into this world, that is, into the one farm of many superstitions; to feed swine, that is, the demons, who say to the Lord: If you cast us out, send us into the swine (Matt 8:31). To feed the demons with frankincense, victims, blood, and to bring back false answers as the wage of such labour. A beast was slain so that, slain, it might divine what alive it had not known; and

that, dead, it might speak from its entrails what it had never uttered with its mouth.

But when the Gentile found nothing divine, nothing saving, nothing that would profit him in such things, despairing of God, of providence, of judgement, of the things to come, he sank from the school to the gluttony of the belly, longing to be filled with the pods that the swine were eating. The Epicureans know this, who, when they had run through the schools of Plato and Aristotle and found there no teaching either of divinity or of knowledge, hand themselves over to Epicurus, the last author of despair and of pleasure. And they eat the pods, that is, they gape after the pleasures of the body, wickedly sweet, and they feed the demons, which are always fattened on the vices and filth of bodies: because, as he who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor 6:17), so he who joins himself to the devil is one demon. But this younger son, although he longed to, still did not fill his belly with those pods. Why? Because no one gave to him. The devil indeed wished, through the famine of knowledge, through the difficulty of pleasures, to make the Gentile greedier for seeking out what is forbidden, for committing offences: but God the father allowed the Gentile to hunger for this purpose, that the occasion of error might become the ground of salvation: for the Jew he so left as not to lose him; and the Gentile he permitted to endure famine, so that he might return.

He returns to his father, then, and cries: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you

(Luke 15:18). That the younger has returned to the father's house and cries to God as father, the daily voice of the Church bears witness, which says: Our Father, who are in heaven (Matt 6:9). I have sinned against heaven and before you. He sinned against heaven in that he blasphemes that the sun, the moon, the stars in heaven are gods, and profanes these same things by adoring them. And I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me as one of your hirelings (Luke 15:19). That is to say: since I no longer deserve the glory of a son, let me obtain at least the wage of pardon for a hireling's labour. And for one whose honour as offspring has perished, let at least a substance to live by remain in daily bread.

But the father runs to meet him, and runs to meet him far off. While we were still ungodly, Christ died for us (Rom 5:6, 8). The father runs to meet him, runs to meet him in the Son, when through him he came down from heaven and reached the earth. The Father, he says, who sent me is with me (John 8:29). He fell upon his neck. He fell, when through Christ the whole divinity lies down and leans upon our flesh. And he kissed him. When? When mercy and truth met each other: justice and peace kissed each other (Ps 85:11).

He gave the first robe. That which Adam lost, the everlasting glory of immortality. He put a ring on his hand. The ring of honour, the title of freedom, the distinguished pledge of the Spirit, the seal of faith, the earnest of the heavenly marriage: hear the Apostle: I have betrothed you to one hus-

band, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor 11:2). And shoes on his feet. So that the feet might be shod in the preaching of the Gospel, so that the feet of those who bring the good news of peace might be blessed (Rom 10:15). And he killed the fatted calf for him. That of which David sang: And it will please God more than a young calf that puts forth horns and hoofs (Ps 69:32). The calf is slain at the father's bidding, because Christ, God, the Son of God, could not be slain without the will of the Father: hear the Apostle: He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for all of us (Rom 8:32). This is the calf that is sacrificed daily and continually for our feast.

But the elder brother, but the elder son coming from the field, the people of the Law, the harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few (Luke 10:2): he hears music in the father's house, he hears choirs, and will not go in. This we see daily before our eyes. For the Jew comes to the father's house, that is, to the Church; he stands outside through envy, he hears David's lyre sounding, he hears the music of the prophets' harmony, he hears choirs from the varied assembly of the peoples, and he will not go in, standing outside through envy. While he judges his Gentile brother by his former ways and shudders at him, he himself takes himself out of his father's goods, he himself shuts himself out of his father's joys. As for what he said: See, so many years I serve you, and I have never disobeyed your command, and you never gave me a kid, we have already said that it is better passed over in silence

than spoken of, because it is the Jew who speaks: and they are not the words of a doer, but of one puffed up.

The father goes out, and says to the son: Son, you are always with me. How? Through Abel, through Enoch, through Shem, through Noah, through Abraham, through Isaac, through Jacob, through Moses, through all the saints, through whom the Jewish generation that is read in the Gospel is derived, when it says: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob (Matt 1:2). And all that is mine is yours. In what way? Because for you the Law, for you prophecy, for you the temple, for you the priesthood, for you the sacrifices, for you the kingdom, for you the gifts, for you (what is above all) Christ was born. But because you wish through envy to destroy your brother, you deserve not to have the father's feasts, the father's joys.

In a narrow sermon we could not open the broadest things as we wished; but to the understanding of your knowledge the things that seem narrow in our sermon are broad. Let this simple and hidden discourse not be unwelcome, which has compelled us not to narrate, not to declaim, but to open and explain things mystical and lofty.

Sermon VI.

On the joy at the bringing of the Gentiles to faith and grace. On Psalm 99 (100)

Since at the younger son's return the whole household formed choirs and sang a heavenly music, it is fitting that we too today take up a psalm, sound the timbrel, set up the instrument, touch the lyre, and make David's melody resound for so great a joy of God the Father. Shout with joy to God, he says, all the earth (Ps 100:1). What is it that the understanding of this exultation seeks? What is it that, after such great, such terrible, such wonderful commands of the Godhead, the earth is now called and invited to a shout of joy? Shout with joy, he says, to God, all the earth. What else is it, but that after the terrible God chose the office of a most gentle shepherd, he put on the person of a shepherd, so that, a merciful shepherd, he might gather into one, like straying sheep, the wandering peoples, the roaming multitudes, the nations scattered far and wide; or rather, so that he might lead and bring back to the use of milk, to the food of grass, to the whole gentleness of sheep, fierce nations, thirsting for the prey of death, the food of flesh, the drink of blood, the fury of beasts? To all the earth he commands and enjoins a shepherd's discipline,

saying: All the earth, shout with joy to God. As the terrible trumpet leads the soldier out to war, so the sweetness of jubilation invites the sheep to pasture. It was fitting, then, to soften the din of warfare with a shepherd's gentleness, so that so gentle a grace might save the nations which their natural fierceness had long destroyed.

That the shepherd's returns would be good when Christ came to the earth, he himself cried out today: I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). Hence it is that the master himself seeks helpers, seeks companions for the care of the whole world, saying: Shout with joy to God, all the earth. Hence it is that, when he is about to return to heaven, he commends his sheep to Peter in his stead, to feed them. Peter, he says, do you love me? Feed my sheep (John 21:16–17). And so that he might not compel the slender first returns by power, but carry them by loving-kindness, he repeats: Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep. He commends the sheep, he commends the offspring of the sheep, because the foreknowing shepherd knew already the fruitfulness of his flock that was to come. Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep. To these sheep Paul, the colleague of Peter the shepherd, with loving feeding held out breasts full of milk, saying: I gave you milk to drink, not solid food (1 Cor 3:2). The blessed King felt this; and so, instead of bleating, he cries: The Lord feeds me, and I shall lack nothing: in a green place, there he has set me: by the water of refreshment he has brought me up (Ps 23:1–2).

After the unceasing groans of wars, then, after a sad life of blood, the next little verse announces gladness to a servitude now returning to the pastures of the Gospel's peace. Man was the servant of sin, he was the captive of death, he was the chattel of demons, he was the home-born slave of idols, he was the flogged slave of vices, he was the one fettered by crimes. So to such evil masters, and so many, man rendered an evil and wretched servitude. When was man not sad under sin? When not mourning under death? When not pale under demons? When not trembling under idols? When not suspect under vices? When not despairing under crimes? And so man heaved his deepest sighs, when he endured continually such masters, and so cruel.

The Prophet, then, seeing us freed from such masters, and called back to the homage of the Creator, to the grace of the Father, to the free servitude of the one good Lord, rightly cries out: Serve the Lord with gladness: enter, he says, into his presence with exultation (Ps 100:2). Enter not in place, but in heart. Enter into his presence with exultation. Because those whom guilt had cast out, whom conscience had expelled, grace leads back, innocence lets in: Enter into his presence with exultation. He who goes into his presence with exultation is free from guilt, is wholly secure of the reward.

Yet what is it that he exhorts? What is this Prophet striving to persuade? Enter into his presence with exultation. Who is free in the presence of God? Who lies before the divine eyes? Who is

exultant before the terror of the majesty on high? Archangels tremble, angels are in fright, the powers fear, the elders fall prostrate before the face of heaven; the elements flee, rocks are dissolved, mountains flow down, the earth trembles, and man of earth, how will he go in undaunted? And does he still stand exultant? Whence is it that the Prophet so takes it for granted that we ought to do this? Whence is it? From what follows: Know, he says, that the Lord himself is God (Ps 100:3). Because that Lord is God who was little in our flesh; hence it is that that Lord is God who was capacious in our cradle; sweet in the lap, gentle in his condition, winning in our company. And so: Enter into his presence with exultation. Because he hid all the fright of the divinity, all the dread of the judge, in our condition, placed it under a provident aspect: so that he who enters may not fear the judge's punishments, but may presume upon a parent's embrace. And how should he not exult who finds a begetter in the one he had feared as examining judge?

Enter into his presence with exultation: know that the Lord himself is God; he himself made us, and not we ourselves. The labour of father and mother is empty, unless the work and authority of the Maker be present in the offspring. Your hands, he says, have made me and fashioned me (Ps 119:73). And elsewhere: You formed me, and laid your hand upon me (Ps 139:5). Therefore that we are born, that we are, we do not owe to ourselves, because we owe the whole to the Author. But we are his peoples, and the sheep of his

pasture. It is proved very often in proverbs that a shepherd came from heaven, to call back with a heavenly shout of joy to the life-giving pastures the sheep that strayed and were wounded by deadly grass.

Enter, he says, his gates with confession (Ps 100:4). Confession alone is what makes us enter by the door of faith. His courts with hymns: confess to him, praise his name. We said that we, now placed within the father's house, must take for ourselves the spiritual harmony of heavenly songs, so that for us there may be confession at the entrance, hymns in the courts, praise in the inner chambers, where the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells (Col 2:9). Confess to him, praise his name. Confess to him, because he is God, praise his name. Through which we have been saved: in which the creature of heaven, of earth and of the underworld bends the knee (Phil 2:10), and loves the Lord God.

For the Lord is sweet (Ps 100:5). Whence? Because his mercy is for ever. Truly he is sweet through mercy, through which alone he deigned to take away the most bitter sentence of the whole world. Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). And his truth even to the age of the age. For God has mercy with his truth kept whole, he who so gives pardon to sins as to keep justice in his very tender mercy and in its reckoning, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon VII.

On hypocrisy and almsgiving. On the passage of Matthew 6: "When you fast, do not become gloomy like the hypocrites"

When God changed the Lord into a father, he willed to reign by charity rather than by power, and chose to be loved rather than feared: whence with a father's affection he warned us, that nothing of our most just labour should be lost to us. The Evangelist speaks thus: When you fast, do not become gloomy like the hypocrites; for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen by men to be fasting. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward (Matt 6:16). Hypocrisy: a subtle evil, a secret poison, a hidden venom, the paint of virtues, the moth of holiness. All adversaries strive with their own strength, fight with their own arms, attack openly: so they are guarded against as easily as they are seen. Hypocrisy feigns at its ease, deceives while it prospers, lies with care, and with cruel art it cuts down the virtues with the sword of the virtues: it destroys fasting with fasting, it empties prayer with prayer, it lays mercy low with tender mercy. Hypocrisy, akin to fever, pledges burning heat in a cold cup. What dropsy is to bodies, hypocrisy is to souls; that is, dropsy thirsts by drinking, hypocrisy thirsts when drunk.

For they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen by men to be fasting. Hypocrisy, in longing to capture eyes, itself becomes the captive of eyes. For they disfigure their faces. And if they disfigure their faces, what adornment of the body will remain? Truly, as the Lord said: If the light that is in you is darkness, how great will the darkness itself be? (Matt 6:23) Hypocrite, though your face be unkempt, your skin neglected, your look sad, your aspect disfigured, you have not found praise from men, and with God you have lost the fruit of the fast. Hypocrite, you have toiled at fasts so that the toil of the fast should not profit you. Hypocrite, you entered the billows of abstinence, you climbed the waves of continence, you swam across the sea of fasting; and in the very harbour of fasting you were shipwrecked: because you did not gain profit, but bought vanity, you who out of God's credit have done a human business. Hence it is that you will render account to God, you who received from men the interest of wretched praise.

Brothers, the poison must be fled, the pestilence guarded against, which makes diseases out of remedies, produces sickness out of medicine, turns holiness into crime, makes atonement into guilt, begets peril out of propitiation. Whoever flees hypocrisy conquers; whoever runs into it falls. Let us flee hypocrisy, let us flee it, brothers: let our fast be from simplicity, holy from innocence, pure from purity, sincere from sincerity; let it be hidden from men, unknown to the devil, known to God. He who does not hide his treasure

betrays it; virtues betrayed will not remain. As the virtues desert those who betray them, so they are eager to guard those who guard them. Therefore let fasting, which for us is the first virtue against vices, be placed in the citadel of the breast: because while it presides within, vices will not be able to shake us without.

This Christ urges, so that the Christian may have it, when he says: But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face, so that you may not be seen by men to be fasting, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you (Matt 6:17–18). When he says, Anoint your head, and wash your face, the serious master does not enjoin that the hair of the head should overflow with alluring ointment, nor does he wish the face to shine with the usual washing; but he wants the Christian's fast to be hidden under the bearing of one who dines, because he does not want the Christian to lay claim to fasting by artful grief.

But let us return to what we began. Anoint your head, and wash your face, so that you may not be seen by men to be fasting, but by your Father, who is in secret. So he does not indulge voluptuous looks, but shuts out faces that are feigned: a face cast down in grief courts fame, it does not profess a voluntary fast. If he wills it, why sad? If he does not will it, why fasting? Rightly he lives in such punishment who makes for himself vice out of virtue, a lie out of truth, loss out of reward, sin out of remission.

If a farmer has not pressed in the coulter, has not dug the furrow, has not cut down the thorns, has not pulled up the grasses, has not laid the seeds in safety, he lies to himself, not to the earth; nor does he do the earth harm, but he makes no fruit for himself: and so he empties himself, so he deceives himself, so he attacks himself, who lies to the earth with a deceitful hand. What will he do? What will he have? What will he find, who lies to God while the flesh hungers and hypocrisy runs riot? Since we have made mention of the farmer, let him know that he endures labour in vain, that he will have nothing, who, pressing the plough of fasting and cutting down the grasses of gluttony and rooting out the thorns of dissoluteness, has cast no seeds of mercy.

This the Lord wished to disclose, who, teaching about fasting, at once added this: Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal (Matt 6:19–20). What is so fatherly? What comes so from love? What counsel so provident from charity? He wills nothing of yours to perish, who wills your goods to be stored in the heavenly treasuries. How securely he sleeps, who has deserved to have God as guardian of his goods! How he knows nothing of cares, how he lays aside anguish, how free he is from anxiety, how he is spared the arrogance of servants, who commits his goods to his father to keep! How a father's

affection keeps what servile fear cannot so keep: a father, when he gives his own to his sons, does not diminish what the sons have entrusted to him. He does not know what a father is; he does not know himself a son, who does not trust his father.

Bolts do not shut out the moth, but shut it in; and they breed it, they do not repel it: things kept nourish rust, they do not escape it; because what is born from the thing itself is not escaped. Where there is need, thieves cannot be lacking. He then who places his goods among moths, rust, thieves, exposes what is his, he does not lay it up. As the moth is born from the garment, rust from metal, thieves from need: so avarice is acquired from riches, greed from gain, from having the burning for having. Whoever, then, wishes to conquer avarice, let him pay out his riches, not lay them up.

Let us send our treasures ahead into heaven, brothers; let the poor be the carriers, who can carry what is ours in their bosom to the heights. Let no one fear fraud from the porters: yours is this conveyance, by which our goods are carried to God, with God as surety: to whom be all honour and glory, power and dominion, and thanksgiving for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon VIII.

On fasting and almsgiving

A prudent helmsman, when he casts off his ship from the shore, when, about to cross the sea, he enters the waves, lays aside his cares for home, fatherland, wife and children, and is so wholly occupied in mind, body and sense with the labours of sailing, that he can both overcome the perils of the waves and, victor over danger, enter the anchorage of a profitable harbour. So let us, brothers, who have entered the road of abstinence, the sea of fasting, the way of Lent, cast off the ship of our body from the shore of the world; let us renounce the cares of a worldly fatherland; on the tree of the cross let us spread all the sails of the mind; with the ropes of the virtues, the oars of wisdom, the rudders of discipline, let us secure the course of our vessel. And, drawn away from the lands, let us watch the sky: so that by the guidance of the heavenly signs we may keep, among the liquid paths, the unstumbling track of a hidden way; and so, with Christ at the helm, the Holy Spirit blowing, the foam of pleasures overcome, the waves of vices surmounted, the storms of crimes run through, the rocks of sins passed by, and the shipwrecks of all offences avoided, we

may enter the harbour of Easter, the gain of life, the joys of the resurrection.

But since we are to make our way across bare plains, through deceptive whirlpools, through uncertain solitudes, we must carry with us the whole substance of food and drink: let us put into our provisions abundant mercy, which will profit us. Brothers, a fast hungers, a fast thirsts, that is not fed with the food of piety, that is not watered with the drink of mercy. A fast is cold, a fast faints, that the fleece of almsgiving does not cover, that the garment of tender mercy does not clothe.

Brothers, what spring is to the earth, this we know mercy to be to fasting. As the breezes of spring make all the buds of the fields flower, so mercy brings all the seeds of fasting into flower, makes the whole virtue of fasting bear fruit for the heavenly harvest. What oil is to the lamp, this piety is to fasting: as the richness of oil kindles the light of the lamp, and with moderate feeding makes it shine for the comfort of the whole night, so piety makes fasting shine, and radiate to the whole brightness of continence. What the sun is to the day, this almsgiving is known to be to fasting. As the sun's radiance makes the day brighter, and scatters all the darkness of the clouds, so almsgiving hallows the holiness of fasting, and shuts out the whole night of greed with the light of piety. And not to dwell on many things: what the soul is to the body, generosity is held to be to fasting. For as the body is put to death when the soul departs from the body, so the departure of generosity is the death of fasting.

Fasting indeed is the death of vices, the life of virtues. Fasting is peace for the body, the grace of the members, the adornment of life. Fasting is the strength of minds, the vigour of souls. Fasting is the wall of chastity, the bulwark of modesty, the city of holiness. Fasting is the school of merits, the mastery of mastery, the discipline of disciplines. Fasting is the saving provision for the journey of the Church's way. Fasting is the unconquered command of the Christian service. But among these virtues fasting then flourishes, then conquers, then triumphs, when it fights with mercy as its leader. Mercy and piety are the wings of fasting, by which it is lifted and carried to heaven; without them it lies and rolls on the earth. Fasting without mercy is a semblance of famine, it is no image of holiness; fasting without piety is an occasion of avarice, not a purpose of frugality: because that frugality swells as much in the purse as it dries up in the body. Fasting without mercy is not truth, but figure; but where mercy is, there truth is too, as the Prophet proves when he says: Mercy and truth met each other (Ps 85:11). Fasting without mercy is not virtue but hypocrisy, as the Lord says: But you, when you fast, do not become gloomy like the hypocrites; for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen by men to be fasting (Matt 6:16). He who does not fast for the poor man feigns before God; he who, fasting, does not pay out his dinner but lays it by, is proved to fast for greed, not for Christ.

Fasting, then, brothers, let us lay up our dinner in the hand of the poor man, so that the hand of

the poor may keep for us what the belly would have lost for us. The hand of the poor man is Abraham's bosom; where whatever the poor man receives, he at once lays up. The hand of the poor man is the treasury of heaven: what it receives, lest it perish on earth, it lays up in heaven. Lay up, he says, for yourselves treasures in heaven (Matt 6:20). The hand of the poor man is the treasury of Christ, because whatever the poor man receives, Christ accepts. Give, then, man, earth to the poor man, that you may receive heaven. Give a coin, that you may receive a kingdom. Give a crumb, that you may receive the whole. Give to the poor man, that you may give to yourself: because whatever you give to the poor man, you will have; what you do not give to the poor man, another will have.

God cries: I desire mercy (Hos 6:6). He who denies God what God wills, wills that what he himself desires be denied him by God. I desire mercy. Man, God asks; but for you, not for himself. I desire mercy. He asks for human mercy, so as to bestow divine mercy. There is mercy in heaven, which is reached through earthly mercies. Lord, he says, your mercy is in heaven (Ps 36:6).

When you are to plead your cause at God's judgement, take mercy as your patroness, through whom you can be set free. He who is certain of the patronage of mercy, let him be secure of pardon, let him not doubt of acquittal. Mercy not only comes before the case and anticipates the examining judge, but even revokes the sentence, acquits the condemned. The Ninevites

prove it: when they were already subject to the sentence, handed over to punishment, standing for the slaughter, given over to death, mercy so snatched them away, so held them, so forestalled, that God preferred to have the sentence withdrawn rather than deny anything to mercy (Jonah 3). Fasting, indeed, stood there then too to plead the cause, sprinkled ashes, spread sackcloth, uttered groans, poured out tears: and what it could not excuse by words, it softened by mourning; but it could not change the sentence, had not mercy come to its aid with the closing plea. Mercy both frees sinners and restores saints: because, had mercy not been present, David too, when he commits adultery, would have lost prophecy (2 Sam 11); and Peter, when he denies, would have lost the principate of the apostolic order (Matt 26); and Paul, when he blasphemes, would have remained a persecutor. Paul acknowledges this when he says: I who was first a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and insolent: but I obtained mercy (1 Tim 1:13).

Brothers, let us acquire mercy through mercies to the poor, so that we may be free from punishment, secure of salvation. Blessed, he says, are the merciful: for they will obtain mercy (Matt 5:7). In vain does he hope for mercy there who has not done mercy here. He who does mercy runs to the reward; he who does not do mercy runs down to punishment.

Sermon IX.

On the same. On the passage of Matthew: "Take heed that you do not do your justice before men"

God deals with us, he deals with us in this world, that nothing may perish for us in the world to come: as shines out from the very beginning of the reading. Take heed, he says, that you do not do your justice before men, so as to be seen by them: otherwise you have no reward with your Father, who is in heaven (Matt 6:1).

And how is what is done by men not done before men? Is the sense of an open justice hidden? What is secret about a public work? He who can hide the rays of the sun will be able to conceal the brightness of justice. Justice, the light of things, is not veiled by dark counsels. Justice, when it shines by its own deed, enlightens all by its example. And why is it that the Lord does not want it done before men, the justice by which human affairs take their stand? And where is that saying: So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:16)? How does he want to hide the justice whose works he wants to shine out so? Brothers, here the heavenly precept wants to take away boasting, remove display, strip off vanity, put aside empty glory: in this way it wants

to hide justice. Justice, which of itself abounds for its own glory, does not seek the spectacle of the people, the praises of the crowd, the favours of men, the glory of the world: born of God, it looks to heaven; it acts in the divine eyes; mingled with the powers above, it waits always to be glorified by God alone. But this is the justice which is from God; that justice, however, which is hypocrisy is not justice: it lies to the eyes, deceives the sight, mocks those who see, deceives those who hear, leads crowds astray, draws peoples, sells fame, buys applause, is done for the world, is not done for God, seizes a present wage, does not seek a reward in the future, blinds eyes, and, blind itself and not seeing, wishes to be seen: because of this blindness Christ begins thus in the present precept.

Take heed. That is, do not long to be heeded. That you do not do your justice before men. Why? Lest you be seen by them. And if you have been seen, what then? You have no reward with your Father, who is in heaven. Brothers, here the Lord does not judge, but explains: he lays open the tricks of thoughts, he lays bare the secrets of minds, he proclaims to those who handle justice unjustly the measure of a just retribution. Justice which places itself before human eyes cannot expect the wage of the divine father: it wished to be seen, and was seen; it wished to please men, and pleased them; it has the wage it wished; the reward it did not wish to have, it will not have.

For what reason these things were said first, let us hear from what follows. When you give

alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do (Matt 6:2). Rightly he says "trumpet", because such almsgiving is hostile, not civil; not given over to mercy, but to clamour: the home-born slave of sedition, not the nursling of piety; a trafficking of ostentation, not a commerce of charity. Whoever displays his alms insults. You, he says, when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be glorified by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. You have heard how he brands almsgiving in the assembly, in the squares, at the crossroads, spent not for the relief of the poor but set out for the favour of men, so that they are proved to sell mercy, not to give it. Hypocrisy must be fled, it must be fled, brothers, which, captive to glory, does not relieve the shame of the poor but wearies it; which seeks out of the groan of the needy the display of its own boasting; which spreads its own praise out of the poor man's pain; which out of the misery of the one who asks spreads abroad the fame of its own ostentation.

But someone says: "Then in the assembly, in the squares, at the crossroads, is mercy to be denied? Is food not to be supplied?" Certainly, in every place and at every time mercy is to be done, food is to be supplied, nakedness is to be covered; but in the way the author of mercy taught, so that mercy may be known not to earth but to heaven; not made known to men, but to God. In the squares, at the crossroads, piety has its secret:

conversely, it is a square, it is a crossroads, when the hypocrite does nothing secret in secret.

Brothers, God in warning thus blames intentions, not places; the sense, not the works; the zeal, not the giver: he rebukes one who gives for his own fame, not for the poor man's famine; he judges not where you do it, when you do it, but how you do it: because God measures deeds by hearts, not by hands; and gathers the quality of works from the sense, not from places. He wants mercy done before himself alone, who alone is both the rewarder and the witness of mercy; and who says: I was hungry, and you gave me to eat (Matt 25:35). He wants it given to himself in the poor man: and he who wants it given to himself wants to owe what has been given; and he who wants to owe what has been given wants nothing to be lost to those who bestow. God asks small things, to repay the greatest. Hence, man, if you lend at interest to God in the poor man, do not seek men as witnesses: good faith does not seek arbiters. He calls in question the good faith of the receiver who gives nothing without go-betweens; he who publishes what he has lent burns the debtor with shame. Therefore, man, when you are about to give to God, give in secret; so that what you give may be not a burden but an honour. For this reason your enricher comes to you in the poor man, so that you may not doubt that he will return what he received, he who freely gave you to have what you might give.

And how modest the poverty is in the poor man who seeks the secrecy of your generosity,

he himself discloses when he says: But when you give alms, let your left hand not know what your right hand is doing (Matt 6:3). How much do you think he wants another not to know it, who wants you yourself, who do it, not to know it in some part of you? Let your left hand not know what your right hand is doing. As the virtues are on our right side, so the part of the vices is on our left. So, as what the silent giver does is the work of the right hand, what the chattering giver does is the hypocrisy of the left. Hypocrisy, guile, pretence, fraud, falsehood, pride, swelling, boasting press upon us and threaten from the left. Whenever, then, we have to do with goodness, with piety, with mercy, let the left hand not know it. It is the left that always declares the battles of souls against us, and labours that the virtues may not come to effect. Impiety acts so that there may be no piety; greed fights so that almsgiving may not win; avarice rages so that mercy may not grow strong; that innocence, purity, simplicity, holiness may not reign, hypocrisy alone does battle, which Christ shuts away from us by such a preaching: But when you give alms, let your left hand not know what your right hand is doing.

Brothers, in this world let us flee the things on the left, if in the world to come we desire to stand on the right and to hear: Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the origin of the world (Matt 25:34). Man, give on earth to the poor man what you wish to remain for you in heaven. Man, be the poor man's fellow soldier here, if you wish

to reign there with our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon X.

On bringing unbelievers to baptism. On Psalm 28 (29)

All who lighten the hardships of their tasks and solace their straits prove that singing was given us by nature for the comfort of labour. Hence sailors overcome the perils of the sea by song; hence they haul immense weights with the relief of songs; hence a ringing voice makes travellers climb steep hills; hence song going before stirs even warriors to undergo the bitterness of battles. And, not to say much, a sweet song overcomes and accomplishes all that there is of hard work, of toil. So, brothers, let us join divine songs to the fast of Lent, so that a heavenly harmony may temper and lighten the weight of abstinence, blessed David calling us to this, who, while he soothes and delights his dear flock in the pastures with his pipe, learned by song to overcome the hardships of wars, by song was able to call the nations, to bring back the Jews, to put the demon to flight, to call the sons of God together to the homage of the Father on high, as his melody sang, inviting well.

Bring to the Lord, he says, you sons of God (Ps 29:1). Do you think he calls the heavenly powers so? Or does he fit men to be sons of God? And lift earthly flesh to a heavenly nature? Bring to

the Lord, you sons of God. Men, brothers, men this Prophet names, whom elsewhere he so hails as sons of God: I said: You are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High (Ps 82:6). We have heard, brothers, where the divine condescension has carried us, where the fatherhood on high has raised us: let us believe that we are sons of God, let us answer to our lineage; let us live for heaven; let us reproduce our Father by likeness, lest we lose by vices what we have obtained through grace. Bring to the Lord, you sons of God. You see that the heavenly Father perceives love by gifts, affection by things given, proves charity by offerings. And truly, brothers, he does not know himself a son, he lacks a heart, he denies nature, he is ungrateful to his father, who does not appease the author of his life with homage, does not win him over with worship, does not honour him with gifts.

Bring to the Lord, you sons of God. Let us see what it is that this Prophet reminds and exhorts us to bring to so great a Father. Bring to the Lord, you sons of God, bring to the Lord the sons of rams. Is this the whole of what he seeks, of what he requires: that the divine offspring is admonished to offer to the divine Father the young of sheep, the cheap brood of earthly cattle, births strewn along the road, seeds scattered over the fields? Or perhaps does God, the Creator of all things, now require Jewish sacrificial victims, bloody sacrifices, victims bleating under the knives? And where is what he says? I will not take calves from your house, nor goats

from your flocks, for mine are all the wild beasts of the forests, the cattle on the mountains, and the oxen. I know all the birds of the sky, and the beauty of the field is with me. If I am hungry, I will not tell you: for the world is mine, and its fullness (Ps 50:9–12).

And if he rejected these things, which sons of rams does he ask to be brought to him? He speaks to Abraham: Take your beloved son, and you shall offer him to me as a holocaust (Gen 22:2). Abraham the ram, ripe for innocence, full of years for faith, perfect for the victim, ready for the holocaust, was bringing his son, the son of the ram: or rather he was sacrificing himself in his son, hallowing his mind, gladdening his faith, so that the same man was victim and pontiff, priest and sacrifice. The whole passion there was the father's, where the son was being sacrificed; the son was set there unknowing, the son was fitted to the ties without knowing, so that he might take martyrdom from the passion, a reward from the father's punishment, snatch a crown from the father's struggle. Indeed, the father's right hand was held back, the father's sword was removed, because the son's death was not being sought, but the father's charity was being proved: nor was the son's blood required, where the whole victim consisted in the father's love, as Scripture says: Now I know that you love God, because you have not spared your only-begotten son for my sake (Gen 22:12). We have called Abraham a ram, so that we might prove Isaac the ram's son: and

so it shines out which sons of rams the Prophet wants us to offer to the Lord.

Bring to the Lord the sons of rams. The Christian is now admonished to bring the sons of the fathers, of the patriarchs, of the prophets, of the apostles, of the martyrs, of the confessors: when the Lord's flock is let out to the pasture of faith, when the heavenly shepherd wants his lambs to be brought to the Lord's fold, lest, scattered through the wildernesses of the nations, they be devoured by the onslaughts of wolves.

But what the divine voice admonishes let us now say more plainly. Bring to the Lord the sons of rams. Bring to the Lord those to be baptised; bring those whom faith conceives, not flesh; bring those whom the grace of God begets, not worldly nature; bring those whom innocence makes lambs, not those whom the dullness of cattle holds: bring, bring those whom either necessity forbids to come of their own accord, or age hinders, or ignorance delays, or vices hold, or offences detain, or expectation deceives, or poverty misleads through shame; lead the willing, draw the unwilling, make for yourselves a wage out of another's need: if a master has a servant who is a catechumen, let him bring him, so that he may now have him as one of the faithful; let a father offer his son, not hold him back, so that to him on whom he bestowed the present life he may confer the future one too. Let a husband lead his wife to faith, lest what is one in the flesh be divided in spirit. Let a friend draw a friend to salvation, so as to prove human charity by divine grace.

Let the citizen lead the stranger, the landowner his guest, to the table of God, so that at no cost of his own he may be humane out of the divine abundance.

Draw the unwilling; let no one say: "He does not want to", because Abraham too bound his son in order to offer him (Gen 22:9); and the angels, to take Lot away from the flames, drew him out and lifted him away with their hands (Gen 19:16); and the Lord, so that Peter might go to martyrdom where he did not want, girded him with the power of his help, saying: Another will gird you, and lead you where you do not wish (John 21:18). And the heavenly Father not only receives the willing, but draws the unwilling too, as the Son says: No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him (John 6:44). How does he believe himself a Christian, who does not bring to Christ what is aged and old? Or how does he judge his house to be God's fold, where no young of the pasture, God's flock, gives a bleat?

I beseech and adjure you, dearest brothers, by our Lord, that you all be watchful in this, so that in these days no one be left an exile from the grace of God, no one from the divine regeneration, so that what God is to confer on others by his grace may grow and overflow into your joy. We are men living amid uncertainty, and we do not know what the coming day may bring forth (Prov 27:1). Let us act, then, dearly beloved, lest servants, children, wives, parents, overtaken by death, should both lose the present life and not reach the future one.

Sermon XI.

On the fast and the temptations of Christ

What human curiosity, what the toil of the ancients, what worldly wisdom, seeking and long seeking, could not find, this the divine law readily granted us both to know and not to know. Whence evil, whence fault, whence the force of vices, whence the fury of crimes, whence the wars of bodies, whence the conflicts of the soul, whence so great a storm of life, whence so cruel a shipwreck of death: man would not know, had not the law of God exposed the devil. The devil, the author of evil, the origin of wickedness, the enemy of the world, ever the foe of the second man: he it is who lays snares, prepares falls, digs pits, contrives ruins, goads bodies, pricks souls, suggests thoughts, sends in angers, gives the virtues to hatred, gives the vices to love, sows errors, nourishes discords, troubles peace, scatters affections, rends unity, savours evil to the full, good not at all, violates divine things, tempts human things.

Hence it is related that the rash tempter reached even to Christ, thus: And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry; and the tempter came and said to him: If you are the Son of God, command

that these stones become loaves (Matt 4:2–3). Let those who hear this not go against God, not accuse nature, not insult the author, not blame the flesh, not complain about the soul, not assail the seasons, not impute it to the stars; let them cease to defame the innocence of the creature, let them perceive that evil is an accident, not created, and God the Creator of good, the devil the inventor of evil: and so let them ascribe evils to the devil, good things to God; let them turn away from evil, do good, for they will have God as their helper in good things, who gives the power to do what he commands, and himself does what he enjoins: because, as the devil drives to evils, so God leads to good things. Let no one, then, obey vices as though they were created together with him, and think that what belongs to crime belongs to nature; but let him take with Christ the arms of fasting, drive back the onslaughts of crimes, lay low the camps of vices, and win the victory over the very author of evil with Christ fighting; once the devil is conquered, vices will avail nothing: because when the tyrant is slain, the tyrant's ranks are broken. Hear the Apostle saying: Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12).

Then, he says, Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit (Matt 4:1). Not by the devil, so that it might be a divine course, not a human assault; that it might be the Spirit of foreknowledge, not human ignorance; and that it might be the power of God, not the power of the enemy. The devil

always knocks at the beginnings of good, tempts the first rudiments of the virtues, hastens to extinguish holy things at their very birth, knowing that once they are founded he cannot overturn them. Christ, not ignorant of this, patiently indulged the devil who was seeking him, so that the enemy might be held in his own snare, and be caught where he thought he was catching; and thus, conquered by Christ, he might yield to Christians.

And when he had fasted, he says, forty days and forty nights. You see, brothers, that our fasting in Lent is not a human invention; it is divine authority, and it is mystical, not presumed; nor is it from earthly custom, but from heavenly secrets. Lent, four decades, contains the four-square discipline of faith, because perfection is always four-square. What mysteries the number four and the number ten hold in heaven and on earth, since there is no leisure to open them now, let us unfold the fast the Lord began. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights. Man, God fasts in you, hungers in you; or rather, he fasts for you, hungers for you, he who for himself, as he does not know how to eat, so cannot hunger. Therefore when Christ fasts on your account, he hungers for you.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. This is not a sign of weakness, but a mark of power; because when it says, afterwards he was hungry, it proves that in the forty days and forty nights there was no hunger in him. To feel hunger and overcome

it belongs to human labour: not to have hunger belongs to divine power. Therefore Christ does not grow weary with fasting, does not hunger from famine; but Christ hungered so that the devil might find matter for tempting, because he did not dare to approach him while he fasted, because, fasting so, he perceived him to be God, not man. Then he perceived a man, then he believed him mortal, then he thought he could be tempted, when the cunning spy saw that he was hungry.

And the tempter came and said. He came with the guile of one who tempts, not with the affection of one who pays homage. He came on more shamelessly than he went away; but let us hear what he offered to the hungry one. Command that these stones become loaves. To the hungry he offers stones: such ever is the humanity of the enemy; so the author of death feeds; so the envier of life: Command that these stones become loaves. Devil, your provision deceives you. He can turn hunger into fullness who can change stones into bread. What is your counsel to him, whose own power suffices him? Command that these stones become loaves. Devil, you have both betrayed yourself and not fed your Lord. Command that these stones become loaves. Wretch! You want to be evil, but you cannot; you long to tempt, but you do not know how; to the hungry you ought to have offered soft things, not hard; you should have coaxed hunger not with rough things but with pleasant; you should have pressed lack of food not with bristling things but

with dainty ones. With such things you could not have snared, not only the Son of God, but even a son of man. Understand, tempter, that in the presence of Christ your arts are lost to you. Command that these stones become loaves. He can make loaves out of stones who turned water into wine. But signs are to be granted to faith, not to guile; they are to be given to one who believes, not to one who tempts; and they are to be done for the salvation of the one who asks, not for the injury of the one who does them. Devil, what are signs to you, whom nothing helps to salvation, for whom everything remains for punishment, for whom even signs avail to ruin?

But take the answer, that you may understand yourself and be subject to your author. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4). Hear the Word of the Father hungering for the words of our salvation, not for bread, and acting so that man may live always by the heavenly word, not always by earthly bread: and so may live to God, that he may know nothing of his labour; because that truly is life which knows no sweat, has no pains, has no end.

Sermon XII.

On the same

Since we see that the springtime of fasting and the season of spiritual wars has come, let us, as soldiers of Christ, laying aside the torpor of body and soul, go out to the field of the virtues, so that the members which have been softened in us by winter idleness may be strengthened by the exercise of heavenly arms. We have given the body a year, let us give the soul days; we spend the times on ourselves, let us assign a time to the author; let us live a little while for God, we who have lived wholly for the world; let us set aside household cares, let us remain in the camp of the Church; let us keep watch in Christ's battle line; let us not seek the sleep of our beds; let us be joined to the brave; let us be parted from soft embraces; let the love of triumphs hold us, let the blandishments of little children not call us away; let the divine voice sound in our ears; let the noise of the household not confuse our hearing; let sparing food be taken from the heavenly ration; the abundance of earthly luxury will not be sought; in cups let the measure of sobriety be kept; let drunkenness not unnerve our strength. Whatever is over from our pay, let our poor fellow soldier take; let no pestilent squandering lose anything; in the conflict

you will have as your help the hungry comrade whom you feed.

So fortified, brothers, so equipped, let us declare war on sins; let us set battle against crimes, announce conflict to vices, secure of victory: for neither will earthly enemies be able to overcome heavenly arms, nor will worldly adversaries be able to withstand the divine king; nor will hostile overthrow be able to surprise those set in the battle array of faith; nor will the devil prevail to disturb with his surprise attacks the cautious, the watchful, the sober; surely he will not even dare to challenge us, so armed, to open conflict: he will not presume to assail us with guile. Let the mind persevere in the heavenly watchtower; let it press down and turn aside the deceitful and hidden snares of the devil.

The devil indeed is wicked of himself, yet he becomes more wicked when provoked. Hear the apostle saying: The devil, like a roaring lion, goes round seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8). While we fast, the devil hungers, he who is always filled from our faults. He draws our food out into surfeiting; he pours our drink out into drunkenness, so as to make the mind mindless, to render the flesh muddy, to reduce the body, the abode of the heart, the vessel of the soul, the wall of the spirit, the school of the virtues, the temple of God, to a stage of crimes, to a parade of vices, pleasure to a theatre. He takes his fill, he gains pleasure, he is sated with feasts, when luxury dissolves us, lust goads, display carries off, ambition drives, anger presses, fury

fills, envy kindles, greed inflames, cares harass, lawsuits vex, gains capture, usury binds, bonds tie, purses press down, gold crushes. When the virtues die, the vices live, pleasure streams forth, honour perishes, mercy fails, avarice abounds, confusion reigns, order succumbs, discipline is laid low. These are what fight against the soldier of Christ; these are Satan's cohorts, these the devil's legions, these are what have besieged the world with sepulchres, warred down peoples, laid waste nations, led the whole world captive. These are what no mortal by himself could withstand: and so, to conquer these, God came himself, the king of heaven himself came down, he himself arrived, the single victor, setting the fast of Lent in battle array, so that with the four decades of fasting he might fortify the whole four-square of the world with an impregnable wall.

Fasting, brothers, we know to be the citadel of God, the camp of Christ, the wall of the spirit, the banner of faith, the sign of chastity, the trophy of holiness. This Adam would have kept in paradise, he whom gluttony dragged out from there (Gen 3). This Noah kept in the ark, when drunkenness drowned the world (Gen 7). Through this Lot quenched the fire of Sodom, he who through drunkenness was scorched by the fire of incest (Gen 19). This made Moses shine with the light of divine fervour, when revelling and drunkenness darkened the people of Israel with the errors of idols (Exod 32). This carried Elijah to heaven, when drunkenness cast the wicked Ahab down to

the underworld (2 Kgs 2). This made John greater among those born of women, when intoxication made Herod the prince a murderer at the bidding of women (Mark 6).

The fast of Lent, brothers, betrayed and laid open the ancient snares of the devil. For the devil, who had despised Christ as he ate, had reckoned him a man as he drank; when he saw him fasting, he suspects God, he confesses the Son of God. If you are the Son of God, he says, command that these stones become loaves (Matt 4:3). By saying this, the devil wants to show a man, not God: he does not want to prepare food, but wants to cut off the fast. If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves. After a fast, not divine power but human weakness seeks bread; nor does God so weary with hunger that he renounces providing food for himself, which is within his authority.

So from what follows the devil discloses what he is attempting: If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down (Matt 4:6). He wants plainly to prove him a man, for whom he has provided not an ascent but a fall: the human condition is found hard for ascending, easy for falling. If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. You are wrong, devil: you do not even know how to tempt: God cannot fall.

Then he showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, and said to him: All these I will give you, if you fall down and worship me (Matt 4:8–9). O the daring of the devil! To God he says: "Worship me"; but he at once felt him to be

God by his powers, the judge by his punishments, him whom he was seeking to make a suppliant with rewards: for in the name of Christ, the name of the one who fasted, he began to be put to flight from the bodies he had possessed, and to give glory, trembling, to him on whom, in his pride, he had cunningly heaped injuries: he conquered by fasts, so as to bestow on us in this way the strength to conquer, the pattern of conquering. This kind, he says, is not cast out except by fasting and prayer (Matt 17:21). Let us fast, then, brothers, if we wish to imitate Christ, if we wish to overcome the deceitful wiles of the devil.

Sermon XIII.

On the same

See, the time when the soldier goes out to the field, the Christian runs back to the fasts of God. See, the time when the idleness of the flesh, the sloth of the mind, the care of the belly, and the whole torpor of homage paid at home are to be laid aside. See, the time when the strength of soul and body must be exercised in the drill of heavenly arms. See, the time when, with Christ presiding and the angels standing by, the strength of our wrestling must be exercised. Now is the time when gluttony clashes with fasting, abstinence with surfeiting, chastity with dissoluteness, faith with unbelief, piety with impiety, patience with fury, greed with liberality, mercy with avarice, humility with pride, holiness with guilt, Christ giving the reward.

If anyone, then, while God looks on, the heavenly trumpet already sounding, the encounter with the angels pressing, entangled in the allurements of the bedchamber, unnerved by the softness of palms, wholly undone by conjugal blandishments, neglects to come to the exercise of virtue, he loses the prize of the wrestling, the glory of virtue, the palm of the contest, the crown of justice; he will even be fined in the future with

the crime of a deserter. Today, brothers, Christ our king has addressed his fellow soldiers from the tribunal of the Gospel, has declared war on the enemies, has promised rewards to those who will fight, has set out the causes of the wars, has exposed the guile and the attempts of the enemies; where and when and how we must do battle he has marked out by a triumphal ordinance. And although he alone could obtain the victory, yet on account of us and of our terror he ordered all the garrisons from on high to be present. He then who would not hear these things, who scorned to know such and so great statutes of our king, judge whether he has not stripped himself of the oaths of our service, and made himself an exile from the heavenly fellowship of the tent.

But you, brothers, who wish to follow in this Lenten fast the pattern of the Lord's fast, show that you will fight, as we said before, against the troops of vices, against the battle lines of crimes, against the shapeless shapes of concupiscences, against the whole airy, the whole widespread and innumerable legions of demons, and that you will triumph, from the very temptations that follow the Lord's fast. For when the Lord had undertaken the Lenten fast with that unwearied proof of his power, the devil at once came to meet him, to fight with guile, since he could not resist by strength one who was fasting. For as much as he lords it over those given to surfeiting and over drunkards, so much he fears those who pray, so much he flees those who fast, as the Lord says: It

is not cast out except by fasting and prayer (Matt 17:21).

But let us hear with what fraud the devil dared to tempt: If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves (Matt 4:3). You have heard what the enemy himself thinks and judges of fasts. If you are the Son of God. You see that he now believes him not a man, but the Son of God, whom he had seen free from the servitude of the belly. He perceived, the devil perceived, that fasting is preferred to all the virtues. He had seen John exchange the delights of cities for a dwelling in the squalid desert, trample the softness of the flesh with the roughness of his garment, rein in the whole dissoluteness of the world with wild food, and, what is the sole mark of the Godhead, forgive men their sins. And yet he did not say to him: "If you are the Son of God." But when he saw the Lord fasting continually, he cries out: If you are the Son of God. The devil errs, who hurls against the Lord the wickednesses and arguments of his cunning. If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves. Why is it that, while Christ fasts, he seeks all the signs of the Godhead in the sole promise of bread? And him whom he senses beforehand, by the continual sign of fasting, to be the Son of God, does he wish to prove to be the Son of God by the provision of bread, by the care of the belly? If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves. Why did he not say: "If you are the Son of God, command that men, or angels, or something else come to be", but command

that these stones become loaves? He asks a sign of bread who greatly fears the sign of fasting. He asks a sign of bread so as to escape the sign of fasting, dreadful to him. The evil counsellor thrusts bread forward, so as to change the virtue, to violate the purpose of the one who fasts.

But let us see what the Bread that came down from heaven answered about bread: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4). How truly the Word of God lives by the word of God! How truly bread has no need of bread! How divinely he turns stones into men, he who from stones raises up sons to Abraham (Matt 3:9) as a token of his majesty!

And since the shameless enemy does not know how to be conquered once, for the manifold triumph of the conqueror, he set the Lord on the pinnacle of the temple, and said: If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down (Matt 4:5–6). O sign! Throw yourself down: he would have spoken more fittingly: "If you are the Son of God, go up to heaven", since it is surely man's to fall to the depths, God's to climb to the heights. If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. So he persuades his own, so he always provides for his own; so he raises his own, that he may cast them down from on high more violently to ruin. If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. The devil betrays himself by his counsels: Throw yourself down. He seeks falls, he commands precipices, and by such counsel he makes martyrs throughout Africa without outcry, saying: "If you

want to be a martyr, throw yourself down", so as to drive them from on high to death, not to lift them from low ground and raise them to a crown.

And as the devil betrays himself by his counsels, so the Lord reveals himself by his answer, when he says: You shall not tempt the Lord your God (Matt 4:7). By saying this he wished it to be understood that he himself was Lord, that he himself was God, he who did not merely give himself to the ground from the pinnacle of the temple, but flung himself from the heavens down to the underworld, so that there might be not the pattern of those who fall, but the resurrection of the dead.

Consider, brothers, whether the savage enemy, though often conquered, could yield to man, he who hears and perceives the Lord God, and yet does not cease to tempt still. He set him on a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory, and said to him: All these I will give you, if you fall down and worship me (Matt 4:8–9). He says this not as one who can give, but deceive; not to confer what is promised, but by promises to take away the very things that are had. All these I will give you. He offers to God what is God's, he promises to the author what is the author's: he urges the one who is to be worshipped by all to worship, and, blinded by his daring, he confesses before the judgement to the judge how he deceived the simple. To whom the Lord answers not so much with the testimony of the Law as with the command of his divinity: You shall worship the Lord your God

(Matt 4:10): you shall worship that Lord God to whom all things bend the knee, not only things in heaven and on earth, but also those in the underworld (Phil 2:10). You will therefore worship, gnashing and wailing in hell, him whom now, a reckless deserter, you invite to worship you.

So the devil, so often and so thoroughly beaten back by the Lord, now runs about with all his fury round us, the Lord's servants; and as Christ addresses his soldiers, so he addresses his own, and arms his ministers. The devil says, then: "The time now grievously defeats us by the keeping of the fast: through gluttony, through surfeiting, through drunkenness, through dissoluteness we cannot assail men; arm lawsuits, sow discords, stir up hatreds, rouse angers, breathe in lies, extort perjuries, suggest blasphemies, spread vain talk, pour in guile, kindle avarice, provide base gains, so that what the belly does not now spend on dissoluteness the purse at least may shut up and lay by for punishment. Beware above all lest mercy, lest almsgiving, lest humanity blot out our past labours, take away our present ones, remove our future ones."

But let us, brothers, recognising the warnings of our king and hearing what the devil has commanded his own, carry through our fasts without strife, without clamour, without anger, without guile, without pretence, with all mercy, charity, piety: so that the Lord Christ, who, spurning the bloody sacrificial victims of cattle, required the sacrifice of a contrite spirit and a broken heart (Ps

51:19), may, appeased and propitious, take in the silence of peace the victims of our fast.

Sermon XIV.

On the fruits of almsgiving, on Psalm 40 (41)

To those skilled in battle the military trumpet sounds out discipline; to the unskilled it gives only a terrifying blare: as the mistress of wars, it gives strength to its own, and fright to the enemy. He who fights without the trumpet is no soldier: he is carried along by fury, not by battle; he acts not by valour, but by danger; he seeks to perish, not to conquer. We have said this so that the soldier of Christ may understand why the heavenly song has been provided. Set on the field of the world, we sustain battle with the devil, with the vices. As often, then, as the prophetic blast thunders to us, so often has it made us wary in peace, and brave in the battle line, and unconquered in combat.

For today the blessed Psalmist summons us by his cry to a heavenly understanding: Blessed is he who understands concerning the needy and the poor (Ps 41:2). And what understanding is there, where poverty is avowed? Understanding has its force if it probes the inner parts, if it detects what is hidden, if it lays bare what is covered. But what is set before the eyes, exposed in public, thrust upon us by the facts, is not a matter of understanding, but of seeing. Stiff with cold from

nakedness, wasted with hunger, parched with thirst, trembling with weariness, sallow with want: what labour is it to understand that he is needy? And if there is no labour in understanding, whence comes the fruit of understanding? Let us pray, brothers, that he himself may grant us to understand what is to be understood, who shows that he is thus understood in the poor man. That he who covers the sky should himself be naked in the poor man, that the fullness of all things should hunger in the hungry, that the fount of fountains should thirst in the thirsty: how is it not a great thing to understand this? How is it not blessed to understand that poverty should be ample for him to whom heaven is narrow; that he who enriches the world should be in want in the one in want; that the giver of all things should ask for a scrap of bread, a cup of water; that God should so lower himself for love of the poor man as not to stand beside the poor man, but to be himself the poor man? He to whom God has given to see this, sees it.

But how he has either poured the poor man into himself, or poured himself into the poor man, let him now tell us himself: I was hungry, he says, and you gave me to eat (Matt 25:35). He did not say, "The poor man was hungry, and you gave him to eat", but, I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. What the poor man received he proclaims was given to himself; what the poor man has eaten he says he eats; what the poor man drinks he testifies was poured into himself. O, what love for the poor does! God glories in

heaven in that for which the poor man blushes on earth, and counts as an honour to himself what is reckoned an insult to the poor man. It would have been enough to say, you gave me to eat, you gave me drink; but he puts first, I was hungry, I was thirsty, because small would have been his love for the poor man in taking up the poor man, had he not also taken up the poor man's sufferings: and certainly true love is proved only by sufferings. True love is to have made one's own the straits of one in straits: beyond measure is the savour of the poor man's food to God, since he who does not hunger for the goods of the whole creation foretells that he has been fed full on the poor man's fare, in the kingdom of heaven, before all the angels, in the assembly of those who rise again. That Abel suffered (Gen 4), that Noah saved the world (Gen 6), that Abraham took up the faith (Gen 15), that Moses brought the Law (Exod 20), that Peter went up the cross head downwards: of this God is silent, and cries out this alone, that the poor man has eaten. In heaven the first ration is the hungry man's; the poor man's pay is the first business dealt with in heaven; what is spent on the poor man is the first thing written in the divine day-books. Blessed is he whose name is read out before God as often as the poor man's account is recited in heaven.

But let us hear the fruit of this blessedness too: In the evil day the Lord will deliver him. Whoever knows that he leads his life through the evils of the world, let him always take with him the help of almsgiving, let him call up troops of the poor

for his protection, let him abound as a generous dispenser in feeding the poor, let him be constant in giving to the poor, let him not tremble in spending; he never runs short to whom a sparing receiver holds out his hand; that treasure cannot be exhausted from which a single coin suffices: In the evil day the Lord will deliver him. In the evil day God will stand by him as deliverer who delivered the poor man from evils. In straits God will hear him crying who heard the poor man when he cried. He will not see the evil day who made the poor man have good days. He will see the evil day who enters the day of judgement without the advocacy of poverty: in vain do sins accuse the man whom the poor man excuses. He cannot be excused whom the hunger of the poor man has accused.

The Lord, he says, preserve him and give him life (Ps 41:3). He did not say, "preserves and gives life", but he said, preserve and give life. He said it so that this should be the voice not of one who announces, but of one who asks. He who heard the needy man asking, behold, has heard the Church throughout the whole world thus asking for him: The Lord preserve him and give him life. Preserve him, that he may not be snatched away to punishment; give him life, that he may rise from the dead and receive life back. And he will not deliver him into the hand of his enemy. Of what enemy? The devil's, surely: he is the prince of enmities; he despises enemies who has trampled on the very author of enmities.

But the Lord help him upon the bed of his pain (Ps 41:4). The Prophet goes through all the miseries of human frailty. But the Lord help him upon the bed of his pain. What is the bed of our pain, if not our body? In it the soul lies, and lies in pain, and feels pain, the soul which, longing to return to heaven, is weighed down by the earth of the body.

You have turned all his bed in his weakness. He does not turn the just man over on his bed, nor the unjust; but the Lord turns the bed for the weak. It is the flesh, then, that is turned and that turns. It is this, then, that is tossed about in adversity and turns in prosperity. The Lord, then, turns our bed when he turns adversity into prosperity for us: and because in the bed of pain, that is, in the bed of the body, the sick mind was tossing, he who was tossing cries out: I said, Lord, have mercy on me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you (Ps 41:5). Because he feels that through the consent of the flesh he has contracted a sickness of the mind, he implores that the soul be healed; and he asks for mercy with confidence, because he has shown mercy to the poor man. Blessed is he who, by lending at interest to the poor man, has made the judge himself his debtor.

Sermon XV.

On the centurion

You are about to hear today, brothers, how a centurion of a Roman cohort became a leader of the Christian service; and rightly, because he began to teach before he began to believe. Jesus came, he says, to Capernaum, and a centurion came up to him, asking and saying: Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, and is grievously tormented (Matt 8:5–6). And Jesus said to him: I will come and cure him (Matt 8:7). And the centurion answered and said: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed: for I too am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it (Matt 8:8–9). You see that the centurion, before he took up the office of a disciple, had been allotted the place of a master. For he offers the form of asking, gives the rule of believing; he lays open the grounds of faith; he commends examples of the virtues, he who had not yet entered the discipline of the Christian school.

A centurion came up to him, asking him. This is to be wise, not to ask. My servant is lying at

home. He pleads the servant's cause as though he were a master: a centurion indeed, who changed his earthly pay into the hundredfold fruit of heaven, and raised the servitude of worldly service to a divine dignity. Lord, my servant is lying at home. He who calls him Lord acknowledges faithfully his own servitude. And how did this centurion, who so acknowledges the Lord, dare to call the servant his own, as though he did not know that a servant's peculium belongs to the Lord? Or is he ignorant of common things, who teaches things so secret, so profound? My servant. I call him mine because he lies there: if he were yours, Lord, he would not lie there. The Prophet proves this when he says: Behold now, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand in the house of the Lord (Ps 134:1). You who stand, he says, not you who lie; your servants stand, men's servants lie. My servant who lies there, that he may be yours, let him rise: mine, because he is paralysed; that he may be yours, let him now be healed. Mine, because he is grievously tormented; that he may be yours, let him now be no longer under punishment.

Lord, it does not befit your servants to be subject to evils; the punishment of your servants is an injury to you; the force of evils ought not to possess your servants; your servants, even if they suffer evils, do not suffer them for punishment, but undergo them for crowns. Adversities are for them not the causes of necessities, but the cause of victory. Men's servants are those who suffer evils against their will, because their own mas-

ters, in despair, cannot help them. But you, Lord, whom powers serve, whom cures obey, to whom healings submit, how will you count as your servant one whom you see to be the servant of such great diseases? Your goodness towards the wicked is known; even the impious confess your loving-kindness; strangers proclaim your mercy. Should I call him yours, whom, as he lies there, your kindness does not seek out?

He lies at home, and is grievously tormented. This is why the greatness of his punishment does not allow him to be brought out, and brought to you, lest a household illness, shown in public, should be both a pain and a shame. The centurion moved the judge by pleading such things and so many; and so moved him that he brought the Lord of heaven himself to be willing to go to his servant. I will come, said Christ, and cure him. Brothers, it was not the centurion who drew the author of loving-kindness to loving-kindness; nor did he compel Christ to go for that for which Christ had come: rather the centurion is taught to perceive this, to understand this, why Christ came to the servant in a servant, why God came to man in man; surely to lift up those who lie, to raise those who are crushed, to loose those in fetters, and, as the most merciful carrier of his own work, to carry those whom no one could any longer either bring or present.

But let us now hear what the centurion answered: Lord, he says, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. He gave the answer due to humility; and by a singular fright he

signified that this was the Lord, in that he fears to lead him into the house of his soul, into the secret place of his heart, under the roof of his conscience, into the inner chamber of his mind, where a household of thoughts moves about, disordered and confused, and does not allow the hall of the human breast to remain without the din of vices in the silence of sincerity. So, with fear for his teacher, he answered: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. This is why Peter, when he recognised Christ as the author of all things, cried out, saying: Go out from me, Lord, for I am a sinner (Luke 5:8). Peter asks him to go out from himself in the same way as the centurion begs him not to come to him; for each acts so that the unworthiness of the guest-house may not remain as an injury to the guest.

I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. This would have been well said before God entered the guest-house of our flesh: but now, why does the centurion thus forbid Christ to enter his roof, when he sees him already dwelling, whole, within the roof of his own body? Brothers, the centurion already saw in Christ the form of his own body, but he did not see in him the passions of his body. Christ was born in the flesh, but he was born of the Holy Spirit: he received the guest-house of flesh, but in the hall of a virgin, so that there should be both the truth of a human body, and that he should have nothing of the pollution of the human body. Rightly, then, does the centurion judge his roof unworthy of Christ, because Christ dwelt under the singu-

lar roof of our body: according to that word of the Prophet, I have kept watch, and have become like a solitary sparrow on the roof (Ps 102:8).

But only say the word, and my servant will be healed. This centurion, though he was without the Law, did nothing without law: he says, Only say the word. For it had been said: He spoke, and they were made (Ps 148:5). And if all things were brought to completion by a speaking, how should the illness of one man not be cured by a speaking alone? Only say the word: and what is said without a word? But he asks for a word not in the manner of speaking, but in the power of doing; the word of which it was said: He sent his word, and healed them (Ps 107:20). Say the word only. For he believed that all powers reside in the word. Your word, Lord, is health; your word is life; where your word has come, from there pain at once flees, illness soon withdraws; the word in which Peter, when he let down the nets, caught a multitude of fish, without which he both endured the night of ignorance and, a fisherman watching all night, found no fruit. Lord, he says, we have toiled all night and caught nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets (Luke 5:5).

And as though what he had pleaded about the word were not enough, that what he asks can be granted by a word, he maintains it by facts, commends it by an example. For I too am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it. For I too am a man. That is to say:

you are God. Set under authority. That is: you are the very authority of authorities. Having soldiers under me. That is: you are the powers. And I say to this one, Go, and he goes. That is: say to the illness, Go, and it goes. To another, Come, and he comes. That is: say to health, Come, and it comes. And to my servant, Do this, and he does it. That servant of mine will be your servant as well, when he has recovered his health.

Let him hear; what is he to hear? You have been made well; sin no more now (John 5:14); let him do justice, that he may be freed from the paralysis of all his sins, and may sing with the Prophet: Return, my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has been good to you; for he has rescued my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from falling (Ps 116:7–8). I will please the Lord in the land of the living (Ps 116:9). Brothers, let him who desires to reach the hundredfold fruit imitate the centurion. So, lest we pass over lightly the prudence of this centurion, let what has been said of him suffice for today: for it is a very great mystery, in which the Gentile is set forth in figure.

Sermon XVI.

On the two demoniacs

That Christ crosses the seas, that he goes round from place to place, is not a matter of human desire, but is the cause of human salvation. Christ walks about, not to see places, but to find men who had perished by various mischances. He who had made the places, what new thing could he see in places? Or what was absent from him who was everywhere? As man he was seen in places, but as God he saw everywhere; he saw, indeed, and he saw the desperate, to whom he was going to bestow divine remedies; he went to the cure of those for whom human cure had already failed, as today's reading has proved.

When Jesus had come, he says, across the water into the country of the Gerasenes, there met him two men possessed by demons, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass by that way (Matt 8:28). It is good to know that the Lord knew and saw what evil, what danger there was for them in those places; and that he went there for this reason, to help those so desperate, so afflicted, so wretched.

There met him two men possessed by demons, coming out of the tombs. In the tombs the authors of death had made their seat. Mark what

savagery, what fury, what rage the demons have towards the human race: although they cannot bear the short span of men, they are not content that men should die, but they long to bury men alive; they consign themselves to the sepulchres, so as to lead men back into the sepulchres: they feed on corpses, they are fattened on rottenness, they take delight in stench, they whose whole pleasure is that men should perish. But let us perceive what they contrive by frauds, what they work by evils, they whose cruelty knows no measure in the open. What are they doing, when they make a display of riches, but sowing avarice? To implant pride, they set forth pomp. They peddle singularity, to shut out what belongs to communion. To feed anger, they colour its causes. To violate piety, they furnish the affections with grievances. They feign philosophy, to make men know nothing by seeking more. They fashion many gods, so that God, who is one and true, may not be known.

There met him two men possessed by demons. When he indicates that many demons had come together to two men, and a whole legion to one, he does it for this reason, to teach that the demons are to be guarded against, not feared; and at the same time he shows how singular is the might of Christ, since at the mere name of Christ the whole multitude of the demons is put to flight. There met him two men possessed by demons. Brought before him, they came unwilling; at the order of one who commands, not by their own daring; they were dragged in against

their will, not running of their own accord. Indeed, in the presence of Christ men come out of the tombs, and, the tables turned, they carry off as captives those by whom they had been made captive; they bring to punishment those by whose torments they were tortured: they make ready for sentence those by whom they had already been delivered over to the sepulchres.

There met him two men possessed by demons, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass by that way. You see that the demons had barred the way to those coming to Christ, had refused them passage. For this is the demons' care, that men may not be able to find the way back to God. For they cannot possess men in any other way than by drawing them away from the society of their author. So that no one could pass by that way. This is why Christ became the way. So that no one could pass by that way. That way, not this one. I am, he says, the way (John 14:6). So that the force of the demons should have no power to stand in the way of those coming to the way through the way, to God through God: no one can reach God except through God.

But let us now hear what the demons cried out. What have we to do with you, Son of God? (Matt 8:29) That is to say: "Author of life, what have you to do with the dead? Dweller in heaven, what have you to do with sepulchres? Fragrance of paradise, what have you to do with stench? We, whom you cast down from heaven, whom you shut out of paradise, from whom you now take away cities, to whom you deny habitable regions,

allow us to dwell at least in the sepulchres: and if we deserve so great a persecution, you do not deserve so great an injury." What have we to do with you? What? What the judge has to do with the accused, the avenger with the guilty, the king with the deserter. What have we to do with you, Son of God? Thieves say this to the owner, robbers to the master; they hold the spoils, they carry the plunder, and they ask what they have to do with him who demands back what is his. What have we to do with you, Son of God? What? That you give back men, restore the world to its author; and that, now that the Creator is coming, you know that nothing more is permitted you among his creatures.

What have we to do with you, Son of God? Have you come before the time to torment us? What have we to do with you? And what have you to do with men? What have we to do with you, Son of God? They acknowledge, they acknowledge God, they confess him as judge, they cry out that they owe a judgement, and they enter a plea about the time. What have we to do with you, Son of God? Have you come before the time to torment us? To the author of times they oppose a time. Have you come before the time to torment us? They complain about the time as though they had made him together with time, just as they buried the living in sepulchres. Have you come before the time to torment us? An untimely cruelty cuts time short, forestalls death, buries the living: and it complains about the time, as though it ought unjustly to have what it desires

before the time, and not be punished as soon as its malice has arisen: the hardened wickedness of the world pleads about the time. To the wicked patience is brief, to the good vengeance is slow; what is long to the injured is short to those who injure.

There was, he says, not far from them a herd of many swine feeding (Matt 8:30). And the demons begged him, saying: If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine (Matt 8:31). An unworthy servitude asks for what is worthy of it. Send us into the herd of swine. Wickedness begs to be sent from the tombs into swine, because it does not know how to give up its stenches, only how to change them. Send us into the herd of swine. Fallen from heaven, they seek the mire; after the ethereal dwellings they court the wallows of swine. Send us into the herd of swine. A herd is sent into a herd, that the multitude of the demons may be laid bare: that it may appear that two men carried what a great number of swine could not bear.

He said to them: Go. And they came out and went into the swine; and behold, the whole herd rushed headlong into the sea, and they died in the waters (Matt 8:32). The worthless beasts are handed over, not to do the demons' will, but so that by such a deed it may be made known how they rage against men, how they seek men's deaths, they who sought swine only to destroy them. Everything that is, that is done, that moves, that lives, the demons burn to destroy, not to possess. Let no man, then, presume to become such a

one: their enmity towards the human race is old, their anger fixed, their malice resolved. Demons do not give way unless they are bound; they have no power to harm unless they are commanded. The worthless beasts are handed over, then, so that it may shine out that nothing is permitted against men to the demons, for whom a command was needed that it should be permitted against swine. We, then, either by our vices bring it about that they receive the power to harm, or by our virtues, with Christ triumphing, we trample the necks of the demons made subject to us.

Sermon XVII.

On the demoniac

We have learnt today from the words of the Gospel that the Lord came across the water into the country of the Gerasenes, and that as he came out of the boat there at once met him a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit, bound with chains and fetters (Mark 5:1–4); a man who had his abode in the tombs: the author of death broods over the abodes of death, and, greedy for human slaughter, those whom he cannot kill by his cruelty he longs to bury alive with a deathly burial. He rages, he raves, the greedy exactor of our destruction, to whom it is a punishment that man is born; he is tortured that man dies too slowly: this very short life of man he strives to banish into horrid sepulchres; a confused enemy, perverse in both directions, he thrusts the living into sepulchres, sets food before the dead, pours out neat wine, so as both to kill the living and to trouble the dead.

The man was held bound with chains and fetters: bound for another's crime; and for the wickedness of its inhabitant the innocent dwelling was tortured. The devil's fault overflowed into the man's punishment, and the robber, shut up within, was fattening on the mis-

eries of his prey; and an accursed envy exposes not the doer, but the sufferer. Desiring to come to the help of this disease, the Lord crosses the sea: that is, in the vessel of our body he passes over to the bounds of the tossing world; he reaches the shores filled with the shipwrecks of our salvation, and floods with the splendour of his light a region steeped in the blind darkness of ignorance, to expose the snares of the cunning enemy and to put to flight with royal power the very prince of spiritual wickedness with his legions; that he may at last set free those whom a hostile power had long held captive.

Seeing Jesus from afar, he says, he ran and worshipped him, and crying out with a loud voice he said: What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most high God? (Mark 5:6–7) I adjure you by God, do not torment me. At Christ's nod the order of punishments was reversed; before, while the devil played the brigand, an innocent man was harried; now the man runs, but the devil runs upon his doom: the flesh bows, but it is the unclean spirit that lies low and is laid prostrate. He ran and worshipped. What is this, devil? Him whom you provoked to a fall with a threefold temptation, whom you craftily courted with the promise of a kingdom that he might worship you, do you now, trembling and pitiable, fall down before and worship? Behold, he who promised all the honours of kingdom and of glory is found dwelling in graves fetid with the corruption of corpses. Thus, thus does he deceive when he promises, so as to drag men down with him to the

underworld, when, a lying promiser, he mocks those who consult him about the things above.

What have I to do with you, Son of the most high God? For now too he worships here as a flatterer, not as one devoted and obedient, desiring to escape punishment, dreading to lose his prey. The wretch believes that he whom he could not conquer by temptation, nor bend by gifts, can be swayed by flattery: but he is wont to loose those who are bound, to call back captives, to restore to himself bounds not acquired but laid down by himself; to strike down the enemy by free power, and not to court, by a beguiling intrigue, the enemy who has taken possession of his own.

And crying out with a loud voice he said: What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me. What is human frailty doing, what does it suffer, subjected to such and so great miseries? Behold, the devil, about to attack the man, cries out with the man's voice as his advocate: and all the man's members do service for his enemy, to their own ruin. What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most high God? What have I to do with you? What the man to be punished has to do with the judge, the deserter with the king, the invader with the master. What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most high God? If you acknowledge the Son, you certainly know the heir: if you know the heir, why do you presume to seize the inheritance? I adjure you by God, do not torment me. The shuffler is afraid, and he dissembles: he acknowledges the Son, but with his usual art he

strives that he should not be understood to be God: he adjures God by God, to make him himself seem to be another, to deceive and mislead the hearing of the bystanders.

Jesus asked him: What is your name? (Mark 5:9) He asks: he is not ignorant, but he fills the part of a judge, he keeps the procedure of an examining judge: he asks the name, in order to inquire into his condition, to judge of his guilt, to sentence him for his crime, and, the sentence given, to prove to the full that he is God. Legion answered, for we are many. Christ's question thus drives away our ignorance; it opens to us what was hidden: a legion against one man. A soldier's cowardice is evident if he deserts the line, if he draws back his step, if he dreads to engage; there he foresees that one man, though a captive, is stronger than a numerous enemy. In the presence of the king, what are these, who, to take one man, and he not even a recruit, came together with the whole column of their cohort? Where would they be, if they had already seen there the standard of the cross, the ensigns of Christ? Come, Christian, advance without fear: a band so great and so numerous, which so fears an unarmed man, will flee far off if it sees, if it feels, if it learns that he is armed.

The spirits besought him, saying: Send us into the swine (Mark 5:12). See where Satan desires to set his seat. From the sepulchres into swine. Once infected with rottenness, he seeks out fetid and unclean dwellings; he delights in filth and mire, he who indeed is always fed on the stench

of crimes and the squalor of vices. But so foul is his odour, of Tartarus and cruel, that not even the nature of swine could bear it: indeed, it preferred to be plunged into the sea and perish in the waves rather than suffer his uncleanness and endure his rottenness. But what can the demons presume, who cannot even touch swine unless the divine power has permitted them? Wretched is he who, leaving the judge, seeks in vain the favour of the executioner, who can neither harass nor spare, can neither diminish the torments nor add to them, but, himself a scoundrel bound over to the lash, does everything at the right and choice of the one who judges.

Sermon XVIII.

On Peter's mother-in-law, sick and healed

In today's reading the attentive hearer has learnt why the Lord of heaven, the restorer of all things, entered earthly and servile dwellings. But it is no wonder if he graciously came near to all things, who had come in his clemency to help all.

When Jesus had come, he says, into Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with fever (Matt 8:14). You see what invited Christ to Peter's house: certainly not the pleasure of reclining at table, but the illness of the woman lying there; not the need to dine, but the occasion of salvation; the work of divine power, not the pomp of a human banquet. In Peter's house it was not wine but tears that were poured out: what troubled the household there was not the care of a banquet, but care for the sick woman: there fever was burning, not greed for food. So Christ entered there not to partake of a feast, but to give back life. God seeks men, not human things; he desires to give heavenly things, he does not covet to find earthly ones: Christ came, then, to receive us, not to seek what is ours. When he had come, he says, into Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with fever. Entering Peter's house, Christ saw that for which he had come: he did not

look at the quality of the house, nor the crowds coming to meet him, nor the pomp of those who greeted him, nor the household thronging; certainly not the very adornment of the preparations; but he looked into the groaning of the sick woman, he gave heed to the burning of the fevered one. He saw the danger of one given up for lost, and at once stretched out his hands to the work of his Godhead: nor did Christ recline for human things before the woman who was lying there rose up for divine things.

He took, he says, her hand, and the fever left her (Matt 8:15). You see how the fever leaves the one whom Christ has held: illness does not stand where the author of salvation stands by; death has no access there, where the giver of life has entered. He took, he says, her hand. What necessity was there to touch, where there was the right to command? But Christ took the woman's hand for life, because Adam had received death from the hand of a woman. He took her hand. So that what had been lost by the hand of the presumptuous woman, the hand of the author might restore. He took her hand. So that the hand which had plucked the sentence of death might receive indulgence.

And she rose, he says, and served him. And did Christ need the service of a woman, and a woman of advanced age, in extreme old age, weighed down with children? Was there then in Peter's house no home-born slave, no servant, no member of the household, no kinsman, certainly no wife, to forestall the service of the mother?

And finally, did Peter himself not see the grounds for his own shame, that an old woman, a mother-in-law, should do for the master what the disciple owed? Brothers, Christ did not exact human service from her on whom he had spent the ministry of his divinity: but he allowed her to serve as a sign of the health restored to her. Christ so drives away diseases that he at once brings back the former strength: where art cures, there the weariness of illness remains; where power heals, there sickness leaves no trace.

But if we wish to know what spiritual understanding lies hidden in this reading, let us not seek the little flowers of words: he who seeks the fruit that satisfies despises the pleasant places of the fields: violets, roses, lilies, narcissus are welcome flowers, but bread is more welcome. What scent is to the nostrils, ornament of speech is to the ears; what bread gives to life, knowledge gives to salvation. The pleasure of eloquence, then, must be put aside when the strength of knowledge is required.

When Jesus had come, he says, into Peter's house. Christ came to Peter's house, so that Peter's house might come to Christ. Christ came to Peter's house then, when he entered the dwellings of our flesh. When Jesus had come into Peter's house. What is Peter's house? That of which the Lord says: And you, Bethlehem, house of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah; for from you shall come forth a leader, who will rule my people Israel (Matt 2:6). Whence the

Apostle too says: Of whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is God blessed for ever (Rom 9:5).

When he had come into Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying and in a fever. He saw the Synagogue lying in the darkness of her unbelief, lying prostrate under the burden of her sins, fevered with vices even to frenzy: and therefore he took her hand, because he works the salvation of the Jewish nation not only by word but with his hands too. Hear the Prophet: But God our King before the ages has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth (Ps 74:12). He took her hand. So that her hand might be cleansed of the blood of the prophets before it should take on the mystery of the Church's ministry. And she rose and served. This is why she who lay there has been raised up, and serves Christ, in that she now sanctifies in good works her hands, which before she defiled with evil works.

When evening had come, he says, they brought to him many who had demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word (Matt 8:16). How can this be understood in a human way, that, letting the day go by, men eager for health should carry many, and those badly wounded, to the remedies of health in the evening? But it is evening when the day of the world is ending, when the world declines from the light of the ages. Late came the restorer of light, to give back to us Gentiles, who came in the night of the ages, an everlasting day. And when evening had come, they brought to him many who had demons. In the evening, that is, in the last time, the loving

and solemn devotion of the apostles offers us Gentiles to God: and the demons are driven out from us, who used to command us the worship of idols. Hear the Prophet: All the gods of the nations are demons (Ps 96:5). For, not knowing the one God, we served innumerable gods with a sacrilegious and most filthy servitude.

And he cast out the spirits with a word. Because Christ did not come to us in the flesh, he came by the word: where, then, there came faith from hearing, hearing through the word (Rom 10:17), he made us free from the demons' servitude, and made the demons captives after their impious lordship. This is why the demons are tortured under our hands at our command, they who used to subject us to wood, bind us to stones, and every day harried us with an empty fear through hollow images.

Now is the time, brothers, that faithlessness may not call us back to their servitude: let us not be snared by auguries, nor deceived by divination, nor caught by lots, nor led on by the Manes, nor seduced by deaths, nor made captive by panting plagues; but let us commend ourselves and our actions to the Lord, entrust them to the Father, believe God; for he manages the time of men as God, and therefore as a father directs the actions of his sons, and as Lord does not abandon the care of his household.

Sermon XIX.

On the scribe whom Christ did not allow to follow him

Today the Evangelist began thus: Jesus, seeing, he says, great crowds around him, ordered them to go across the water (Matt 8:18). Whenever the unteachable crowd spreads itself around the Lord, and is tossed in the storm of conscience, it leaves calm, seeks the waves, leaves the harbour, enters shipwrecks, and, straining for the heights, is plunged into the deep; then Christ orders this sea, troubled by such throngs, to be crossed. Jesus, seeing, he says, great crowds around him, ordered them to go across the water. Not that he might flee from men, he who had come for men's salvation; but he gives the foolish a truce in which to believe, he waits for the wanderers to return; he offers patience and pardon, he who does not wish to pronounce sentence; he bears with the stubborn, he who wishes not to destroy, but to save what he has made.

One of the scribes came up, he says, and said to him: Master, I will follow you wherever you go (Matt 8:19). He goes away, he does not come near, who rashly promises to follow the Lord. But who can promise to be equal to all things? He would have spoken more cautiously: "I will follow you wherever you command"; more

humanly, certainly: "Wherever you wish." I will follow you wherever you go. So speaks one who does not know what difference there is between himself and the Lord; so speaks one who understands Christ to be not God, but a master. I will follow you wherever you go. Peter follows over the sea, but sinks; he follows to the Passion, but denies. And if Peter thus fails, and gives way at a few things, who is this man who thus promises to follow the Lord to all things? I will follow you wherever you go. So this man speaks, as though he could undergo the conflict with Christ, pass through the ignominy of the cross to glory, enter the citadel of death, put death to death by death, penetrate the unknown recesses of Tartarus, burst the chains of hell, call back to their own bodies souls held fast now for ages, forgetful of the light, shake the earth, split the rocks, unbar the sepulchres, lead the buried out of the underworld, bring forward the witnesses of his resurrection. Let him add further that he goes wherever Christ goes, sits upon the shoulders of the angels, ascends the heavens, sits beside the Father, holds the summit of all the heavenly dignities: to these things Christ, to these the Lord: why does a foolish scribe, a proud home-born slave, promise to follow his Lord?

But he receives from Christ the answer such presumption deserves: Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head (Matt 8:20). What does this mean? The fox, weak in strength, mighty in cunning, inventor of guile, artificer of fraud,

mistress of pretence, empty of simplicity, full of tricks, robber of the farmyard birds, enemy of the homes of the household: rightly does Christ make her the type of Herod, prince of the Jews, who, forgetful of their former liberty, standing under Roman power, ruled by art, reigned by cunning, commanded by fraud, presided by guile, prevailed by pretence; and because he could not carry off prey from foreign nations, he devoured his own people, the home-born peoples, like farmyard birds. Christ proves this when he sends word to Herod: Go, tell that fox (Luke 13:32). Truly a fox, he who seizes by guile a kingdom which he merited neither by birth nor by life. This Herod, then, set up for himself holes for his wickednesses in the hearts of the scribes, even to the killing of Christ: and he left no place where Christ might lay his head, which is God (1 Cor 11:3).

Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests. Here too he calls birds the demons flying in the air, who themselves too made the nests of their malice in the breasts of the scribes, there to breed all the seeds of their wickedness. This is why, as soon as the devil mingled himself with the mind of Judas, he both conceived the fruit of guile and gave birth to the crime of the betrayer. You see that Christ did not repulse the scribe because he was willing, but exposed him because he was feigning, and shrank from him because he was presumptuous. Or why should Christ, why should the author of loving-kindness, the bestower of salvation, forbid this man

who wished to come, he who soon after held back another disciple who wished to go, that he might not depart?

Another disciple, he says, said: Lord, let me first go and bury my father (Matt 8:21). But Jesus said to him: Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead (Matt 8:22). Can it be that Christ thus refuses the last homage of piety? That he forbids the last office to parents, which is owed them? He does not refuse the homage of piety, but he sets the divine servitude before human affections. Hear what the disciple said. Let me first go and bury my father. This ought to have been not first for him, but second; the earthly father must be placed after the heavenly Father.

Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead. That is to say: follow me to the insult of the Passion, so that with me you may come to the glory of the resurrection. Leave the dead to bury their own dead. Why should the son of faith go back to the house of unbelief? Why should the offspring of salvation weep for the lost one with the lost? What should the pledge of the resurrection care for the sepulchre of his begetter? Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead. How do the dead bury their own dead? Brothers, he himself said: I am the life (John 14:6). What the soul is to the body, Christ is to the soul; without the soul the body does not live, the soul does not live without Christ: when the soul withdraws, at once stench, corruption, rottenness, the worm, ashes, horror and all things hateful to the sight succeed in the body: when God departs, at once

there comes into the soul the stench of sins, the corruption of crimes, the rottenness of vices, the worm of conscience, the ashes of vanities, the horror of faithlessness, and in the living sepulchre of the body there is held the funeral of a soul already buried.

There was added to the case that the corpse of unbelief was being honoured with unbelieving obsequies, and piety was tended by the ministry of impiety. Jesus entered, he says, the house of the ruler, and saw the music-makers (Matt 9:23). Do not such people make a sacrilege out of piety, who hire music for mourning, strangers' laments for the funerals of their own? But where there is no lamentation, there is a bought and hired chant. It is not the artful pipe, but simple affection that mourns the dead. Christ, then, did not wish his disciple to be absent from his father's funeral rites, but he did not wish him to take part in profane mourning.

Sermon XX.

On the stilling of the storm at sea

The readings of the Church are so dispensed by a divine secret counsel that they confer a higher knowledge on the learned, and lavish on the simple saving things, the grace of understanding. As Christ went up, he says, into the boat, a daring storm is related to have made a great commotion. As he went up, he says, into the boat, his disciples followed him; and behold, a great commotion arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered by the waves; but he was asleep (Matt 8:23–24).

The sea which bowed its swelling back beneath Christ's feet, laid its crests flat, reined in its motion, bound fast its waves, and along a liquid road served him once with the solidity of stone: why is it that it rages, raves, strives even to the peril of its author? Why did Christ himself, who foreknew the future, seem so ignorant of the present as to take no precaution against the coming squall, the hour of the storm, the time of danger, but, among all who were awake, he alone was then held in sleep, when so great a peril hung over himself and his own? Brothers, it is not calm weather that proves a helmsman's skill, but a stormy tempest: when the breeze is gentle, the

lowest sailor steers the ship; in the confusion of the winds, the art of the chief master is sought. This is why the disciples, after they saw that the skill of the seamen had come to nothing, that the seas raged against them, the waves made for them, the whirlwinds of the winds had gathered against them, fled in alarm to the very helmsman of things, the ruler of the world, the master of the elements, asking him to calm the waves, remove the danger, give back safety to the desperate. Indeed, when his command alone had bound the sea, beaten back the winds, taken away the whirlwinds, given calm, the voyagers perceive, believe, acknowledge that he is the author of all things.

But let us now bring out what is within. When Christ, about to cross the sea of the world, went up into the ship of his Church, the blasts of the Gentiles, the whirlwinds of the Jews, the squalls of the persecutors, the clouds of the mob, the mists of the demons so rushed upon it that there was one storm of the whole world. The waves of kings foamed, the billows of the powers boiled, the rage of subjects roared, the whirlpools of peoples spun round, the rocks of unbelief stood out, the Christian shores bellowed, the shipwrecks of the lapsed were tossed about, and there was for the whole world one peril and one shipwreck.

Then the disciples came to the Lord and roused him, saying: Lord, save us, we are perishing; and Jesus says to them: Why are you fearful, you of little faith? (Matt 8:25–26) Roused, then, by the disciples, Christ rebukes the sea, that is, the world; he calms the globe, softens kings, ap-

peases powers, stills the waves, settles peoples, makes the Romans Christians. From among them too he made executors of the word of the Christian faith those who had been persecutors of the Christian name. This calm the Christian princes keep, the Church holds, Christendom possesses, the Gentile world admires.

Then, he says, rising, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm (Matt 8:26). But the men marvelled, saying: What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him? (Matt 8:27) Those who come to the Lord, who rouse him, who beg with humble supplication to be saved, are disciples: but those who marvel that the elements so obeyed Christ are called men. They are truly men, and men of the world, who marvel that the world has been so turned to obedience to Christ, who are astonished that the summits of the temples have been so cast down like the swellings of the waves, who see the foam of the idols and the whirlwinds of the demons so put to flight; whom the deep and wide-spread calm of the Christian name throughout the whole world leaves thunderstruck. And truly, brothers, when Christ slept in death, a great storm arose in the Church; when Christ rose from the dead, there was given back to the Church, as it is written, a great calm. Now let us rouse Christ, who sleeps in us, with the whole groaning of our hearts, with the voice of faith, with Christian tears, with deep weeping, with apostolic cries, and let us say: Lord, save us, we are perishing.

And since the reading fits the time aptly, and as it is written: The north wind is a harsh wind, but by name it is called the Right-hand wind, the wind that brings upon us nations so fierce, so bitter; this north wind, then, a harsh wind, spreads itself in a grim whirlwind through the Right-hand wind, through the African wind, through the south wind, through the east wind; it confounds the seas, blots out the air, casts down mountains, swallows cities, sinks provinces, forces the whole world to be one shipwreck. This is why the little boat of Christ is now lifted to the sky, now goes down into the depths of alarms, now is steered by the strength of Christ, now is tossed by terror, now is covered by the waves of sufferings, now swims clear by the oars of confessions. But let us, brothers, cry out again and again: Lord, save us, we are perishing. And in truth, brothers, if we were one, and one human body, if we believed that those who are perishing are our own vitals, we would cry out unceasingly, with the affliction of fasting, with the groaning of prayers, with the outpouring of tears: Lord, save us, we are perishing. And we would be eager to help ourselves in our brothers: nor would we see, with the sword raging, a sea of our own blood on the land, nor would we now feel so many shipwrecks of bodies, nor indeed of souls; and we would pray with humble voice: Lord, save us, we are perishing.

And yet no compassion, no piety, no fright, no shame of any kind, or compunction rouses us to pain. It is God's doing, God's, that we are pressed

by evils, that we are always scourged, that the nations prevail, that hail falls, that blight infects, that impiety has power, that diseases hold sway, that death rages, that the earth trembles: yet we neither tremble nor fear, nor turn aside from evils, nor seek good things. Avarice rages, pomp pants, iniquity pleases, other men's goods delight us, but our own perish; God's scourges come, but our faults provoke them. If God is just, he is surely merciful towards us.

Brothers, let us return to the Lord, that God may return to us; let us renounce evil things, that good things may answer us: let us serve the good God, that we may not serve evil nations and unjust powers, with Christ, our Lord and helmsman, helping us, whose honour and majesty remains without end for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon XXI.

On the same

Whenever Christ sleeps in our ship and is lulled to sleep in our body by the sleep of our sloth, the squall bursts upon us with all the confusion of the winds, the threatening waves rage, and while again and again they are lifted up and fall back with foaming billows, they beget for the voyagers bitter shipwrecks in expectation, as the present reading of the Evangelist has declared, saying: And Jesus said to them on that day, when evening had come: Let us cross over to the opposite side; and leaving the crowd, they take him just as he was in the boat (Mark 4:35–36). And Jesus said to them on that day. What day? That day, surely, on which, according to Isaiah, he rises to shatter the earth (Isa 2:19); that day on which the whole brightness of the world's light turns to evening; that day on which, as the night of temptations draws on, the images of the vanities, which are to be fled, grow thick. When evening had come. It is evening then, when the last time and the final hour announce to human senses the confusions of things that are coming forth. Let us cross over to the opposite side. From earthly things to heavenly, from present things to future. And rightly opposite, because divine things are

always opposite to human: while these draw down to frailty those who are subject to them, those lift up to virtue the ones who follow them.

And leaving the crowd. They leave the crowd who forsake popular favour and the mob that wanders about with an ever uncertain judgement: nor, bound over to human rumours, are they held back from the road of virtue, but, steady and secure in the good of their conscience, with Christ as their companion, they cross over the lying waves of praise and disparagement.

And they take him, he says, just as he was in the boat. What is this? Christ is one way in heaven, in another way he is held in the boat; one way in the majesty of the Father, in another way he is perceived in the lowliness of man; one way co-eternal with the Father, in another way he is seen, temporal, through the stages of our ages; one way he sleeps in our body, in another way he keeps watch in the holiness of his Spirit. They take him just as he was, he says, in the boat. It is the praise of faith to receive Christ as he is and is held in the boat, that is, in the Church: where he was born, where he grew up, where he suffered, where he was crucified, where he was buried, where it is of singular salvation to confess that he ascended into heaven, sat down at the right hand of the Father, and will come thence as judge of the living and the dead; he who, having so confessed Christ, has taken him into our boat, even if he is battered by the offences of the waves, is yet not sunk by the dangers, nor covered by the waters.

And there arose, he says, a great squall of wind, and it was sending the waves into the boat, so that the boat was filled (Mark 4:37). And there arose a great squall: it did not dare to test the power of the sleeping Lord, but to strike at the disciples' faith, to expose their fear, so as to show how much servitude it owed to its author.

And he was, he says, asleep in the stern (Mark 4:38). To one asleep those who are awake flee for refuge; and they believe that he can withstand the raging elements whom they see held in the deepest grip of sleep: they observe that the slumber of human necessity had come upon him in such a way that he could be roused neither by the crash of the sea, nor by the roar of the waves, nor by the final shipwreck that threatened. And where is that word: Behold, he will not slumber nor sleep, he who keeps Israel? (Ps 121:4) The majesty that knows no weariness, that is ignorant of rest, does not sleep on its own account, nor slumber for itself; but he does all things through me, for me: he who, as often as he changes the appearance of his action, of his countenance, so often reproves our changes and the faults of our souls. Hear the Prophet saying: His eyelids question the sons of men (Ps 11:4). See how the eyes of God are closed, lest they should look, to punish them, on those who sin. Turn away, he says, your face from my sins (Ps 51:11). And again they open, to spur on those who run, to raise up those who grow weary, to look upon those who pray. This sleep of the Lord, then, tests the disciples' faith, exposes their doubt, and re-

veals them to be of little belief, since they believe that the elements can rise up not only against themselves but against their very author.

It was sending, he says, the waves into the boat. For as much as the masses of the Gentiles, like waves, shake the Lord's ship from outside and pour into it, so much do the swollen billows of the heretics burst in and rage within. This storm blessed Paul declares that he endured, when he says: Fightings without, fears within (2 Cor 7:5). So that the boat was filled. Rightly does the Evangelist relate that the boat was filled with foaming waves, since the Church suffers almost as many heresies as we read there are questions of the divine law.

And he himself, he says, was in the stern, asleep on a cushion; and they wake him and say to him: Master, does it not concern you that we are perishing? And rising, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Be silent and be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm (Mark 4:38–39). And he said to them: Why are you fearful? Have you not yet faith? (Mark 4:40) While the reading lays open the event, it commends the present time by its example. For a great and very heavy, stormy tempest is hanging over us, while the raging and destructive whirlwind of the winds thrusts itself in from every side: the seas bellow: the very islands are overturned from their foundations, and all the shores are struck with a mournful sound.

But since, as we have said, Christ sleeps in our ship, let us approach him more by faith than by

body, and let us knock at his door more with the work of mercy than with the touch of the desperate. Let us rouse him, not with insolent din, but with the cry of spiritual songs; not with wicked murmuring, but with watchful supplication. Let us give God some of the time of our life, lest this unhappy vanity and pitiable solicitude consume the whole day, lest destructive sleep and empty slumber spend the whole night; but likewise let a part of the day and of the night be assigned to the very author of times. Watch, man, watch; you have an example: what the cock bestows on you, his host, you should show to your Creator; especially since he sounds out to you for your profit, when he rouses you to work, when he announces the day already near: how much more fitting is it that with heavenly hymns you rouse your God from his seat on high to your salvation. Hear the prophet saying: In the night my spirit keeps watch for you, O God (Isa 26:9). And the Psalmist: With my hands by night before him, and I have not been deceived (Ps 77:3). But the same Psalmist admonishes that three times of the day are to be assigned to God, saying: Evening and morning and noon I will tell and proclaim, and he will hear my voice (Ps 55:18). While Daniel diligently prayed to God at these three times (Dan 6:11), he obtained not only foreknowledge of the future, but also merited the freedom of his people, long held captive.

Let us say, then, what the Prophet said: Arise, why do you sleep, O Lord? (Ps 44:24) Arise, and do not cast us off for ever. Let us say with the

apostles: Master, does it not concern you that we are perishing? And a master indeed, since he is not only the Maker of all the elements, but also their moderator and ruler: when he has heard us, when he has deigned to awake, the waves will be levelled, and the swollen billows laid low, and the hills; the winds will scatter, the squall will perish, and this storm which is hanging over us, this great storm, will be changed into the greatest calm.

Sermon XXII.

On despising the care of earthly things, and on the watchful servant

Rewards are always appointed for those before whom hard contests are set, and the greatness of the reward is set according to the greatness of the contest. This is why Christ places the kingdom in the lap of his disciples, so that in the contest they may not yield to dangers, nor to fear; he who strives towards a kingdom despises dangers; he who is eager for victory does not know how to fear.

Do not be afraid, he says, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32). A flock little to the world, great to God; little, because he calls glorious those whom he has formed to the innocence of sheep and to Christian gentleness: a little flock is one that is not diminished from great, but grows from little; the little flock thus marks out the infancy of the newborn Church, which he promises will soon come, by heavenly increase, to the insignia of his kingdom. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.

He added what one who is to reign must do: Sell what you possess, and give alms; make for yourselves purses that do not grow old, a treasure

that does not fail, in heaven (Luke 12:33). Sell what you possess: no one can be master of all things unless he is not held by his own; it is the mark of an abject mind to remember his household affairs when he is called to a kingdom; the low, plebeian heart sets a little coin before royal treasures; a poor understanding, brooding over little things, loses great ones; and, gaping after temporal things, forsakes everlasting ones. Sell, he says, what you possess, and give alms; make for yourselves purses that do not grow old, a treasure that does not fail, in heaven. Man, by such a warning Christ wished to enrich you, not to strip you; he wished your goods to remain yours, not to perish; he commanded the purses to be made everlasting, not to be emptied; he bade you transfer, not lose.

A treasure that does not fail, in heaven, where no thief comes near, and no moth destroys. He acts more by a father's counsel than by a master's right: he rebukes you for hiding your goods amid the snares of robbers and the bites of moths; you are warned not to make for yourself sleepless nights, anxious days, troubled times. The guardian of gold, the keeper of silver, has no security, knows no rest; and he who lacks security loses rest; that man is rich in punishment, not in wealth. A treasure that does not fail, in heaven. That is to say: where I am, there put it; what is given to me, I keep. Man, give to the Father, lend to God: for neither will the Father deny the heir, nor God deny man, what has been lent; he cannot keep what is yours, he who gave what is his.

Does he who lavishes divine things need human things? Is he greedy for what is ours, who made us heirs of what is his? Surely, what will he deny to those on whom he has conferred a kingdom? O man, if you are to remain here as you are, store up here what is yours: if you are going there, why do you leave here what is yours? He who keeps what must be left behind is the guardian of what belongs to others, not of his own.

If in this life, in which we are pilgrims, we live, and it pains us to be poor for a little while, sad, without honour: what will it be in the everlasting homeland, among eternal citizens, to endure pain from contempt, punishment from ignominy, reproach from nakedness; and then to be bound over to punishments, when others are promoted to the kingdom? when the poor man is led to sit with God, and the rich man is dragged into the fellowship of the punished? Alas, how lamentable the reversal, when those despaired of among men will possess the divine hope, and those endowed with human goods will be cheated of heavenly goods! And this the treasure does, which either lifts man's heart to heaven through almsgiving, or sinks it into the earth through avarice. And therefore he said: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Luke 12:34). Man, send, send ahead your treasure into the heavens, lest you sink your heavenly soul into the earth. Gold is from the depth of the earth, the soul from the heights of heaven. It is better, therefore, that gold be carried

to the seat of the soul than that the soul be sunk in the sepulchre of gold.

Those, then, whom he has granted to reign in heaven, stripped of all the cares of riches and now unencumbered in every way, he bids serve as his soldiers in the world. Let your loins be girded, and lamps burning in your hands; and you be like men waiting for their master, when he comes back from the wedding (Luke 12:35–36). Let your loins be girded: virtue must be girded there where pleasure must be restrained. He does not know how to conquer the vices of the body who lays aside the belt of virtue. Girded, then, with the baldric of chastity, which is the badge of the Christian service, let us cut away the loose sloth of the flesh, and, keeping watch in expectation of our king, let us not know the sleepless sleep of the world. They do not sleep, he says, unless they have done evil (Prov 4:16).

And lamps burning in your hands. Blessed are those in whose hands the lamps of good works shine. For so it is: Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:16). And as a lamp before the eyes, so a good work shines out in minds. A lamp shines not only for the one who carries it, but for many; and a good work, while it shines in the deed of one, enlightens many by its example. A lamp drives back the obscurity of the nights, a good work puts to flight the darkness of malice. Let us kindle the lamp by good works in our hands, if we wish to shine before the Lord and before men.

And you be like men waiting for their master, when he comes back from the wedding. Because torches are always friends to weddings, the chastity of a wedding is celebrated with the testimony of lights. For as he who presumes upon unlawful things flees the light, so he who seeks lawful things shines out in manifold light. And you be like men waiting for their master, when he comes back from the wedding. Men are those who, in the manner of the servitude they owe, await the coming of their master with unwearied watches; but those who so serve the belly that they do not know the divine servitude, and, solicitous for the pleasure of the flesh, have lost their solicitude for going out to meet the Lord, are not to be called men, but beasts. And you be like men waiting for their master, when he comes back from the wedding. Since Christ came to betroth his Church, the bride's chamber is adorned: and it is adorned with the gold of faith, the silver of wisdom, the gems of the virtues, the veils of holiness, the roses of bashfulness, the lilies of chastity, the violets of modesty. And the temple of purity, the pinnacle of virginity, is raised to the heights of heaven: nor are the harps of the psalms lacking, the instruments of the prophets, the voices of the apostles, and all the harmonies of the heavenly wedding. He is indeed a slave of sleep who is not roused to the wedding of the heavenly king by such and so great a clamour.

And you be like men waiting for their master, when he comes back from the wedding, so that when he comes and knocks, they may open to

him at once. Coming, he knocks; the heart that has a good conscience opens, the heart that has a bad conscience shuts; the just mind opens to the reward, the unjust shuts itself off, because it has not deserved it.

Let us watch, then, dearly beloved, that we may attain the blessedness that follows. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, finds watching (Luke 12:37). Let these promises of blessedness suffice; but since Christ speaks of the charity of that blessedness itself, let us put it off today, that we may hear more fully what such a Father has promised his sons.

Sermon XXIII.

On despising the care of earthly things and on the promise of the kingdom

You have heard today how the Lord joined the blast of the heavenly trumpet to the shepherd's song of joy, so as to lift to divine things the minds of the sheep, long bowed down, and to promote them forthwith to the heavenly kingdom. Do not be afraid, he says, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32). Humility has acquired what pride lost, and the little and gentle flock has tamed by its own meekness every ferocity in all its variety. The little flock conquered and broke as many kinds of beasts as it subjected diversities of nations to the yoke of Christ. The little and gentle flock was long content to be slain, long suffered itself to be devoured, until the savagery of the Gentiles, sated with blood or with flesh, tasting the sweetness of the Gospel pasture and the streams of the divine fount, should shun the whole contagion and the fodder of the world, and should return from beast to man, he who had slipped from man into a beast. That the prophets foresaw this, that the apostles fulfilled it, that the martyrs endured it, is certain, as he bears witness who says: For your

sake we are put to death all the day long; we are reckoned as sheep for the slaughter (Ps 44:23).

But as this flock of a new order went into battle, where he lives who has been slain, he who has fallen conquers, he finds his soul who loses it, it imitated its king; it followed that sheep, that Lamb, who like a sheep was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearer, he did not open his mouth (Isa 53:7). He is silent who suffers willingly; he cries out who is torn against his will. Nor can he complain of death who assumes death because he has deigned to, not because he is compelled. It is a mark of power when someone dies willingly for many; when one dies unwillingly, it is a matter of extreme necessity: for the one comes from contempt of death, the other from the condition of nature. Christ, then, like a sheep, both willing and silent, is shorn, to cover that nakedness which Adam first brought in; like a lamb he is slain, that, sacrificed, he may absolve the sin of the whole world; he lays down his life for the sheep, to fulfil both the loving-kindness and the care of a shepherd. For you, then, king, for you priest, for you shepherd, for you sacrifice, for you sheep, for you Lamb, for you all things he became, who had made all things. And he who never changes for himself is changed so often for you; for your sake he is shown in various forms, he who remains in the one only form of his majesty. And what more? God man gives himself to you as you are able to bear him, because as he is you cannot endure him.

But let us now hear what such a shepherd has promised to the little flock. Do not be afraid, he says, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. O goodness poured out! O loving-kindness unheard of! O affection beyond words! Into the society of his wealth the shepherd takes his sheep, and into the fellowship of his lordship the master admits his servants; into a share of the kingdom the king admits the flock of the whole people: thus, thus does he give, whose wealth cannot fail, whose kingdom cannot be diminished, whose power cannot be emptied by his giving.

But the Lord began providently, saying: Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. The servile state is not equal to hearing the promise of a kingdom without fear, because he who is scarcely worthy of freedom is unable to take in the insignia of a princedom. So the Lord strengthens the minds of his servants with such a word, lest the sudden hearing of the promised kingdom lay them prostrate. For a servant to want a kingdom is a crime; to approach it, a danger; not to fear, rashness. But how much is this to Christ? Or what wonder is it that he gives his servants a kingdom, that he makes servants sharers with himself in lordship, he who washes the servants' feet, so as to serve his servants with the utmost servitude? Let them come here, let them come, who dispute his power, and then let them contend about his equality, when they have been able to grasp, to speak, to measure such loving-kindness; and let

them no longer slander him if he says that in our body he is less than the Father, he who not by word only but by deed as well, when he washes the feet of servants, has subjected and submitted himself to the feet of little servants. Man, spare yourself now, because, that you might spare yourself, God washed your feet, held your feet, embraced your feet.

But let us return to what we began: Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased (complacuit) your Father to give you the kingdom. Behold, he who gives says that the Father gives. Can it be that by speaking so he disowns his own generosity? Far from it: he does not diminish his power, but lays open his affection: speaking so, he does not make a distance, but shows the will of the Father and his own, he confirms the unity. That he said "complacuit", and did not say "placuit", teaches the gift of the Trinity: because what pleased the Son towards us, this pleased the Trinity together.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom: after so great a generosity, then, after his grace so abundantly bestowed on you, the Lord bids you, who are to reign, cast away the abject and vile peculium of servitude. Sell what you possess, and give alms. Royal power does not admit plebeian dress; august honour is conferred only with the diadem and the purple. He, then, who believes himself divinely consecrated king must cast off the garb of servitude. This is why the king on high ordered that man who dared to enter the banquet

of his majesty in an unworthy garment to be bound, cast out, thrust into the outer darkness (Matt 22:13), because the unseemliness of the one invited redounds to the insult of the one who invites. He also who, now enriched with riches, with royal wealth, keeps back the peculium of his former liberty, a captive to wretchedness, does not know that he is happy. It is the custom, it is the mark of a happy mind, that one who has been raised to a kingdom should at once liberally dispense what was his own, what was private, to parents, to kinsmen, to needy citizens, lest he who has attained wealth and honour be a beggar in mind. With such providence, then, with such counsel, the Lord bids us sell, bestow, give away what is vile and perishable, we who wish to possess in the heavenly kingdom all things that are in heaven and on earth.

But if you wish to keep the prices of your estates, and if perhaps the hoards in purses delight you, make yourself purses such as he commanded, who is now the guardian and provider of your desire. Indeed, when he saw that he had spoken harshly, Sell what you possess, he at once added: Make for yourselves purses that do not grow old, a treasure that does not fail, in the heavens. Are you saddened again, because you are compelled to place what you have in the heavens? I beg you, entrust it to your God, you who entrust it to a servant, and commend it to God rather than to man. But if you fear that the loving-kindness of the bestower may take something from it, may scatter something, seal your

purses with the ring of faith, so that with such a guardian you may sleep secure, because where he is, there is no place for a thief. He will not be able to deny you your money, who has bestowed on you all that is his, who has enriched you with the honour and glory of his kingdom.

Sermon XXIV.

On the watchful servant and the happiness of the kingdom of God

No one is unaware that vigils are always and for all things salutary, because in truth to watch more is to live more. For what is so like death as the look of a sleeper? What so full of life as the form of one awake? Sleep must be indulged so that it may restore the body, not dissolve it; and recall its strength, not enervate it. No one, then, is unaware that vigils are always and for all things salutary. What art, what work, what season, what power, what office does not seek out the gains of life by working by lamplight? This is why a king, wakeful in battle array, foresees and avoids the snares of a cunning enemy; then the soldier in camp repels the night attacks that come upon him by cautious watching through the night. So the sailor, by watching, enters the uncertain ways of a far-spread voyage, and crosses trackless paths, and by a stealthy track reaches the longed-for berth of a gainful harbour. Hence the shepherd joins nights to days, and denies himself all time for sleeping, lest, with sleep in their favour, any occasion be given to wolves to make raids on the flock. So the skilful traveller, through the night air, forestalls the heats of the

sun, and with more foresight assigns the suitable daytime to resting.

Knowing this, the Prophet cried to the Lord not by day only but all night long: Lord, God of my salvation, by day I have cried out, and by night before you (Ps 88:2). What more? The Lord himself spends the night in the prayer of God (Luke 6:12), that he might free us by prayer before he redeems us by his Passion. And if the master watches for his servants, rightly does he thus bid the servants watch for themselves.

Let your loins, he says, be girded, and lamps burning in your hands; and you be like men waiting for their master, when he comes back from the wedding (Luke 12:35–36). Let your loins be girded. A new order of vigils, a new dress is commanded. Let your loins be girded, and lamps burning in your hands. The watchful servants are admonished of nothing about clothing, nothing about shoes, nothing about the equipment for going out to meet him; but the whole care is enjoined on girding the loins, the whole force of the precept is laid on binding the loins, with only the help of lamps added, without which neither is the darkness of the night opened, nor does the face of the coming day grow bright. Let your loins be girded, and lamps burning in your hands. The belt, indeed, is properly the token of servitude, since it both makes men unencumbered in running and makes them obedient.

But it would have been enough to say, "Be girded"; why does he name the loins above all? Why does he who commands make mention of

the loins so emphatically, with such respect? Do you ask why? Because in the loins lies the whole cause of the body, from the loins all the business of the flesh is stirred up, in the loins is the whole occasion of human lapse, of human frailty. From there comes what makes men ignorant of virtue, what makes them slothful. This is why the Lord bids, above all, that our loins be bound with the baldric of chastity, and commands that all that is hanging, flowing, loose in our flesh be bound tight with the unbroken girdle of virtue, so that, the flesh being girded up, the gait of our mind may be rendered free, swift, unencumbered for going out to meet the Lord. Yet, hearing this, man, you must know that the flesh does not hold you back from going out to meet God, because it is the inseparable companion of the very office of that meeting, if you put its baggage in order, if you lighten its burdens, if you, a provident traveller, bind tight its hanging and loose wrappings. What more? It will be a wholesome comradeship for you, if you are not its idle and slack director; but how you must balance its baggage, how moderate its unjust weights, the Apostle teaches, saying thus: Put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and avarice, which is the servitude of idols (Col 3:5). The flesh, then, must be bound tight with the belt of continence, lest, poured out in vices and weighed down by the whole weight of sins, it be unable to keep to the steps of things above and of heaven.

Well, then, did the Lord add: And lamps burning in your hands. Because lamps are always carried in the night-time as a testimony of innocence: and as darkness is always the friend of vices, so lamps are always the enemies of crimes; lamps are always the companions of good work. But in the hands of the saints good works themselves are lamps, as the Lord says. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:16). And truly they carry their lamps, truly they kindle their lamps with the fuel of works, truly with the ointment of mercy, those lamps which, though hidden in place, in purpose, in zeal, flash forth in work, in virtue, and shine throughout the whole world.

And because the Lord knew that the dispositions of those who wait for him are very sad, very anxious, lest anyone be overcome by weariness, lest anyone flag through delay, lest anyone succumb to the fatigue of long waiting, he promises to those who persevere, for heavenly blessedness, a heavenly homage. Blessed, he says, are those servants whom the Lord, when he comes, finds watching (Luke 12:37). And lest the quality of that blessedness should be held uncertain, he at once added: Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them recline at table, and passing by he will serve them. God will gird himself, and will make the servants recline, and will serve them. Behold an unheard-of change of things, behold a fearful rebuke to lordship, behold a dreadful reversal of servitude: because

the servant stood by for a little while, girded, in expectation of his master, and bore the faithfulness of waiting with a brief fatigue, to repay him in kind the divinity veils itself within its very divinity. He will gird himself and make them recline at table, and passing by he will serve them. God stands by man as he reclines, and stands by him in heaven; the Lord serves the servant as he feasts, and serves girded his boys, his attendants; Christ does the ministry, and does it already established in the glory of the Father.

Man, do you still slander Christ, on the ground that he deferred to the Father? He who, washing your feet on earth, displayed to you the last service, and promises you again in heaven the lowest servitude? Believe, heretic, and do you too strive to repay him in kind. He prepares for you in heaven a banquet with himself as servant, and you on earth do not cease to heap up and beget continual blasphemies against him; he too will make his passings, because passing he will serve them; from lordship he will pass and move over to the loving service of his faithful; to you he will pass from father of mercy to a most severe judge. And passing by he will serve them. To those who confess, who wait, he will serve a banquet; he will serve you too, but the sentence your denial deserves.

And if he comes in the second watch, and if he comes in the third watch, and finds them so, blessed are those servants (Luke 12:38). If he comes in the second and third watch: the world knows several watches, the expectation of the

Trinity knows only three; why, then, did he begin from the second, and keep silent about the first? Because the first watch had already gone by at the dawn of the Lord's nativity. The shepherds prove this, who, while they keep watch over their flock, merit to find, to see, to hold in the manger the very shepherd and author of the flock; but let us seek what the second and third watch are. As the first watch is that of his birth in the flesh, so the second watch is that in which he returns and is raised again in our flesh. Indeed, that it may come to him as he rises, the year is roused and the world awakes. The third watch is that in which the whole expectation is ended by the last coming of the one who comes; so that as he rose again for us, so we may now rise again for him to perpetual life.

Sermon XXV.

On despising the care of earthly things, and on the promise of the kingdom

You have heard today with what gentle exhortation the Lord consoled the small and earthly beginnings of the Gospel flock. Do not be afraid, he says, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32). He takes away anxious hopes, removes doubtful outcomes, drives off and shuts out all fear, when at the very outset he promises a kingdom to those who are being born. For it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom. Who sighs about food, about clothing, about a plebeian fortune and the meanness of a springtime turf, when he is certain of a kingdom, secure of lordship? He begrudges himself greatly who, raised to the highest things, casts himself down to lowly things, lays himself down among needy things.

But it is fitting to know who this Father is, or what he is like, or what kingdom he promises to his sons. Who this Father is you learn every day by your own confession, when you cry: Our Father, who are in heaven (Matt 6:9). And what he is like you have seen clearly in the very greatness of his works: out of nothing he made heaven, and made the earth solid out of the liquid, set

the mountains on the balance, shut the seas within lawful bounds by the sole authority of his command. But if you desire to know the quality of the kingdom he promises to the little ones, he himself discloses it, saying thus: Let the little ones come to me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:14). To be in heaven is a wonder; to live in heaven is a thing of majesty. How great a thing it is, further, to reign in heaven, mortal sense gives up estimating; and yet, man, what you cannot estimate, you have received. For so the Apostle says: What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it gone up into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9). And what you doubt that you deserve, you are now compelled to confess that you have and possess. What, then, has he to do with earth, who possesses heaven? What has he to do with human things, who has already obtained divine things? Unless perhaps groans please, labours are chosen, dangers are loved, the worst of deaths delights, and evils inflicted are more welcome than goods bestowed.

But let us see what counsel so great a Father gives to those who are to reign. Sell what you possess, and give alms (Luke 12:33). If you believe that you will live, that you will reign, that you are already rich on high, then where you are to be, where you are to move, where you are to reign, let those things that are yours go before you now; reckon up your miserable riches by mercy; turn what is human into what is divine. And lest perhaps anyone should lack transport to carry

the things you send away, the poor man has been pressed into service: the poor carry our burdens, and carry them willingly, because by such a weight they are not weighed down, but lifted up.

Sell what you possess, and give alms; make for yourselves purses that do not grow old, a treasure that does not fail, in the heavens, where no thief comes near, and no moth destroys. Make for yourselves purses that do not grow old. You see that this Father wishes to enrich his sons, not to strip them. Make for yourselves purses that do not grow old. In a new way, or rather in a heavenly way, he who hears him buys by selling, stores up by spending, acquires while he loses. How he desires money to endure, purses of riches to be made perpetual, hoards to remain, he who says: make for yourselves purses that do not grow old! Behold, he who had begun by urging contempt teaches avarice: make for yourselves purses that do not grow old. And he who rebuked those who lay up treasure for time bids purses without end be sought, to feed the whole tinder of craving. Christ, where does the love of your own draw you? To win the avaricious man, you make him hear what he desires, not what he ought: you command purses, you wish eternal treasures to be prepared, which may not fail; so that the avaricious man, while he runs his usual course to gains, may either take hold of virtue, or be taken hold of by virtue. Truly you are a Father, you who deal thus with your little ones, whatever they are. For we too sometimes, when our little ones ask for harmful things, thrust upon

them wholesome things under the appearance of harmful ones, beguiling their folly, not befooling our affection.

You said: Make for yourselves purses that do not grow old, treasures that do not fail, in heaven. Why is a purse prepared? What need of bars there, where innocence itself is the guardian? What need of a seal there, where there is no suspicion of fraud? If even in heaven there is need of purses, care is not lost, but changed. Lord, you saw that for the avaricious the whole of their faith is in treasures, the whole of their hope in purses: and therefore you wish incorruptible purses to be prepared in heaven, so that he who does not follow you to heaven may at least follow his purses. Avaricious man, make yourself purses, and make them at God's command, because the divine majesty assents to your wishes. But make yourself purses by spending, because whatever the poor man has received, the heavenly Father receives. And where does he store it? In heaven.

And lest perhaps you grieve that you have lost even the interest, you will receive a hundredfold, in the heavenly loan, whatever you have sent over to heaven with the poor man to carry it. The world's interest is a hundred to one; God takes one for a hundred; and yet men do not wish to have a contract with God. Are they perhaps solicitous about the security? Why? Is not man bound to man by the obligation of a tiny sheet of paper? God gives security in so many and such great volumes, and is the debtor not held? But you say: "Suppose that he owes it; at whose demand will

he repay?" At his own; because he cannot lie to anyone: he himself is both the enforcer and the debtor. He will not be hard in repaying, who is lavish in giving. Lend, man, to God what God has given you; the bestower wishes to give back greater things, when he wishes to be a debtor.

Sermon XXVI.

On the faithful steward

What the Lord is read today to have answered Peter when he asked, the hearing of many has taken to have been said in figure to the apostles themselves, only to the teachers and to those who preside over the churches. Peter asks: Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to all as well? (Luke 12:41) The Lord answered him: Who, do you think, is the faithful and prudent steward, whom the master has set over his household, to give them their measure of wheat in due season? (Luke 12:42) Blessed is that servant whom the master, when he comes, finds so doing: truly I say to you that he will set him over all that he possesses (Luke 12:43–44). But if that servant says in his heart: My master is delaying his coming, and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him asunder, and put his portion with the faithless (Luke 12:45–46).

This similitude binds the bishops of the Church first of all, but this figure exempts no man, no mortal whatever; for in speaking to the steward, it has answered all, though one alone

asked: if there is anyone who has received nothing from God, he will not fear the examination of his stewardship, the office of a steward. Man, if you have received this very thing which you give, how will you deny that you have received what you have? The dispenser of the Church will give an account of the heavenly stores, of the divine granaries; he will render his reasons. And the greater the trust he takes on, the greater the debt he does not doubt he will repay, as the Lord says: To whom more has been entrusted, more will be required of him (Luke 12:48). And elsewhere: The mighty will mightily suffer torments (Wis 6:6). The higher a man has climbed, the higher he will fall if he slips. What is higher than heaven? He who sins in heavenly things falls from heaven; he runs headlong to despair who offends in the very eyes of the one who rules; and he lacks excuse who commits the misdeed with the judge himself as witness. Or what defence does he hope for, whom the testimony of the examining judge accuses?

So the devil, when he was an angel, and dwelt in heaven, and moved always before God most bright and shining, in trying the ears of God, in growing proud in the sight of God, fell to the earth, was cast down to Tartarus, and was changed from an angel into a devil; and he who was the minister of pardon became the leader of punishments. This is why the Apostle warns the man of our order, lest he fall into pride and the snare of the devil (1 Tim 3:6–7). The steward, then, of the divine word and the

dispenser of heavenly teaching, who stands continually before the Lord, moves always among the altars, never withdraws from the eyes of God, who undertakes the causes of sinners, the pains of the people, offers, presses prayers, receives, brings back, restores what has been obtained, wholly turned from a man into an angel, cannot sin except in the very face of God among the holy of holies, so that he takes a crime upon himself from the place whence he was wont to bring back pardon for others.

Indeed, Nadab and Abihu, priests, sons of Aaron the priest, in presuming to defile the altars with strange fire, are consumed by the fire of the altar itself (Lev 10:1–2), so that those who had made sin out of propitiation took punishment from the sacrifice: a sin which drunkenness had roused in them; for the smell of wine had driven away the smell of incense, and the fire of drunkenness had provoked the flame of the altar. Hence, because, estranged by wine, they had carried a strange fire, they are at once carried out, extinguished by the divine fire. Drunkenness in another man is a crime, in a priest a sacrilege, because the other kills his soul with wine, the priest extinguishes the spirit of holiness, as the Apostle says: Do not extinguish the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19).

Rightly, among the other things which today's discourse reproves in the bad steward, it condemns the madness of wine, saying: But if that servant says, My master is delaying his coming, and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get

drunk. Fitly he said: to eat and drink, and get drunk, and beat. Drunkenness is the mother of slaughter, the parent of quarrels, the bearer of fury, the shameful mistress of wantonness: he who has her does not have himself; he who has her is not a man; he who has her does not commit sin, but is himself sin. Drunkenness is a flattering demon, a sweet poison, a voluntary madness, an invited enemy, a snare to decency and an injury to modesty: let no Christian know her, let a priest not touch her even by hearing; lest he who is the pattern of the virtues should thereby become the pattern of the vices, and be found an example of them.

But since enough has been said to us and to the men of the Church, let us now examine the saying of the Apostle, to show how the Saviour's answer binds all, namely that there is no one who is found a stranger to God's stewardship. There is no power except from God (Rom 13:1). If all power is from God, then from God too the king has obtained the dignity of the royal stewardship. So the general, so the soldier, so the governors of provinces, so of cities: all these will have to give an account, if in anything they have exceeded the measure of the power entrusted to them; whether the king kept justice, whether he held to equity, whether he moderated his power, whether he did not neglect mercy, whether he so held the balance of his weight that the scale of his power leaned and inclined to neither side, whether he took care of all, whether he provided for the peace of the citizens, whether he so tem-

pered the revenue that neither the soldier lacked enough nor the taxpayer was worn out. And the general will render his reasons to God, whether he gave an example of valour to those who followed him, whether he was wakeful on watch, untiring in his rounds, whether he sought the peace of all by his own labour. The soldier too will give an account, whether he obeyed orders, whether he extorted from no one, whether he repaid the pay he received with most just labour. The judge too will have to undergo, for his own judgement, the judge on high.

And you who are master of your house, I wish you to believe yourself a steward set over it rather than a master, so that you may show your wife a simple charity, and pour into her prudently the teaching you have learned in the Church: for the Apostle commanded her to be silent in the Church, and to learn at home with you teaching her, saying: Let women be silent in the churches; but if they wish to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home (1 Cor 14:34–35). Spend on your children a sober affection, a solicitous care, and bring them up faithfully in the discipline of the Lord. Give your servants the food and clothing due to them, remit their faults, temper your threats, impose discipline, and hold as brothers by heavenly descent those whom you possess as subjects by worldly servitude. You also, servants, owe faithfulness to your master in the very servitude you bear, because he who does not render with a loyal and pure heart the homage due to his master according to the flesh

is liable to God, who sees hearts, before he is to man: to God, who made you equal by grace, you whom your condition had made unequal by servile lowliness. What shall I say of the rich man? The more he has, the more he owes.

… Indeed, he gives back and hands on to another at one and the same time: if he is unwilling to give these things back, let him entrust them to individuals in portions. And you, poor man, do not think the stewardship of poverty entrusted to you a small one, if you bear it patiently, if you are not ungrateful, if even in your very need you are sober and frugal; if you give thanks to one who gives, and do not heap blaspheming insults on one who does not; if you seek only as much as mercy gives, not as much as importunate craving drives you to. Surely you too, poor man, who ask willingly, should give willingly too to those who ask. But perhaps you say, "I have nothing": let there be the mind to give, and the means of bestowing will not be lacking; set your chair for the one who comes, set your table, lampstand, lamp: surely set before him gladly something from what you have received. So Elijah (1 Kgs 17), so Elisha (2 Kgs 4), when they turned aside to the empty and needy dwellings of widows, abundantly supplied what the widows lacked.

And the Lord added, to confirm this similitude, saying: But that servant who knew his master's will, and did not make himself ready, and did not act according to his will, will be beaten with many stripes; but he who did not know, and did what deserved stripes, will be

beaten with few (Luke 12:47–48). He indeed who sins knowingly rightly pays the heavier penalties of conscience; but this one too, through the faults of ignorance, will not escape the stripes of ignorance: as it is not permitted to despise God, so it is not permitted to be ignorant of him.

Sermon XXVII.

On removing offence

In the array of war the watches of the soldiers are always assigned, so that ambush may have no licence and guile no opening. Most pernicious indeed is the sudden enemy; for he either forestalls the unaware, or seizes the unwary first, or crushes the sleeping. Hence it is that Christ, our King before the ages, through the whole night of this age, appointing beforehand the turns of the watches, has warned his soldiers against the most subtle guile of the devil, that is, of the old enemy, against the hidden onsets of the vices, against the ambushes of crimes that rush in, against the offences that arise for us from various causes, against the trials of the present life, against the burning battle lines of the world's afflictions, admonishing thus: Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation (Matt 26:41). And, settling how the watch should be kept, he added: And if he comes in the second watch, and if he comes in the third watch, and finds them so, blessed are those servants, whom, when he comes, he finds watching (Luke 12:38, 37). And blessed indeed, because those who watch and forestall the guile of the enemy will glory in the coming of their Lord. Today,

however, the Lord has roused against offences the very sentries of our captains, and has armed them, saying to the disciples: It is impossible that offences should not come (Luke 17:1). That is, it is impossible that enemies should not come.

And first, brothers, it behoves us to know what these offences are. The kinds of offences are diverse, and the first are those which the fraud of the devil brings to birth. The second are those which human cunning begets. The third are those which nature itself, suspicious and unwary, brings forth from within us. And from the devil are those which deceive by appearance, which hold out good things while they bring in evil ones: like that word to Adam, when he took from us what was human by promising what was divine (Gen 3). And that which he said through Peter: This shall not happen to you, Lord (Matt 16:22). He strives to make void the triumph of the cross, while he falsely pretends to burn with an excess of love. For when the Lord was speaking of the glory of his Passion, he answered through Peter: This shall not happen to you, Lord. How sweet the serpent's poison: he first makes the soldier deny the victory of his king, before the servant himself should deny his Lord. Hence the Lord sends the servant behind him and sends the offence back to its author, saying to Peter: Get behind me; and to the devil: Satan, you are an offence to me (Matt 16:23). And truly Peter goes behind the Lord, for, to follow him to heaven, he mounted the cross upturned.

But such too is that offence which he caused the Jews. For the stone laid broad to make footsteps firm he furrowed and roughened into a stumbling-block entire, and turned the rock of the whole foundation into an offence, that it might be ruin to the wretched. Behold, he says, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (Rom 9:33). Hence it is that the Psalmist asks with anxious supplication: Keep me from the snare which they have set for me, and from the offences of those who work iniquity (Ps 141:9). And because he had leapt over the stumbling-block and overcome the offence, he glories thus: On the rock you have exalted me, and you have led me, for you have become my hope (Ps 61:3–4).

We have spoken of the first kind of offence; let us speak also of the second, which we said comes from human cunning. Balaam the diviner set an offence before the people of Israel, when he met their warriors not with men in iron but with girls painted with every art of the procurer, to turn their arms into debauchery, to change their triumph into infamy, to draw the avengers of guilt into guilt, and in sum to profane all their holiness with foulness (Num 31:16; Rev 2:14). Hence it is that Moses marked him with such a sentence when he punished him. And kill Balaam, he says, the diviner, because he set an offence before the sons of Israel. Jeroboam contrived an offence, who by a miserable fiction set up golden heifers as gods for the people (1 Kgs 12:28), that they might not seek the living God,

nor the true temple, nor the divine law, nor the legitimate kings, nor the rites of their fathers: so the people was made a slave to error. One causes offence, according to the Apostle (1 Cor 8:10), when someone eats things sacrificed to idols as though they would do no harm, and reckons by such an act that senseless stones and wooden gods, which can neither sanctify nor avail in anything, ought to be despised. But what he reckons an example of faith becomes to the ignorant an occasion of error, because he provokes those who do not know, not to contempt but to worship, and makes what he, knowing better, consumes in a spirit of mockery look to the uninstructed like a banquet of religion. Hence the Apostle well concludes and makes it plain: And the weak brother will perish through your knowledge, for whom Christ died (1 Cor 8:11).

The third kind of offence is that which is begotten in us from our own senses, when we are deceived by the eyes, when we are beguiled by the hearing, captured by smell, and corrupted by taste. Hence Eve was wounded by the forbidden and deadly food, by the taste as by the sight. And the woman saw, he says, that the tree was good to eat, and pleasing to the eyes to look upon, and beautiful to behold (Gen 3:6). Rightly then did the Lord add that the senses themselves cause offence, saying: If your eye or your hand offends you, cut it off and cast it from you: it is better for you to come to life without an eye and a hand than to enter Gehenna with your whole body (Matt 5:29–30; Mark 9:43–47). And although the

Lord commanded us so to cut off failings and vices, not members, yet if Eve, the mother of the human race, had done this, she would better have come into life without an eye and a hand than have sent her whole lamentable posterity into death.

We must beware therefore, brothers, lest we cause offence to others, lest we ourselves suffer it when another causes it. Offence is what strikes the senses, what disturbs the mind, what confounds the purity of the understanding. Offence is what made a devil out of an angel, what rendered a traitor out of an apostle, what brought sin into the world, what led man down to death. Hear the Lord saying: Woe to the world because of offences! (Matt 18:7) Offence tempts the saints, wearies the cautious, casts down the unwary, confounds all things, throws everyone into turmoil: and although in the present place the Lord speaks of the offence of his Passion, and points to Judas, through whom comes the very offence of offences, yet, lest anyone should come to this, he gave warning, saying: It is impossible that offences should not come; but woe to him through whom they come! It is good for him if a millstone is hung about his neck and he is cast into the sea, rather than that he should offend one of these little ones (Luke 17:2).

Why not a stone, but a millstone? Because the millstone, in grinding the wheat, in pouring out the flour, in separating the bran from the fine meal, supplies bread to those who labour devoutly. Rightly, then, a millstone is bound to the

neck of him who chooses to be a minister of offence rather than of peace, so that that may drag him to death which ought to have drawn him to life: because he turns the senses given for life into an offence of death, persuading men to see otherwise, to hear otherwise, to perceive otherwise, to savour otherwise than was in Christ, than was in saving knowledge. Hence the corner stone (Isa 28:16), hence the stone of help (1 Sam 7:12), hence the stone cut out without hands (Dan 2:45), which is Christ, he so turned about and dragged into an offence for the little ones, that he made of it not the bread of life but the bread of tears and of pain, as the Prophet testifies, saying: You who eat the bread of pain (Ps 127:2). Rightly, then, as he said elsewhere, let a donkey's millstone be hung about his neck (Matt 18:6), and let him take his punishment from the very source from which he took his sense, and be made equal to the senseless beasts, he who would not be compared to men who savour heavenly things.

Sermon XXVIII.

On the calling of Matthew, publican and rich man, and on Christ eating with publicans and choosing poor men as apostles

That poverty is akin to the virtues, earthly and heavenly discipline alike prove. The athlete comes naked to the wrestling, the sailor contends naked with the waves, the soldier stands in the battle line only when unencumbered; he who strives towards philosophy first despises all that lies in possessions. Poverty therefore is akin to the virtues; and if poverty is thus held to be the parent of the virtues, the companion of the virtues, it is fitting to understand why Christ thus chose poor men for the office of virtue.

Peter and Andrew, James and John, a brotherhood paired, or rather a poverty twinned, are chosen as princes of the apostles: poor in wealth, lowly in station, mean in craft, obscure in life, common in labour, given over to night watches, slaves to the waves, denied honours, handed over to injuries, with the net for their only support, gaining their food and clothing by the catch of fish alone. But in these men, the meaner their worldly aspect seemed, the more precious were the souls that God's gaze then saw. They were poor in wealth, but rich in innocence; lowly in

station, but sublime in holiness; mean in craft, but precious in simplicity; obscure in life, but shining with the merit of their life; common in labour, but singular in purpose: given over to night watches, but already called to heavenly victories; slaves to the waves, but not drowned by the waves; denied honours, rather enriched with honours, not denied them; handed over to injuries, but not abandoned to injuries; catchers of fish, but already appointed fishers of men.

Come, he says, and I will make you become fishers of men (Matt 4:19); that by the cast of the life-giving bait, by the hook of the heavenly word, they might draw souls up from the whirlpool of death to the everlasting light. Catchers of fish become fishers of men, they pass from labour to labour, because labour that has been practised does not know how to grow weary. Whatever comes from use does not weary. Virtue endures by exercise. Hence it is that Christ willed to exercise his apostles in human labours, that he might render them unwearied in divine ones: God willed that fortitude should remain in them, that exercise should furnish them with virtue. And because fruit comes from labour, he willed them not to lose their labours but to change them: he himself first granted them the practice of labour who afterwards gave them the endurance of virtue. Hence it is that in every land they thus overcame kingdoms, nations, prisons, chains, torments, deaths, raging men.

We have said that in the apostles poverty was chosen, the friend of the virtues, dear to God.

That Christ chose for the apostolate Matthew, rich from the toll-house, wealthy from usury, laden with the gains of the world, what shall we say of it? Today Matthew began thus about himself: And as Jesus was passing on from there, he saw a man sitting at the toll-house, Matthew by name; and he said to him: Follow me (Matt 9:9). Matthew the publican, with his gains, raises no small question for us, and with his trading sets great business before us. But someone says: "What question? What business? God receives the poor, but does not repel the rich. He who has receives and draws to himself those who do not have (Luke 16). Abraham rich, rich Job, David rich. And what more blessed than Abraham? What braver than Job? What holier than David? For Abraham too, after earthly griefs, gathers into the lap of his consolation the devout souls that fly back to heaven. And Job, amid the very engines of riches, both overcame the devil himself and left us an example of overcoming him. Abraham so possessed riches that he often despised them when they were offered and trampled on them when they were granted (Gen 14:22–23); and he so loved to possess riches, not to be possessed by riches; to have them as matter for largess, not as the burning of cupidity."

But to this it is answered: the saints' riches were innocent, given as they were by God, not basely acquired; granted for the use of life, not for the interest of death. But as for Matthew the publican, his riches so publish him as master of cupidity, so baked him in the furnace of avarice,

so bound him with the chains of securities, so pressed him down with the weight of money-bags, that he could not be lifted to innocence, rise to justice, advance to virtue. Hence his sitting was already a sinking down, not a sitting. Why, then, Christ called such a man to his own, why he chose him for divine things, unless it is sought out more deeply, makes a very deep question, and not a question only, but even an offence, as the intent of the bystanders made plain at that time. For how should human weakness not be troubled, when it saw money so prevail with Christ that he gave faith to the fraudulent, grace to the venal, the office of largess to the master of cupidity, the mastership of holiness to the teacher of loans, the heavenly secret to the publican of the world? It burned those who saw it that usury, which lays waste the earth, was raised up to heaven, and that she whom men detest the Godhead was summoning. That those who saw it then felt so, Matthew himself discloses, who, being about to tell the truth about himself, could not keep silent about this.

And as Jesus was reclining at table in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and reclined with him and his disciples (Matt 9:10). But the Pharisees, seeing it, said to his disciples: Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners? (Matt 9:11) And the Pharisees said this to make it a great evil, one that could displease even the wicked: and if it was an impiety for publicans to be partakers with Christ even in food, what was it to associate a publican with

divine things? Brothers, the wit of an interpreter would labour over this question, if the Lord himself, to whom the question is put, did not take away all that is questionable in it.

Let us go back, then, over the order of the reading: let us hear why Christ came to Matthew. As Jesus was passing, he says. He did not say, "As he was standing there": Jesus passed, and passed on from there, so that Matthew should not remain there; Jesus passed on from there, so that Matthew should not stay there in such a state. He saw a man. He did not say, "He saw Matthew", because in Matthew he had set the man free; that is, men whom money possessed cannot serve God, while they serve money. You cannot, he says, serve God and mammon (Matt 6:24). Come, follow me. He did not say, "Bring it to me", because he was seeking Matthew, not Matthew's money-bags. Come, follow me. That is, put down your burdens, break your chains, loose your snares. Follow me. Seek yourself, lose usury, that you may be able to find yourself.

But now let us hear what he answered the Pharisees: It is not the healthy, he says, who need a physician, but those who are ill (Matt 9:12). Behold why Christ had come to Matthew: to cure the wounds of avarice, to heal the festering of usury. Go, he says, and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice (Matt 9:13). He desired mercy, so that Matthew might lay out in mercies what he had taken through misery, and redeem the penalty from the very source from which he had purchased the fault. I did not come

to call the just, but sinners. In saying this, he did not reject the just, but shut out the unjust, who falsely claimed to be just. Christ, then, in coming to sinners, willed to blot out sins, not willed to remain with sinners. What it is to give life to the dead, that it is to bestow largess on the avaricious. So Christ's calling Matthew is not that account of money, but it is wholly the account of virtue. Indeed, Matthew at once became poor to the earth, that he might be held rich in heaven.

Sermon XXIX.

On the same, and on gold

When the Lord calls forth Matthew the publican to the summit of the apostolate and raises him up, he gives a hand to the fallen, restores hope to the desperate, gives back to life those whom death was already holding bound to itself. As Jesus was passing by, he says, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the toll-house (Mark 2:14). He was sitting, of course, he who could not stand, weighed down by the burden of cupidity, and wholly bent by the very consciousness of fraud.

Gold, heavy by nature, becomes far heavier by avarice. Hence it is that it presses down the one who has it more than the one who carries it, and weighs more heavily on hearts than on bodies. It is born deep in the earth, it pursues the very foundations of the mountains, and runs through the depths of the veins in blind windings, and in ever seeking its own nature again, it brings heavenly hearts down to the underworld: it always darkens the senses, it always sinks the heights of minds into earthly things. To pay out gold is good, to hoard it evil, to despise it strong, to flee it safest of all: and as to conquer it belongs to virtue, so to have escaped it belongs to happi-

ness. The frenzy for gold seethes more fiercely in the human breast than a whole furnace glows with its fires, and it melts men down on earth more sharply than it is itself melted in the heat of the flames. Lord of cruelty, savage enemy, it wounds by being loved, strips by enriching, takes captive even the very sight, breaks faith, violates affection, wounds charity, troubles quiet, takes away innocence, teaches theft, counsels frauds, commands robbery. And what more? This is what the Apostle said: The root of all evils is avarice (1 Tim 6:10). There is indeed one exchange: if a prudent man sends it ahead to heaven before he is sent by it, like a fool, into Tartarus. Let him send it by the hand of the poor, because whatever he has given to the poor for God's sake he transmits to heaven without delay.

Rightly does the Lord, desiring Matthew, fettered by such chains, to be set free, rouse him, saying: Follow me. That is: follow me, who make my way from the heights to the heights, and not gold, which sinks from the underworld to the underworld. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt 6:21). Gold so corrupted the stock of the patriarchs, a holy offspring, so great and singular a crown of brotherhood, and made it such an exile from all piety, that they handed over Joseph to the Egyptians, a brother to barbarians, the innocent to the guilty, freeborn status to servitude (Gen 37:28). So it dried up their minds, so it pressed down their hearts, so it changed into bestial rage whatever human feeling had been in them, that it did not let them remember the

affront to God, the grief of their holy father, the feeling of their own blood. Consider what is more grievous than gold, which, when it ruins men's morals, ruins their nature as well. Gold so took the Jewish people captive by its sight, overcame them with its allurements, deceived them utterly by its appearance, that they believed it to be God, and denied the true God, the God known by so many benefits; so it turned men into beasts, that they believed a calf's head to be their head, and set the head of a beast before the Head of all things (Exod 32). Mark how this pestilence must be fled, which, having ruined men's morals, honour and life, willed and strove to take from man God himself as well. This is what made Judas a traitor, so as to compel a man to deny God, to sell the brother of his own blood, to sell off his Maker, and to put a price on that very blood which the Lord was of his own will to bestow as our price (Matt 26:15). But lest many examples on this matter breed weariness, let us pass on to the rest.

Follow me. And he rose and followed him (Mark 2:14). Often we read of a useful virtue even in an enemy, often it is proved even in an adversary. Matthew is not withdrawn from work but changed, and he undertakes the toll-house rather than leaves it, so as to acquire things that will last for God, not things that will perish for man; so that he should not, a gloomy reckoner, bring the thirtieth into the fortieth and the fiftieth coin, but, a glad one, should store away the thirtyfold, the sixtyfold and the hundredfold fruit of joy, to profit the interests of God. And he rose and

followed him. A noble mind, which so easily despised, as though they were nothing, the things it had thought great: it is clear that he had before amassed his present gains through ignorance, and as soon as he felt and saw himself free of them, he was swept up to divine things.

And it came to pass, while he was reclining at table in his house, many publicans and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples (Mark 2:15). Jesus reclined more in Matthew's mind than on his couch, and he feasted not on food but on the return of a sinner, so as to call back by the banquet, by fellowship at table, by the affection of humanity, by the sweetest conversation with himself, those who were reclining there, whom he knew could be undone once the power of the judge was recognised, could be struck down by the terror of his majesty, could be laid low at once by his bare presence; veiled in a human body, he who willed to come to man's help. He hid the lord, he who deigned not to deny confidence to servants; he covered his majesty, he who was eager to embrace frail man with a parent's love.

But the Jews take offence, saying: Why does your master eat and drink with publicans and sinners? (Mark 2:16) You wonder, Jew, why he mingles in the banquet of sinners, he who for sinners willed both to be born and did not refuse to be slain: you bark at him because he drinks the wine of sinners, he who for sinners poured out his own blood. And if you would have him able to do more: he himself took up sin, so as not to lose sinners; the judge turned his sentence back upon

himself, to show that he had loved sinners, by paying their debt rather than by forgiving it. But let it suffice that the Lord himself answered such men: The healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are ill; for I did not come to call the just, but sinners (Mark 2:17). And who was not sick, when the very nature of the human race was so sick? To all, then, he came, he who found all ill, so that he might cure them; but he plainly deserved to die who despised the physician, so as not to accuse himself or confess himself sick.

But the Lord at once opens the figure of his words, saying: For I did not come to call the just, but sinners. Here the Lord does not reject the just, but the proud; and he marks out those who, though they are not just, boast that they are. And where were the just, when, according to the Prophet, there was none who did good, there was not even one (Ps 14:3)? That they may understand their illness, let them admit the physician, that they may be cured; let them confess themselves sinners, so that Christ, now parent and guest at table, may grant pardon, lest afterwards as judge he bring upon the obstinate the endless sentence that is their due.

Sermon XXX.

On the same

Today's Gospel reading so changed Matthew the publican into an apostle, that he who was a defrauder of money became a distributor of grace, and passed from the school of impiety to the mastership of piety; and he who had been an instructor of avarice became a teacher of mercy. As Jesus was passing by, he saw a man sitting at the toll-house, Matthew by name (Matt 9:9). When Jesus was passing on from there, rightly was he passing on from there: he was passing through Judaea, to come to the Gentiles; he was passing by the Synagogue, so that the Church might remain; he was going beyond the homeland of the flesh, to return to the seat of his Godhead. In Christ, brothers, the injury of the flesh is transitory, for in him the honour of divinity is everlasting.

As he was passing on from there, he saw a man. He saw with divine eyes more than with human ones. He saw the man, so as not to see the man's sins. He saw his own work, so as to disregard the works of sinners. God saw him, that he might see God. Christ saw him, that he might no longer see the hiding places of money. Christ

saw him sitting, because, weighed down by the burden of cupidity, he was not able to rise.

Brothers, this publican sat worse at the toll-house than the paralytic, of whom we spoke before, lay on his bed. For that man suffered paralysis of the flesh, this man of the mind; in that man the frame of the limbs had been thrown into disorder, in this man the whole order of the senses had been scattered; that man lay captive in the flesh, this man sat captive in body and in heart; that man succumbed to his pains against his will, this man served his vices of his own will; this man seemed to himself innocent in the crime of avarice, that man knew himself a sinner amid his wounds; this man heaped up the sins of gain, that man blotted out his sins with the groans of his pains. Rightly, then, it is said to the paralytic: Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven you (Matt 9:2), because he had paid for his offences with his pains; but to the publican it is said: Come, follow me. That is, that by following me you may repair what you lost by pursuing money.

But someone says: "Why is the publican, who seems greater in crime, held greater in office?" For at once, endowed with the sure dignity of the apostolate, he not only received it himself but bestowed the indulgence of sins on others: he lights up the whole world with the splendour of the Gospel preaching, while the paralytic is scarcely held worthy of pardon alone. Do you want to know why the publican obtained more? Because, according to the Apostle, where sin abounded, grace also abounded the more (Rom 5:20). We

know how the publican bears the type of the Gentile people and the paralytic is a figure of the Jewish people, who to this day is held on his bed by an evil sickness, so that unless he is carried by the faith of the Gentiles, offered to Christ by the compassion of the saints, saved by the belief of the Christian people, he cannot reach the house of faith, the house of the fatherland.

And as he reclined in the house, behold, he says, many publicans and sinners came and reclined with him and his disciples (Matt 9:10). But the Pharisees, seeing it, said to his disciples: Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners? (Matt 9:11) God is reproached because he bends down to man: why does he recline beside the sinner, why does he hunger for penance, why does he thirst for the return of sinners, why does he accept the dishes of mercy, why does he take the cup of piety? Brothers, Christ came to the meal, Life came to the banquet, to make those who were to die share his life; the Resurrection lay down at table, that those who lay in the sepulchres might rise; Indulgence reclined, to raise sinners to pardon; divinity came to humanity, that humanity might come to divinity; the judge came to the meal of the accused, that humanity might forestall the sentence of guilt; the physician came to the sick, to restore the weary by eating with them; the good shepherd bent his shoulders, to carry the lost sheep back to the saving folds. But this the Pharisee detests and reproaches, who thinks the Lord's meal a matter not of virtue but of the belly; not of the spirit but

of the flesh; not of divine goodness but of human pleasure; of earthly luxury, not of heavenly grace. So, so does he see himself, who does not see God. Who blames the physician for lying beside those who lie sick, but an enemy of human salvation? who reproaches the shepherd for stooping under the weary flock, but one who knows nothing of love for a flock of gain? who judges the judge for his loving-kindness, but one who is beyond hope? who spurns communion with God, but a sacrilegious man? who shudders at indulgence, but a cruel one?

Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners? And who is a sinner, but one who denies he is a sinner? He is the greater sinner, and, to speak more truly, he is already sin itself, who no longer understands himself to be a sinner. And who is unjust, but one who judges himself just? You have read, Pharisee, that no one living will be justified in your sight (Ps 143:2). As long as we are in a mortal body, frailty too holds sway in us; and even if we overcome sins in act, we cannot overcome the sins of our thoughts, nor flee injustices: and even if we can avoid these in the body, and even if we are able to subdue an evil conscience, how can we abolish the faults of negligence, the sins of ignorance? Pharisee, confess your sin, that you may come to Christ's table, that Christ may be bread to you and the bread itself be broken for the pardon of your sins, that Christ may become a cup to you, he who is poured out for the remission of your offences. Pharisee, dine with sinners, that you may dine with Christ; acknowledge yourself

a sinner, that Christ may dine with you; enter with sinners the banquet of your Lord, that you may be able not to be a sinner; enter the house of mercy with the pardon of Christ, lest with your justice you be shut out of the house of mercy and punished: acknowledge Christ, hear Christ, hear your Lord, hear the heavenly physician refuting your calumnies once and for all.

It is not the healthy who need a physician, but those who are ill (Matt 9:12). If you want a cure, acknowledge your sickness. I did not come to call the just, but sinners (Matt 9:13). If you desire mercy, confess your sin. Go, he says, and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. Christ desires mercy, and not sacrifice; or what sacrifice will he seek, who, to seek you, himself became a sacrifice? I did not come to call the just, but sinners. He did not reject the just; it is because without Christ no one is held innocent on earth. I did not come to call the just, but sinners. In saying so he did not reject the just; it is because he found all to be sinners. Hear the Psalmist. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there is any who understands or seeks God (Ps 14:2). All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one (Ps 14:3). Brothers, let us be, let us be sinners by our confession, that by the pardon of Christ we may not be sinners.

Sermon XXXI.

On the fasting of the Pharisees and of John's disciples

Goodness is the mother of the virtues, malice the origin of the vices; glory accompanies the virtues, confusion clings to the vices as their kin; as the vices are covered by guile, so the virtues are made illustrious by freedom. Hence it is that Christ, the light of the virtues, acted freely, spoke purely, bestowed as God, endured as a parent, rebuked as a lord: but the Jews, a viper's brood, the death of their bearer, the slaying of their begetter, in destroying Christ tore open the womb of their mother the Synagogue. Truly, as it is written, offspring of vipers (Matt 3:7), they bowed their heads, flattered with the tongue, dealt wounds by guile, poured out venom in blasphemies: and as if contempt were not enough for hatred, scorn for injury, so they pursued Christ with ambushes, tried him with tricks, assailed him with questioning, attacked him with insults, and in their eagerness hemmed him in with every pretence. They put before him those to be cured on the sabbath, so that, if he did not cure them, contempt might arise from his inability; if he cured them, calumny might flow from the Law. They asked by what power he did mighty works by his command (Luke 20:2), so that, if he said it was the

Godhead's, they might stir up ill will; if he kept silent, they might bring against him the crime of the magic art. For they said: He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Matt 12:24); and, as was read today, before the disciples they were composing a slur against their master over the banquet of the publicans. Before the master they accused the disciples of knowing nothing of fasting and being given to gluttony; but out of spite they were throwing causes of hatred and seeds of discord to the disciples about the master, to the master about the disciples.

There came, he says, the disciples of John, saying: Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast? (Matt 9:14) And what society have the Pharisees with the disciples of John? only that envy had joined those whom discipline had parted. Here jealousy now loses its own rights: accustomed to divide, it has joined. The Jews could not bear that Moses be placed after the Lord, John's disciples would by no means have Christ preferred to John: so both raged against Christ with a common spite.

Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast? Why? because with you fasting is a matter of the Law, not of the will; fasting regards not the one who fasts, but the one who fasts gladly. And what fruit of fasting is there for you, who fast an unwilling fast? Fasting is the singular plough of holiness: it tills hearts, uproots crimes, plucks out offences, undermines vices, sows charity, nourishes plenty, prepares the harvest of innocence. Christ's disciples, therefore, set

in the whole harvest of holiness, and gathering the sheaves of the virtues, having already the bread of the new fruit, cannot fast the fasts that have grown old. These are boasted of in words, displayed by pallor, advertised by faintness; they please human eyes, not divine ones.

Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast? The Lord answered: Can the sons of the bridegroom fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? (Matt 9:15) What does this mean? John, when he was questioned, thus testified that Christ is the bridegroom: He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears with joy, rejoices at the voice of the bridegroom (John 3:29). Fittingly, then, John answered his disciples with the voice of his master, so that they at least might believe and not force the glad times of the bridegroom to enter upon a sad fast: because he who seeks a bride puts fasts aside, leaves austerities, gives himself wholly to joys, indulges in feasts, goes about all gentle, all lovable, all festive, and does all that the tender affection of a bride requires. Christ, then, who was at that time betrothing the Church, gave himself to tables, did not deny himself to those who feasted with him, made himself human, courteous, gentle with devoted charity, until he should join human things to divine, and make a heavenly fellowship out of an earthly society.

The Lord added, saying: No one puts a patch of rough cloth on an old garment, for it takes away its fullness from the garment, and a worse

rent is made (Matt 9:16). He means the gear of the ancient Law, worn by Jewish pursuits and corrupted senses, torn by sects, made shabby by impure acts. The rough cloth he calls the garment of the Gospel. But hear: the cloth is not a part of a rent, but the beginning of a weaving. For then for the first time the web of the royal garment was being woven from the fleece of Christ, from the fleece which the Lamb gave. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). And the royal garment was being woven which the blood of the Passion would dye into a purple splendour. Rightly, then, Christ forbade this rough cloth to be put on Jewish oldness, lest a worse rent be made, if Christian newness tore Jewish oldness.

And he doubles the example, saying: Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, otherwise they burst the skins, and the wine is spilled, and the skins perish; but they put new wine into new skins, and both are preserved (Matt 9:17). He calls the Jews old skins; the Christians he names new skins: because, as skins of hide are cleansed of all filth and smeared with fragrant spices, so that they may keep the taste of the wine unspoiled, so by fasts human bodies are cleansed of all the filth of carnal offences and become skins fit for the divine winepresses, to receive the new wine from the press of the cross and keep its newness uncorrupted. But as the Christians receive this, so the Jews, unless they become Christians, will not have it: corrupted by vices and grown old in evils, they would so receive the new wine, which

is the word of the Gospel, as to burst and pour it out. It must be acknowledged, then, that by these examples Christ did not refuse to have his disciples fast, but refused to mingle the true fast with a fraudulent fast.

Sermon XXXII.

On the man who had a withered hand

All the works of Christ's signs, astonishing works of power, must be believed to have come about not humanly, nor by chance, but by divine providence, as the word of the Gospel has shown us today. And Jesus entered, he says, the synagogue, and there was a man there who had a withered hand (Mark 3:1). Christ indeed enters the synagogue, but the Jew neither receives him as he enters, nor acknowledges him present, nor, blinded, understands him at work. See how bodily presence is nothing where there is a pitiable separation of mind; just as, on the contrary, bodily absence counts for nothing where hearts are associated through faith.

And there was a man there who had a withered hand. In this man the image of all men is figured, in him the cure of all is carried out, in him the long-awaited health of all is restored. For the man's hand had withered more by the numbness of faith than by the dryness of the sinews, and more by the fault of conscience than by bodily infirmity. Very ancient was this illness, and one that had befallen at the very beginning of the world, nor could it be cured by man's art or kindness; contracted by the just indignation of God,

it had touched forbidden things, presumed upon what was not granted, when it stretched itself out to the tree of knowing good and evil (Gen 3); it needed its author, not one who would apply a poultice, but one who could relax the sentence imposed, and by forgiving undo what he had bound up in his indignation. In this man only a shadow of health is enacted for us; but perfect health is reserved for us in Christ, because the dryness of our hand is dissolved by mercy then, when it is drenched with the blood of the Lord's Passion, when it is stretched out on that life-giving wood of the cross, when it plucks fruitful virtue from pain, when it embraces the whole tree of salvation, when the body is fastened with the nails of the Lord, so that it may never return to the tree of concupiscence and of a withered will.

The Pharisees watched, he says, whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him (Mark 3:2). To the infamy of the judge and the wickedness of the examining judge, a crime is sought out of a cure, an accusation out of loving-kindness, guilt out of power, punishment out of healing. But it is no wonder: good things always offend the wicked, devout things the impious, holy things the profane; or when does the wanton man not accuse discipline, the vicious virtue, the criminal innocence? The priests watched intently on the sabbath, not whether he would sin, but whether he would cure, so that they might accuse him. Lovers of crimes keep vigil, lie in wait to accuse virtues, as though the sabbath had been provided against health and

not for health. Whether he would cure on the sabbath: they watch; with such an interpreter of the Law, I do not say the sick man suffers sorely, but he utterly expires. The sabbath did not impiously deny cure to the sick, but with all loving-kindness from time to time granted rest to mortals weary with excessive labour.

And he said to the man who had the withered hand: Rise into the midst (Mark 3:3), you who profess your own infirmity, who claim the loving-kindness from above, witness of divine power, proof of Jewish disbelief. Rise into the midst, so that those whom so great a power of signs does not prick, whom the works of so great a healing do not bend, may at least be constrained and softened by compassion for so great an infirmity.

Then he says to them: Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or evil; to save a life or to destroy it? (Mark 3:4) In saying this, he commends the goodness of his work and accuses the conscience of the malice they had conceived: for while he longed to make the man whole in body and mind, they in their eagerness to accuse were striving to destroy him; they who even allowed him to cure on the sabbath, lying in wait in their minds whether he would cure, so that, once he had cured, they might be condemned by the malignity of their own sense, and might be more wicked by such forbearance than by malice itself, and more raging in guile than mad in such a judgement.

But they were silent; and looking round at them with anger, grieved at the blindness of their

heart (Mark 3:4–5). He said "looking round", not "looking at"; that is, not merely gazing on the face as a man, but contemplating as God bodies, hearts, minds, senses, things past, present, to come. Looking round at them with anger, grieved. He is angry as lord, he grieves as parent, he feels pain as man, he beholds as God. He says to the man: Stretch out your hand; and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored (Mark 3:5). Stretch out your hand: by a command is loosed the hand that had been bound by a command. Stretch out your hand. The penalty recognised its judge, the work its God, the indulgence betrayed its Maker.

Pray, brothers, that the Synagogue alone may be darkened by such an infirmity; and that there may be no one in the Church whose hand cupidity withers, avarice contracts, rapine weakens, tightfistedness cramps into sickness: but if this very thing should happen, let him hear the Lord and quickly stretch it out in the work of piety, relax it, and hold it out in mercy, in almsgiving. He does not know how to be healed who does not know how to lend at interest to the poor.

Then the Pharisees went out and at once took counsel with the Herodians how they might destroy him (Mark 3:6). The Jew is always joined to the Herodians, to attack Christians. Jesus, he says, withdrew with his disciples to the sea (Mark 3:7). So that by comparison with the waves he might prove and show the error of the Jews to be more crooked. But because Jesus, with the boat serving him, that is, the Church, is set apart from

the confusion of the crowds, and the helmsman of the Christian people sits unwearied at every kind of healing, and has commanded the winds and the sea (Mark 4:39) to be still at last in the obedience of calm, as the prophet says: Let us burst their chains, and cast their yoke from us (Ps 2:3), so that, remaining under the yoke of piety, we may deserve to be partakers of the divine glory.

Sermon XXXIII.

On the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, and on the woman suffering from a flow of blood

You are about to hear today, brothers, and, as the holy Evangelist Mark relates, to learn together with me, how before Christ the rulership of the Synagogue falls down and collapses, and confesses him God and Lord in a twofold way, when it worships at the command of the Law, which says: You shall worship the Lord your God (Deut 6:13), and when it declares him the restorer of life, as it implores the health of a dying daughter. There came to him, he says, one of the rulers of the synagogue named Jairus: and seeing him, he fell at his feet, and besought him much, saying: My daughter is at the point of death; come, lay your hand on her, that she may be saved and live (Mark 5:22–23).

Before the sermon opens the mystery of the Gospel's sense, it is pleasing at this point to set forth a little the sufferings of parents, which they take on and bring forth from their affections and their love for their children. With the household standing round, amid the tender and gentle attentions of kinsfolk, the daughter lies on a soft little bed: the father lies prone on the dry ground and rolls on the earth; she fails in

body, he wastes away in mind and heart; she endures the secret sufferings of her sickness, he, all squalid and mournful, is borne about and tossed among all the people; she dies to rest, he lives to punishment. And indeed we have passed over the anxious prayers of parents when they beget: the perilous stages when they bring forth offspring, when they nurse them, the sad labours and constant torments when they are sick: worse is the day of death when their pledges go before them. Alas! why do children not know such great things? why do they not feel them? why do they not toil to repay their parents in turn? and yet the piety of parents perseveres: because whatever parents spend on their children, God, the parent of all, will repay to the parents.

But let us return to what we set out to do. And there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, named Jairus, and seeing him he fell at his feet, and besought him much, saying: My daughter is at the point of death; come, and lay your hand on her, that she may be saved. That he so laments his daughter's last hours with tearful supplication, that he so asks a remedy for her sickness, proves and shows abundantly a despairing affection; hence it is that he so prescribes the order of the cure: Come, lay your hand on her. The sick do not command how they are to be cured, but only implore that they be cured. But since he was a ruler of the synagogue, he had knowledge of the Law; and while the rest were made by the word, he had read that man was formed by the hand of God. He believed God, then, that by the same

hand by which he knew his daughter had been created she could be re-created and brought back to life. We have learned what it is.

Come, and lay your hand on her. That he who of his own will laid it on to create, may, entreated, lay it on again to restore. This is what the Prophet acknowledges, when he sings in the Psalms: You formed me, and laid your hand upon me (Ps 139:5). For he who laid it on when he formed from nothing, laid it on again, to re-form from what was lost. Indeed, the same Psalmist, as soon as he felt the saving power of this hand and obtained its bounty, broke out in a repeated cry: The right hand of the Lord, he says, has wrought power, the right hand of the Lord has exalted me; the right hand of the Lord has wrought power (Ps 118:16). And to show that he had obtained what the ruler of the synagogue had asked, he added: I shall not die, but live (Ps 118:17). The one, in asking, had said: Come, lay your hand, that she may be saved and live; the other, having already obtained it, exults: I shall not die, but live. The right hand of the Lord is Christ, as we are taught by the prophetic word. And truly he wrought power in vanquishing the devil; in binding the strong man, as he himself said, and plundering the strong man's goods (Matt 12:29); in destroying hell, in putting death itself to death. And truly he has exalted us, whom he lifted out of the depth and raised to heaven.

But now let the sermon pass to the woman, who so sought a remedy for a hidden wound and a shameful sickness, as both to cover her own

modesty and to keep the reverence due to the one who cured her. And he went with him, he says, and a great crowd followed him, and pressed upon him: and behold, a woman who had been in a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered much from many physicians, and had spent all she had, and had gained nothing, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came behind in the crowd and touched his garment, saying: If I touch even his garment, I shall be saved (Mark 5:24–28). And at once the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was cured of the scourge (Mark 5:29).

Not so much are two seas confounded by their waves, as this woman's mind was tossed by a doubtful heap of thoughts. After the desperate struggles of physicians, after costly medicines, after a vain and most ancient cure, when art and skill had now failed the one who treated her, when all the sick woman's substance had now been consumed, the shameful wound ran to meet its very author, not by chance but divinely, so that what could not be cured by human art in so many years might be cured by faith and humility alone. The woman stood far off, she whom nature had suffused with modesty, whom on this account the Jewish Law had branded unclean, saying: She shall be unclean, and shall not touch anything holy (Lev 15:25; 12:4); she was afraid to touch, lest she incur the Jewish fury, lest she incur the sentence of the Law. She did not dare to speak, lest she should confound and burden the hearing of the bystanders, lest she should become a byword

of the peoples, she who for so many years had been the stadium and skamma of sufferings. For the long and continuous pain would not let her bear and endure any longer, and the speed of Christ as he passed cut short the time for deliberating, and on the other hand she knew that health would not be given to one who kept silent, who hid her disease.

Amid these wars of thoughts, the woman found the only way of salvation, to steal her cure, so as to seize in silence what she could not ask, both for her own modesty and for reverence towards the one who would grant it; and that she who did not merit it in body might reach the physician in heart, God by faith, and touch with her hand only his garment: knowing that this fraud, which not will but modest necessity had begotten, would procure not only pardon but also remedy; especially since she was seeking a thief's gain and caused no loss to him from whom it was taken. A devout robbery, committed with faith as its servant, faith drawing it on. Behold where power was sought by contrary means, where fraud, with faith consenting, obtained what it strove for.

The woman approaches among those pressing round, so as not to be known, and presumed that she could steal a cure by faith alone, so as to be hidden in her bearing and her body; she approaches from behind, and judged herself unworthy to look on him. Faith cured in a moment of time what human art could not cure in twelve years. After this example, he drags out long sea-

sons in sicknesses by his own vice, and labours long through his own negligence, who does not know how to be cured by faith alone, but only how to be burdened with the expense of spices. The woman touched his garment and was cured: and she was released from her ancient sickness.

Wretched are we, who daily handle and receive the body of the Lord, and are not cured of our wounds. It is not Christ who is lacking to the sick, but faith: for much more will he, remaining now in us, be able to cure the wounded, who, passing by, so cured the woman who lay hidden. It is enough for today, brothers, to have told of the thefts of faith and the power of the Lord as he passed by: but why the Lord, as though ignorant, asks for her whom he knows to have been cured by the work of his power, we shall tell in the following sermon, because it is long now.

Sermon XXXIV.

On the same

All the Gospel readings, dearest brothers, bestow on us great benefits both for the present and for the future life. But today's reading has both conferred all that belongs to hope and shut out whatever belongs to despair. Hard and lamentable is our condition: an inborn frailty compels us to sin, and the confusion that is kin to sin forbids us to confess; for to do evil is no shame, and to confess is a shame: we fear to say what we do not fear to commit. But today the woman, seeking a silent medicine for a shameful wound, found a silence through which the sinner may come to pardon. The first happiness is not to have come into the foulness of sins, but the second happiness is to have found pardon of sins while the sins lay hidden. This the Prophet had perceived, who said: Blessed are they whose iniquities are remitted, and whose sins are covered (Ps 32:1).

Behold, says the Evangelist, a woman who had suffered a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind and touched the hem of his garment (Matt 9:20). The woman, whom long care had failed, took refuge in sudden faith: she who was ashamed to ask for medicine wished to steal health; she wished to be unknown to him by

whom she believed she could be saved. As the air by the whirlwind, so the woman was troubled by the storms of her thoughts: her plight contended with faith, hope with fear, necessity with modesty; the chill of fear was quenching the heat of cruelty, the force of modesty was darkening the light of faith, modest necessity was breaking the confidence of hope. So the woman was tossed with confused surges like a great sea: she was seeking how to make something hidden out of what was public, a secret out of a crowd; she was striving that health might return to her and modesty not perish; she was taking care that her cure should not redound to the injury of the one who cured; she was providing that health might be restored to her with the reverence due to the Saviour kept safe. With such a sense, then, the woman rightly came from the edge of the hem to the whole summit of the Godhead.

She came up, he says, behind. But where is behind? And touched the hem of his garment. She came up behind. But where? There was no behind: there she found the face she was avoiding. In Christ the body was manifold, but the Godhead was simple; he was all eye, who so saw the suppliant behind him. She came up behind, and touched the hem of his garment. O what did this woman see dwelling in the inner parts of Christ, she who in the hem of Christ saw the whole power of divinity dwelling! O how this woman taught how great is the body of Christ, she who showed that so much is in the hem of Christ!

Let Christians hear, who daily touch the body of Christ, what medicine they can take from that body itself, when a woman snatched complete health from the hem of Christ alone. But what we must weep for: the woman drew medicine from a wound, for us the medicine itself is twisted back into a wound. Hence it is that the Apostle admonishes and laments over those who touch the body of Christ unworthily: For he who touches the body of Christ unworthily takes judgement upon himself (1 Cor 11:29). And that rashness takes weakness from the very source from which faith ought to have received health, he added in turn: For this reason many among you are weak and feeble, and many sleep (1 Cor 11:30). By "those who sleep" he likewise means the dead, whom he mourns as already buried in a living body. Peter and Paul, the princes of the Christian faith, spread the knowledge of the name of Christ through the whole world; a woman first handed down the discipline of approaching Christ; a woman first gave the pattern of how a sinner may blot out sin by silent confession without confusion; how one who offends, known to God alone, may not be compelled to lay bare before men the shame of his conscience concerning his guilt; how man may forestall judgement by pardon.

But Jesus, he says, turning and seeing her, says: Take heart, daughter, your faith has saved you (Matt 9:22). But Jesus turning: not by a movement of the body, but by the gaze of divinity. Christ turned to the woman, that the woman might be turned to Christ, that she might receive

a cure from him from whom she had received life, and might know that the cause of her present wound had been for her the matter of perpetual salvation. Turning and seeing her. He saw her with divine eyes, not human; he saw her to restore her to health, not to recognise her whom he knew; he saw her; he on whom God has looked is endowed with good things and is free of evils. This the whole world feels from use, saying thus of the fortunate: "God has looked on him." God looked, then, on this woman, whom by curing he made so fortunate. And what more? Christ taught by the woman's example how faith alone avails for the whole of salvation.

But let us now speak of the ruler of the Synagogue, who, in leading Christ to his daughter, gave the way by which the woman might come to Christ. So began the beginning of today's reading. Behold, one ruler came up and worshipped him, saying: Lord, my daughter has just died; but come, lay your hand on her, and she will live (Matt 9:18). It did not escape Christ, who foreknew the future, that the meeting with the woman we have spoken of would come about: through which the ruler of the Jews would learn that God is not to be moved by places, not to be led on a journey, not to be drawn by bodily presence, but is to be believed how God is everywhere present, everywhere whole, everywhere always; and how he can do all by command, not by toil; send forth his powers, not carry them; drive away death not by hand but by command; restore life not by art but by precept.

My daughter has just died; but come. That is to say: the warmth of life still remains, traces of the soul are still seen, the spirit is still on its way, the master of the house still has his daughter, Tartarus does not yet know her dead; so, that you may hold back the departing soul, make haste. Foolish man, he thought that Christ could not raise the dead girl unless he held her. Hence it is that Christ, when he came to the house and saw the girl being wept over as though lost, to move faithless minds forward to faith, says that she sleeps, not that she is dead, so that they might believe that one can rise more easily from death than from sleep.

The girl is not dead, he says, but sleeps (Matt 9:24). And truly with God death is sleep: because God raises the dead to life more quickly than a sleeper is roused from sleep by a man, and God pours back life-giving warmth into limbs cold with death before man can pour vigour into bodies buried in sleep. Hear the Apostle: In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead will rise (1 Cor 15:52). The blessed Apostle, because he could not convey in words the swiftness of the resurrection, fitted it to examples. Or how could he compress the speed of speech there, where divine power outstrips speed itself? But how does time appear there, where an eternal thing is given without time! As time brought temporality, so eternity has shut out time.

Sermon XXXV.

On the woman subject to a flow of blood

What it is to touch Christ, the woman set in a flow of blood taught today: who, when she touches the hem of Christ, then knocks at the secret of the divine breast, and by the theft of faith snatched the highest power from the edge of the hem. Happy fraud, which both conferred the gain of salvation and at once removed the losses of modesty. The hearing of the Gospel reading proves this. Behold, he says, a woman who had suffered a flow of blood for twelve years, coming up behind, touched the hem of his garment, saying within herself: If I only touch his garment, I shall be saved (Matt 9:20–21). In grievous sicknesses the force of pain often gives counsel, in desperate cases necessity is often the teacher, suffering itself finds its own medicine. Hence it is that the woman found how to help her shameful wound: to make known by the silence of faith what she could not make known by public outcry, to come by the secret way of the spirit to the heavenly physician, whom she could not reach by the open road of the flesh. The loving-kindness of the healer gave her great boldness, but the necessity of a shameful sickness took away her confidence; the greatness of her pain compelled

her to approach Christ, but the foulness of her ulcer did not let her go to Christ. So the woman, in two minds, and with the counsel of faith trembling, preferred to be judged for her faith rather than thus to perish of a foul wound.

She came up behind, and touched the hem of his garment. Knowing that touch does not pollute God, nor sight offend him, nor smell exasperate him, nor hearing wound him, nor human thought defile him. For if the sun touches dung, and yet is not defiled by the dung, how much more does the Creator of the sun touch all things, and yet cannot be defiled by any contact? And if a physician, when he handles the pus of wounds, when he treats the shameful parts of the limbs, reckons it not an injury but an honour: how much more does God not think it an injury, when, curing, he looks upon our wounds, touches them for remedy, visits them for salvation? What offends the sight of God are the wounds of sins, not of pains; the diseases of crimes, not the sufferings of bodies; the pus of vices, not the flux of the bowels: because a man is held to be willing in his offences, but is held against his will in his sicknesses. Hence it is that the sinner receives punishment, the sick man receives a cure. The woman, then, conscious not of will but of pain, confounded not by crime but by sickness, came up behind, to avoid the eyes of the crowd, not to escape the sight of Christ; she wished to be unknown to the peoples, not to Christ; she longed to be hidden not from God, but from men: because by God

alone could she be seen though hidden, heard though silent, cured though concealed.

She came up and touched the hem of his garment. Because in Christ she believed nothing to be hindmost, judged nothing to be at the edge; because neither is God lessened in man, nor is power diminished in the hem, nor is the heavenly nature varied by the offices of the members. Hence it is that the woman came through the back to the face, through the garment penetrated to the inner parts, and through the hem touched the summit of the head. Nor is this without mystery; hear the Prophet saying: Like the ointment which ran down to the border of his garment (Ps 133:2). You see, brothers, that the whole fullness of the divine chrism, the whole power of the divine head, has passed into the hem of this garment. Knowingly, then, the woman longed to touch the sacred hem of Christ, that from a hidden mystery she might take medicine for her wound.

Brothers, great is this woman, and exceedingly to be admired, who surpassed the doctors of the Law in knowledge, outdid all the Jews in mystery, went before an apostle in faith. For Judaea with its scribes and doctors despised the whole God in a body: the apostle Thomas, to believe Christ God, put in his hands, thrust in his fingers, laid open the wounds; and, to believe Christ, compelled Christ to suffer again (John 20:27).

But what person this woman bears, whose type she presents, whose image she represents, let us search out with spiritual understanding.

Who is she, whom inborn blood, natural infirmity, original sickness, so brought to the causes of death, to a lethal wound, to the straits of a foul sickness? and whom it so befouled with vices, defiled with crimes, wounded with secret wounds, that art could not bear to cure her, nor the eye even to see her, nor decency even to admit her, nor could the Law itself prevail to cleanse her; or rather, whom the Law had ordered to be kept from the temple, barred from sacred things, to abstain from all holy things: and whom it had so declared unclean that whatever she touched was held unclean? This is she, brothers, this is the Church, which, wounded by the sin of the first man, flowed wholly with blood, ran wholly from its origin into death.

Sermon XXXVI.

On the woman with the flow of blood, and the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue

It is the part of a modest debtor to discharge his promises at once, and not to mock the creditor's mind with delays or keep it in suspense with long waiting. Since the narrative of the ruler of the synagogue and of the woman with the flow of blood, linked together and drawn out, departed from the usual brevity of our sermon, we preferred to halve the exposition, lest your hearing be less refreshed than burdened.

The ruler of the synagogue runs to meet the Lord, and falls full length on the ground, states his case, makes known his pain, moves the affection of the giver, bids him hasten and come to the cure; the woman, on the contrary, the Lord meets unsought: passing by, he offered her the occasion of salvation; silent, he recognised the case of the silent woman; he looked upon the hidden wound of one who even concealed it. Between the Lord and the woman so great a commerce of stolen salvation is transacted: and while he, entreated, makes his way at a public petition, the thought of faith penetrates the divine and reaches the secret. Happy woman, who in so great a multitude is alone with Christ, so that she alone is conscious

both of the health restored and of the sublime power! Blessed she, who found such an access, which no one could block! Blessed she, who by such a way burst forth and crept up to her author; who, before she could be confounded by man on account of her wound, was rid of the very foulness of the wound, knowing that with men and through men all access to health was closed to her, men who are wont to shudder at wounds rather than to cure them! God wipes away human wounds, he does not despise them; nor does he shudder at the sicknesses of men, but drives them away; nor does he detest the uncleannesses of the human body, but amends them: because at the touch of his creature God does not know how to be soiled: God cannot be soiled.

But the Evangelist raises a question when he says: And at once Jesus, knowing in himself the power that had gone out from him, turned to the crowd and said: Who touched my garments? (Mark 5:30) When he asks, it is as though he professes ignorance: he feels that power has gone out from him, and does not know to whom it went out? he knows what he had granted, and is ignorant to whom he granted it? he doubts of the person, who is certain of the health bestowed? But it is not by the error of one who does not know, but by the majesty of one who knows and foreknows, that the Lord asks here; nor does he seek what was hidden from him, but shows that the very thing was well known to him, in that by so asking he alone discloses to all, who did not know, what lay hidden. The silent petitioner,

who pleaded with her thoughts alone, and clung behind his back to the counsels of his power, he brings into the midst, not as an ignorant examiner but as a foreknowing inquirer, and makes her stand before his eyes, so that she who had carried off health for herself might carry back faith as well for all; and she who had proved his power might acknowledge his majesty; and that she should not go back unknown, as she thought, she who had given full knowledge of herself.

While she blushes at her wound, while in such a cure she reveres him as God, the woman was suffering no small clouds upon her faith, and in the light of her mind she herself was darkened by the mists of confusion. The voice of the Lord, then, as he inquired, like a saving breath, put the clouds to flight, scattered the mists, lit up her faith, and made her who lay hidden in the darkness of night brighter than the sun itself. Or is she less than the sun, she who shines through the whole world, who gleams and is resplendent in the whole assembly of the Church? if she had gone back thus unseen, by your leave, she would have cheated the physician, not proved him; and she could have ascribed what she had obtained to herself, not to the one who healed her; she who had believed that she had snatched the cure from the hem of the healer, not from his perception: or what had she believed to be his, whose power she had felt in herself, and whom yet in her intention she judged a stranger? She, assuredly, even if before the cure her lying hidden had been from modesty, her judging herself unworthy from

humility, why after the cure did she not come forward of her own accord, to give thanks, to render honour, to give back the glory of so great a work? but after she saw the Lord persist in his inquiry, and, though the disciples excused it and pleaded the pressing of the crowd, perceives that she cannot be hidden, after the fear and trembling of conscience began to accuse her, she came into the midst, to profess openly as physician him whom she had felt in secret, and to worship him as God, and that a medicine might be made of so great a sickness of hers for those present as for those to come, as the Evangelist says: But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done in her, came and, falling down before his feet, told him the whole truth (Mark 5:33).

But since the historical account must always be raised to a higher understanding, and future mysteries are to be known through present figures, what sacrament the ruler of the synagogue, or his daughter, or the woman set in the flow of blood hold under the appearance of these persons must now be laid open in allegorical discourse. The daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, to whom Christ comes, goes, and hastens, and makes his way at a human pace, he who divinely cannot be moved by place, is without doubt the Synagogue, as the Lord says: I was not sent except to the sheep that have perished of the house of Israel (Matt 15:24).

But while Christ is making his way to her, the Church, which, set among all the nations, having lost the good of nature, was losing and pouring

out the blood of the human race; whose sickness human skill, in striving to cure it, was only increasing: for the censure of human frailty and the strictness of worldly discipline both always shed the blood of peoples, and yet could neither abolish enemies, nor restrain the wars of citizens, nor utterly blot out the madness of crimes; she, then, pierced through by such cures, when she saw consumed whatever had been and was of her substance, that is, heart, mind, sense, talent, labour, industry, reason, which we lend to rulers for progress as though to physicians, when she felt the presence of Christ passing by, came up behind, because, polluted with blood, she did not merit to see him. She comes up behind, that is, she follows the hearing of faith, and touches the extremities of Christ as it were the very hem, since she is not honoured in the fathers, not sanctified in the Law, does not boast herself in the prophets, is not honoured in the Lord's very body, since she is held a stranger to that order of Christ's generation. Behind his back, that is, in the last time, she follows Christ, and is consecrated by the hidden mystery of faith, and truly touched the garment which she found in the sepulchre, through which she believed and proclaimed the tokens of the risen Lord. But while Christ is occupied about her with his powers, in the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue the Synagogue fails and dies: so that she too may return to life through faith, she who had died through the Law and had perished through nature.

Meanwhile they come from the house of the ruler of the synagogue and say: Do not trouble the master; the girl is dead (Luke 8:49). And to this day the Jews do not want Christ troubled, whom they desire not to come, and they pronounce death, they who faithlessly have lost the hope of resurrection; but how well this too fits our assertion, that the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue is related to have spent twelve years in life, and this woman is recorded to have persisted twelve years in her wound, since at the last and fulfilled time of each health and life were given back. For this number encloses the time of human life: for, to make a year, it is divided and counted in twelve months: whence the prophet too indicates that Christ came in the acceptable year of the Lord (Isa 61:2); and the Apostle confirms that Christ came in the fullness of time, saying: When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son (Gal 4:4). Pray, brothers, that as the Synagogue has died to itself and to the Law, so that it might live to Christ, so we too may die to sins and to the flesh, that we may be able to live in Christ.

Sermon XXXVII.

On the sign of the prophet Jonah

Brothers, the deeds of the saints are not to be put down to chance but to signs: and what are thought to be their vices are to be referred to mysteries, not to lapses, as the Lord's instruction signified and laid open today, saying: And as the crowds were gathering, Jesus began to say: This generation is an evil one; it seeks a sign, and a sign will not be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah; for as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of man also be to this generation (Luke 11:29–30). Behold, the flight of the prophet is turned into a figure of the Lord himself, and what is celebrated as a deadly shipwreck stands forth as the mystery of the Lord's resurrection. For how Jonah bore and fulfilled in all things the type of the Saviour, the text of the history written about him shows.

Jonah, he says, fled from the face of God (Jonah 1:3). Did not the Lord, to bear before him the face and form of man, flee from the face and form of his own Godhead? As the Apostle says: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal to God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant (Phil 2:6–7). The Lord took up the form of a servant, to be

hidden from the world, to forestall the devil; he puts himself to flight into man. And well is the type of Christ kept in the very words of Jonah. He did not say: "I flee God", but: From the face of God I flee. God, who is everywhere, has nowhere to flee from himself; but Christ, in order to flee the face of the Godhead not as by place but as by appearance, took refuge in the whole countenance of our servitude.

Jonah, he says, went down to Joppa, to flee to Tarshish. Hear him who came down: No one, he says, has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven (John 3:13). The Lord descended from heaven to earth, the Godhead descended to human things, the dominion on high descended to our servitude. And yet he who had gone down to the ship went up into the ship to sail: so Christ, who came down into this world, by powers and wonders went up into the ship of his Church.

But what does the storm stirred up by the winds mean, if not the devil, who, entering the heart of Judas, raised up kings, nations, peoples, soldiery, judges like the sea, and swelled them into waves, so that the waves, rising and falling, might demand their own author for the quiet of the world? Hear the waves of the world, hear the Prophet saying: Why have the nations raged, and the peoples devised vain things? (Ps 2:1) The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together against the Lord, and against his Christ (Ps 2:2). And because the lot that would betray Jonah was not lacking, it fulfils upon Christ the

prophecy of David, which says: And upon my garment they cast the lot (Ps 22:19).

But that Jonah was the author of his own plunging, when he says: Take me up and cast me into the sea (Jonah 1:12), points to the voluntary Passion of the Lord; for why do they allow themselves to be bidden this, who could of their own accord have helped themselves in such a peril? For when the safety of many demands the death of one, death is placed in the choice of the one who perishes, because both his will can hold back the man who is to die from death, and the death of the one in peril can forestall the peril: so here, where the whole of the Lord's work is enacted as a figure, the authority of the one who dies is awaited, so that to die may be not a necessity but a power. Hear the Lord saying: I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again: no one takes it from me (John 10:18). How? Because Christ, though he sent forth his spirit, did not lose it; because it is not seen how he who receives and holds in his hand the souls of all could himself lose his own soul. Hear the Prophet saying: My soul is in your hands always (Ps 119:109). And elsewhere: Into your hands I commend my spirit (Ps 31:6). But what more?

It runs, it rushes to meet him, the beast is there from the deep, to fulfil and to disclose, or rather to conceive and to bring forth, the whole mystery of the Lord's resurrection; the beast is there, the horrid and cruel image of hell is there, which, while it is borne with greedy jaws upon the prophet, felt and tasted the vigour of its own

author, for in devouring it fell into a fast. But trembling, it fits and prepares the abode of its heart as a lodging for the heavenly guest: so that it, which had been the whole cause of the peril, might itself become the unheard-of carrier of a necessary voyage, keeping its passenger safe and after three days bringing him back to the world above; and might give to the Gentiles what it had taken from the Jews, to whom, seeking a sign, the Lord decrees that this sign alone is to be given, through which they might know that the glory which they had hoped for in Christ was to be conferred entire on the Gentiles.

This generation, he says, is an evil one; it seeks a sign, and a sign will not be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of man also be to this generation. Because, as Jewish unbelief surged, Christ was plunged into the deep of hell; and running in a three days' course through all the hidden places of Tartarus, he gave a token both of Jewish cruelty and of his own majesty and of death destroyed, when he rose again.

Rightly, then, the Ninevites will rise in the judgement, and will condemn that generation (Luke 11:32), because they were corrected by the preaching of one prophet, shipwrecked, a stranger, unknown; these, after such great powers, such great wonders, with the whole flash of the resurrection, do not come to faith, are not moved to penance. For they do not believe the very sign of the resurrection, but long to defame it, in that with a price they close the soldiers'

eyes and corrupt their hearts, so that they should keep silent about what they had known, what they had seen; buying a lie, to take away the truth. They turned their own misdeed back upon the disciples of Christ, when they say: Say that his disciples came by night and stole him (Matt 28:13). You are wrong, Jew: it was not the disciples who had carried this off, but the master; and he who seemed slain stole himself away. But I wonder that the Jew seeks Christ, whom he had savagely placed between two thieves: he commits wickedly, guards impiously, seeks more iniquitously still.

Jew, Christ cannot perish, but you have lost him for yourself by your wickedness. She will come, the queen of the South will come into the judgement, and, with him who was thought to have been stolen as judge, she will condemn you: because she came from the end of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and you, most unhappy one, slew the wisdom of God as it came to you (Luke 11:31). The Ninevites were then provided as a figure of the Gentiles who would believe, the queen of the South as a figure of the Church. Blessed are we, brothers, because what went before in type, what was promised in figure, we venerate, behold and possess in its form, in truth.

Sermon XXXVIII.

On bearing injury with an even mind

How great is the greatness of the heavenly philosophy, how great the virtue of the Christian service, the Lord taught today, saying thus: If anyone strikes you on your right cheek, offer him the other as well (Matt 5:39). He thinks this hard who does not know how great are the rewards of patience. Do you think that man can find victory in wounds, who will not gain a crown even by the blow of a palm? Can this man seek glory by death, to whom a human injury seems heavy, when it is borne for divine honour? Man, are not the rudiments of your infancy composed of such precepts? Slaps of the palm are the beatings of little children, not of men. Hence it is that Christ's boyhood is encouraged by light commands, so that the youth of the Gospel may come with its full strength to heavy things; so that it may rejoice to obtain by labours, punishments, death, what in infancy it could not acquire by small injuries.

But that what has been commanded may be shown not to be hard, let the very series of the commands be gone over again. You have heard that it was said to those of old: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say to you, not to resist evil: but if anyone strikes you on your right

cheek, offer him the other as well; and whoever wishes to go to law with you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well; and whoever forces you to go a thousand paces, go with him two more (Matt 5:38–41).

You have heard that it was said to those of old. To which men of old? To the Jews, of course, whom malice more than age had made old, whom the frenzy of vengeance held so greedy that for an eye they demanded a head, for a tooth a life. Hence it is that the Law curbed them to a like return in vengeance, so that those who could not savour the pardon of a fault might at least savour a measure in revenge, and exact only as much vengeance as the force of the raging man had inflicted in injury. But this was for those of old; let us hear what divine goodness commands us, who have been made new through grace.

But I say to you. To whom? To Christians, of course. Not to resist evil. In saying this, he wants us not to repay vices with vices, but to overcome them with virtues, and to quench anger while it is still in sparks; for if it reaches the full blaze of fury, it is not stilled without blood. Anger is overcome by gentleness, fury is quenched by meekness, malice is soothed by goodness, cruelty is laid low by piety, impatience is punished by patience, contention is overcome by caresses, humility lays pride low. Therefore, brothers, whoever wishes to overcome vices, let him hold the arms of piety, not of fury.

And although it may be clear to the wise what it means that Christian beginnings are trained by

injuries, yet, because they do not indeed understand that this belongs to virtue, that this is the summit of goodness, this the height of piety, that this belongs to a divine philosophy, not a human one: not to resist evil, but to overcome evil with good, to bless the one who curses, not to deny the one who strikes the licence of striking again, to let the one who takes the tunic have the cloak, and to make the robber's booty a largess, to add one's own service for another two thousand to the one who forces a thousand paces; so that will may overcome necessity, piety impiety; and that the virtue of the one who suffers may so overcome what the force of the compeller commands: therefore, although these things teach how the soldier of Christ is strengthened for virtue by injuries, yet, that it may be plainer, let us inquire more deeply for what cause the precepts have been given. Brothers, when the disease of sins, the wickedness of vices, the frenzy of impiety had poured itself into human minds, and extinguished whatever there was of knowledge, sense and reason, with insane fury it made the nations spread through the world flee God, follow demons, worship creatures, despise the Creator, desire vices, shudder at virtues, be driven on by swords, rush upon wounds, perish alive by deaths. Hence men could not be healed otherwise unless heavenly physicians, armed with all piety and patience, strove, who would so endure the injuries of the frenzy of the sick, bear their curses, sustain their blows, be torn with wounds, until they brought them back to sobriety of sense,

to sincerity of spirit, to soundness of mind; and so made them seek God, flee demons, feel their sicknesses, savour health, cast off vices, take on virtues, avoid wounds, shudder at blood, refuse death, desire life.

And if you wish what we have said to become more fully known, let us speak of examples from the physicians of the flesh. Is it not so that whenever the fire of bile has inflamed a wretched man, and, with the fever reigning, has made the sick man insane, his sense is disturbed, his mind perishes, savagery comes on, humanity departs, and, to say no more, while the man is dying the frenzy lives? Hence it is that he gnashes his teeth, mangles his parents, tears at his neighbours, strikes with his fist, bites, and assails those who wait on him. Then the physician, for the praise of his skill, for the glory of his art, for the increase of his fame, arms himself with patience: he takes on endurance, disregards injuries, bears bites, endures labours, and suffers no light torments, to free the sufferer from torment; he soothes with oil, keeps at his cares, dispenses medicine, sure that the sick man will repay his services with a reward of honour once he has recovered health.

I ask, what greater frenzy, what heavier force of fury, what madness can equal striking the cheek of a holy man? beating the face of a meek brother? suffusing the grace of a calm countenance with a sad bruise? stripping a man of the only garment that covers him? and for a vile booty leaving nothing to God, nothing to man, nothing to nature, nothing to shame? forcing a

man busy with his own affairs into service? and counting another's torment one's own comfort? Therefore, brothers, if we know that those who commit such things labour under a most grievous frenzy, let us obey Christ, and bear with all the strength of piety the bites, blows and burdens of our raging brothers, so that we may both free our brothers from torment and ourselves attain the eternal reward of patience.

Nor let the servant disdain to receive from his fellow servants what the Lord deigned to receive from servants and for servants: he did not refuse his face to the slaps, to the one who took his tunic he gave up both his cloak and his body; the one who forced him into labour he followed, grateful and willing, to death. Therefore, brothers, if the Lord thought it worthy to suffer, how, how does it seem unworthy for the servant to suffer? We err, we err, brothers; he who does not do what the Lord commanded hopes in vain for what the Lord promised.

Sermon XXXIX.

On perseverance in prayer

Divine things are always sufficient to themselves of themselves, but they are often made known to men by human examples for this reason, that heavenly providence attends not to what it could say itself, but to what the hearer could take in. So a spring at first breaks out through the slender channels of the veins, and creeps little by little in narrow rivulets, until by fitting increase it bursts out into the whole breadth of rivers, and pours itself out mightily. And, to speak to you of ourselves: when a little child is born, nature at once prepares a nourishment born with it, turns food into drink, and by a long infusion of milk fits the throat, still numb, and the sluggish passages of the inner parts for the use of more solid food. So the Lord raises us up by homely examples to grasp divine things, and instructs us, saying: Which of you will have a friend, and will go to him at midnight, and say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and he answers from within: Do not trouble me, for the door is already shut, and my servants are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you? (Luke 11:5–7) I tell you,

though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs (Luke 11:8).

O how he wishes to give, who lets himself be so disturbed, so roused! O how he wishes that to seem a matter of his necessity which is a matter of his power! O how he longed to run to meet the one who knocked, he who placed the very bed of his privacy thus at the door! O how unwilling he was to refuse, who showed even the one he was refusing how it might be wrung from him! O how the Lord was not only at the door, but the Lord was the door itself! I am, he says, the door (John 10:9), I who, while the servants slept, alone and first heard the necessity of the one knocking. O how loving, how merciful he is, who proves and shapes by examples what he teaches by commands! When you give alms, he says, do not sound a trumpet (Matt 6:2). And again: Let your left hand not know what your right hand is doing (Matt 6:3).

Which of you will have a friend, and will go to him at midnight? It is little that the night veiled the one doing mercy, that the importunity of the asker covered the largess of the giver, unless sleep too were added to heap up the veiling of his loving-kindness. In this act of humanity he sets forth a twofold kind of necessity, of the one asking and of the one sleeping, so that the guest compels the one to ask, sleep compels the other to give: inasmuch as he says that he will give to him in time for this reason, that he may seem

not to run to meet his friend, but to run back to sleep; and that he may rather be allowed to sleep than be pleased to give to one asking so. What more? behold, sleep more than sound proved that knocker's advocate.

Nor do I think it idle that he so discloses, so designates the hour of asking, saying: Which of you has a friend, and will go to him at midnight? As if at the first and second and third hour of the night too, when gentle slumber first pours itself into the bodies of sleepers and glides sweetly and wholly into the inner parts tired by the day's labour, the importunity of a disturber were not troublesome and harsh. But this time shows the devoted and constant judgement of one who keeps vigil through the night; this is the time at which the mind, burning, but towards divine things, between labours past and labours to come, grants nothing to the body, nothing to rest: but before it finishes the works of the day that is over, it already begins and anticipates those of the day to come. This hour is well able to obtain what is asked. Knowing this, the Prophet declares that this very time was the time of his supplication, singing: At midnight I rose to confess to you (Ps 119:62). At this hour that heavenly bridegroom always comes to meet those who watch, he who says: At midnight a cry was raised: Behold, the bridegroom is coming (Matt 25:6).

He could not fail to obtain what he wanted, who, to receive a guest, to refresh a guest, denied himself all rest. Or how could he not answer one so asking, so knocking, he who confesses that he

himself is received in the guest, when he says: I was a guest, and you took me in (Matt 25:35)? I think that the one knocking said this, or perhaps pleaded otherwise: "I did what you commanded; give what you promised; I believed you when you said: Do not be anxious about tomorrow (Matt 6:34). That is why it left me nothing to set before yesterday's guest: if I am a trouble to you who have plenty, how much more of a trouble was he to me who have nothing? And yet I could not excuse myself to him, because I strove to obey you. Here the shame of the one who commands is now more at stake than that of the one who has nothing. The guest is in the house, and you sleep; or rather, you sleep, you who do not sleep. I took in the guest: if you do not give bread, it is you who have denied bread to the guest." Rightly, to one so knocking, so asking, that lender of the Gospel gave as many loaves as he needed.

What do those do who place themselves not in bed but in the sepulchre itself? who give themselves up not to sleep but to death? whom the cock does not warn, the morning star does not rouse, the sun itself does not call back and bring forth to the light? These have lost both the time for supplication, and the reward of the guest, and the very works of the day. We are saddened, brothers, when we stand at daybreak before the Lord and do not see our children with us. He in whose house a guest had come knocked thus in the middle of the night. I ask, why do you not keep watch at least at daybreak, you who have a guest in your house? what he gave to grace, give

at least to sloth; what he spent on humanity, spend at least on necessity, you who love sleep more than yourself.

Surely, that you who sleep for death may be able to keep watch for life, listen to what follows: And I say, he says, ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Luke 11:9). For everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it will be opened (Luke 11:10). But you say: "Granted that I can ask, how shall I be able to knock at the heavenly secret?" How? By repeating prayers, and awaiting the judgement of the bestower, enduring most patiently the delays of the giver; because whoever, having knocked once, is at once indignant if he has not been heard, is not a suppliant petitioner but an imperious exactor. Hear the Prophet saying: Wait for the Lord, act manfully, and let your heart be strengthened (Ps 27:14). And if he puts it off again into the future, wait patiently for your Lord. But if you wish to know where you ought to seek: there are riches in the bosom of the poor, and the kingdom of heaven is within you. Within you is the kingdom of heaven, says the Lord (Luke 17:21).

But who is the friend who sleeps, and who the friend who comes from a journey, and who are the servants who sleep, and who is he who knocks, and why under a fixed number he asks only three loaves, when I have asked, sought, knocked, and, a wakeful disturber, have merited to receive, I will not deny to you, the friends of my Lord. But you say to me: "Behold, the friend of

your Lord has come to you." He is accustomed to give, not to receive; indeed, these provisions the eager shepherd has filled up from the abundance of his own store for the journey, so as to taste of the meanest preparation of our poverty; nor did he, the richest of guests, allow me at dead of night to seek elsewhere for him what he himself had. Nor is it any wonder, brothers; the rich man always wants to give when he turns aside to the poor. This man ever stays at the door of that friend of the Gospel; in this man's chamber that giver of the Gospel remains with his servants, in whose heart the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit always make and set their dwelling. What more? He is a father: from him to ask, in him to seek, through him to knock, I have trusted; and therefore I, no careless promiser, have declared that I will give to you.

Sermon XL.

On the good shepherd

When the season of the spring air has begun to open the yearly births of the sheep, when it has begun to scatter the abundant young of the fruitful flock over fields, meadows and roads, the good shepherd sets aside even his songs, and, running anxiously to and fro, seeks, picks up and gathers the tender young, and lays them, a glad carrier, on his neck, his shoulders, his arms, so as to bring them all safe and lead them secure to the folds. So we, brothers, when in the smiling spring of Lent we see the Church's flock pour forth rich births, set aside the songs of our exposition and the feasts of our customary sermon, and, anxious, spend all our care with the heaviest labour in gathering and carrying in the heavenly offspring. But since we see the lambs restored to the flock, and all of them now within Christ's folds, we are called back, most joyful, to the divine songs, setting before you with all exultation the life-giving supplies of the Lord's food: so that those whom we have felt to be our companions in labour we may have as partakers in joy. And since this preface of ours has made and brought in mention of the good shepherd, of him who alone is good, alone shepherd, alone

the shepherd of shepherds, let the whole intent of our sermon and exposition be filled with him and kept on him.

The good shepherd, he says, lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). The force of love makes him brave, because true love counts nothing hard, nothing bitter, nothing heavy, nothing deadly. What sword? what wounds? what punishment? what deaths can prevail to separate perfect love? Love is an impenetrable breastplate: it spurns darts, strikes swords aside, mocks dangers, laughs at death; if it is love, it conquers all.

But let us ask whether this death of the shepherd is to the sheep's advantage, a death that leaves the sheep destitute, that hands the unarmed flock to the wolves, that so abandons the dear flock to the bites of wild beasts, gives it up to plunder and exposes it to death, as is proved from the death of Christ the shepherd himself. For from the time he himself laid down his life for his sheep and allowed himself to be killed by the fury of the Jews, his sheep are plundered by the onslaught of the Gentiles as of robbers; destined for slaughter, they are shut up in prisons as in robbers' dens; they are torn without ceasing by persecutors as by raging wolves; they are mangled with rabid tooth by heretics as by strange dogs. This the slain choir of the apostles proves, this the blood of the martyrs spilt over the whole world cries aloud, this the limbs of Christians given to beasts, consumed by fires, sunk in rivers, plainly show: all of which, surely, as the shepherd's death brought it on, so his life could

have prevented it. So for your sake a shepherd proves his love by death, because, when he sees danger hanging over the sheep, when he cannot defend the flock, he prefers to die rather than see any harm come to his sheep. But what are we to make of it, since Life could not die unless it had willed? who could have taken life from the giver of life against his will? as he himself says: I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again; no one takes it from me (John 10:18). So he willed to die who, though he could not die, allowed himself to be killed.

Let us ask, then, what force this love has, what reason, what is the cause of this death, what the profit of this passion. And plainly the force is sure, the reason true, the cause shining, the profit of so much blood wide open: for from the one death of the shepherd a singular power shone out; the shepherd went to meet, for the sheep, the death that hung over the sheep; so that by a new order he might, captured, capture the devil, the author of death, conquered, conquer him, slain, punish him, and by dying open to the sheep the way of conquering death. For the devil too, in aiming at man, leapt out against God; in raging against the accused, he runs into the judge; he finds punishment in inflicting penalty; he himself receives sentence in passing it; and death, living by feeding on mortals, dies in devouring life; death, swallowing the guilty, is swallowed in gulping down the author of innocence; and death itself perishes, which destroyed all, in seeking to destroy the salvation of all. In this way, then, the

shepherd went before the sheep, the shepherd did not withdraw from the sheep; nor did he give them to the wolves, but he handed the wolves over to them, granting them so to choose their own robbers that, slain, they should live, mangled, rise again, dyed in their own blood, shine in royal purple, gleam in a snowy fleece. So the good shepherd, when he laid down his life for the sheep, did not lose it; and he held the sheep in this way, he did not leave them; nor did he in this way abandon the sheep, but invited them, and through mortal fields, by the road of death, called them and led them to life-giving pastures.

But someone says: "When will these things be? Look: meanwhile the sheep, that is, the apostles, prophets, martyrs and confessors, lie buried: torn apart, they are scattered over the whole world; wrapped in blood, they are shut up in gloomy sepulchres." And who doubts that the slain martyrs rise again, live and reign, when Christ, slain, has risen again for them, lives and reigns? Hear the voice of this shepherd: My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me (John 10:27). Those who followed him to death must follow him to life; those who went with him to dishonour must go with him to honour; and those who were partakers of the passion must be partakers of the glory. Where I am, he says, there will my servant be also (John 12:26). Where? Surely above the heavens, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Man, do not let faith trouble you, nor a hope too long weary you: for what is kept for you in the

very author of things is a sure thing for you. You have died, he says, and your life is hidden with Christ in God; but when Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory (Col 3:3–4). The toiling reaper will see in the harvest what he does not see in the seed, and he who weeps in the furrow will rejoice in the fruit.

Sermon XLI.

On fasting and almsgiving

We read that a great many overcame the wars of the nations who yet, we read, did not win the battles of the flesh; and we have heard that those gave their breasts to offences who did not give their backs to enemies. Alas! That the conquerors of nations were the captives of vices; that the lords of peoples served crimes in shameful servitude; that they stood firm among raging swords, and fell among enervating allurements; that they were a terror to kingdoms, a plaything to sins; that fasting they crushed the opposing battle lines, and gorged they broke up the camps of their own virtues; that they lay low in spilt wine who did not know how to lie low in spilt blood! Whence is this? whence? Because this is not reason, but sickness; not life, but fever; frenzy, not nature. For as often as undigested food casts down the vital organs, weakens the stomach, corrupts the blood, vitiates the humours, kindles the bile and begets the utmost blaze of fever, so often the sick man loses his mind, lets go his senses, is carried off by his desires, is driven by what is contrary, spurns what is healthful, seeks what is harmful, flees the cure. Then the physicians busy themselves to come to his aid with the

remedy of abstinence, so that he may be healed, so that abstinence may heal what voracity had wounded. And if for a temporal cure the sick obey their physicians and keep a hard sparingness, why should it be hard, for eternal salvation, to obey Christ by moderate fasts, to govern the body by measure, to rule the mind by sparingness, to bridle the senses with sobriety? As the clouds of the earth darken the sky, so intemperate banquets obscure souls; as whirlwinds confound the elements, so heaped-up dishes upset the stomach; as the waves a ship, so drunkenness sinks the body, sends the man to the deep, takes away the gains of life, makes him undergo the shipwreck of death.

It is a fever, then, it is a fever which the blessed Apostle thus laments as panting in the human vitals: I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh (Rom 7:18): if not good, then surely evil. What evil? Frailty, surely, which, while it creeps in the flesh, boils in the veins, enters the bones, lodges in the marrow, seethes in the blood, thus breaks out into the frenzy of vices. Frailty is the fever of nature, the mother of sicknesses, the bearer of passions; it is frailty that lays such necessities upon us: and where there is necessity, not will; where captivity arises from the condition, no judgement on power holds. It is frailty through which man goes, not where will invites, but where necessity leads. Hear the Apostle saying: It is not what I will that I do (Rom 7:15). Frailty, in providing man with what is necessary, makes him come to what is not necessary;

in providing food, it leads on to surfeit; it urges drunkenness in serving drink; it offers sleep so as to hand over sloth; it cares for the burdens of the belly so as to take away the care of salvation; it gives everything to the flesh so as to leave nothing to the soul: it makes the body a parade of passions; it makes man his own death and the life of vices. Hence, if a man feels himself sick in this way, let him hand himself over to the heavenly physician, rest securely in his counsels, refrain from foods, keep measure in drink, so that in this way he may overcome the sickness of frailty, flee the frailty of the passions, avoid the fever and the frenzy of vices.

Abstinence is man's first medicine; but for a full cure it requires the outlay of mercy. Abstinence quenches the fever, but limbs dried out by the blaze of a long fever cannot return to full health unless they are anointed with abundant ointment, unless they are moistened with the gentlest poultices, unless they are helped by the outlay of medicine: so fasting, though it shuts out the diseases of vices, cuts off the passions of the flesh, drives away the causes of crimes, yet without the ointment of mercy, without the stream of piety, without the outlay of almsgiving, does not restore perfect health to minds. Fasting heals the wounds of sins, but without mercy it does not cleanse the scars of the wounds. Hear the Lord saying: Give alms, and behold, all things are clean for you (Luke 11:41). Fasting, with a singular tillage, plucks out vices, roots out crimes, prepares the field both of the mind and of the

body for good fruits: but unless it has laid the foundations of mercy, the zeal of the one who fasts is decay. Fasting is the victim of holiness, the sacrifice of chastity; but without the incense of mercy it cannot rise to the divine sight in an odour of sweetness. What the soul is to the body, mercy, it is clear, is to fasting: when fasting lives by mercy, then it gives life to the one who fasts.

Fasting, the ship of the virtues, carries the profit of life, brings home the gain of salvation. But he who enters the sea of the flesh, cleaves the waves of vices, passes between the rocks of crimes, sails past the shores of the passions, unless he quickly enters the harbour of piety, cannot exercise the virtues, cannot have the gain of the virtues. He who knows that he stands on the slippery ground of this life, who understands that he passes along the road of the flesh by way of falling, who feels that he lies open to the assaults of ignorance and the mishaps of negligence, let him so keep the fast as not to leave mercy behind. Fasting opens heaven to us, fasting brings us in to God; but unless mercy, the patroness of our causes, stands by us then, we who cannot stand firm on our innocence will not be secure of pardon, as the Lord says: Judgement without mercy to him who has not shown mercy (Jas 2:13).

A day is welcome, but a clear one is more welcome: our fast, then, will be the brighter for it, if the splendour of mercy gives us clear days of Lent. God cries out: I desire mercy (Hos 6:6). Man, give God what he wants, if you want to be given by God what you want. I desire mercy is the voice

of God; God asks mercy of us, and if we give it, what is he going to say? What was read today: I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink (Matt 25:35). And what then? Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the origin of the world (Matt 25:34). He who gives bread to the hungry will give himself a kingdom; he who refuses a cup of water to the thirsty will refuse himself the fountain of life. For love of the poor God sells his kingdom: and so that every man may be able to buy it, he sets a fragment of bread as its price, because he wants to have all, he who asks as much in price as he knows a man to have. God sells his kingdom for a fragment of bread; who will be able to excuse the man who does not buy, when so great a cheapness of the sale accuses him?

Brothers, let our midday meal be the poor man's supper, so that Christ's table may be made ready for our meal, as he himself promises when he says: You shall eat at my table in my kingdom (Luke 22:30). Brothers, let our fasts be the delights of the poor, so that our temporal fast may be changed for us into eternal delights. Man, by giving to the poor man you give to yourself; for what you have not given to the poor man, another will have. You will have only that which you have given to the poor man.

Sermon XLII.

On the same

The goods of fasting, brothers, we touched on, as far as we could, in the preceding sermon; and that prayer is akin to fasting we made plain in the very conclusion of the sermon. But since fasting without mercy fails, fasting without piety fasts, prayer without tender mercy grows weak, prayer without generosity grows weary, let us restore our fasting by the showing of mercy, let us raise up our prayer by the hearing of piety, let us bring mercy to fasting as its patroness: for fasting without mercy is the hunger of avarice, fasting without piety is the punishment of cupidity; it is vengeance, not devotion, to fast not for God but for one's purse; to wear oneself down with abstinence and be swollen with a dropsical cupidity; to unburden the belly of food and weigh the mind down with the weight of money. He reduces himself to a purse who does not know how to dispense money, but only to shut it up: such a man is the keeper of what belongs to others, not the master of his own; because he prepares for another, denies to himself, since the merciful man pays out what the miser held down.

The man who fasts without tender mercy is a field tilled without seed. A tilled field is free

of thorns, escapes weeds, avoids all that belongs to neglect, all that belongs to squalor. But as without seed it becomes barren, by its very tilling gives no fruit, gives labour, and cannot come to a good crop; so the man who fasts tills his soul afresh, purges his senses, cleanses his heart, cuts off vices, roots out crimes, gives cultivation to the mind, gives comeliness to the body; without mercy he does not come to the fruit of life, does not go on to the reward of salvation. What a royal hall is without a king, that is fasting without generosity. The king's hall gleams with gold, shines with marble, is resplendent with paintings, grows great in its spaces, rises in its roof, is made lovely with greenery, is awe-inspiring in its very seclusion: but without the king it has no honour, it lacks glory, it is an empty solitude, a shut-up wilderness, a dreadful solitude. So fasting shines with innocence, beams with chastity, gleams in its conduct, is adorned with good habits, sparkles in its bearing, is magnified with the whole adornment of holiness; but without mercy it has no glory, lacks reward, does not hold the palm, loses the confidence to supplicate, does not grasp the merit of obtaining, as Scripture attests, which says: He who shuts his ear so as not to hear the weak, he too will cry out, and there will be no one to hear him (Prov 21:13).

How will he ask for mercy who has refused it? Judgement, he says, without mercy will be done to him who has not shown mercy (Jas 2:13). He who does not give mercy to another takes it away from himself. He who scatters to the poor man

will have mercy for himself. He has scattered, he says, he has given to the poor; his justice remains for ever and ever (Ps 112:9). He who sows mercy for the needy will reap it for himself. Those who sow, he says, in tears will reap in joy (Ps 126:5). Rain does not soak the earth as the tears of the poor water fasting. Man, cast the seeds of your fasting into the tears of the poor, because the virtues of fasting dry up, and the harvests of those who fast wither, if they have not been watered by the weeping of the poor. The rain of heaven soaks the earth, the tears of the poor man water heaven; so heaven thirsts, and waits for the weeping of the poor in place of dew, because mercy ploughs the fields of heaven, piety draws furrows through the heights above, there mercy sows; for what the poor man's hand has received, it reaps there; there he gathers the crop who has entrusted his seed to the poor man to be sown here. Blessed is he for whom, as he sows thus, eternal granaries are made ready for unending life. The blessed Apostle was describing this sower when he said: But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and he who sows in blessings will also reap of blessings: each one as he has purposed in his heart, not out of sadness or out of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:6–7).

Great are the works of the Lord, but the greatness of mercy surpasses greatness: for when the Prophet had said: Great are the works of the Lord (Ps 111:2), he added elsewhere: His mercies are above all his works (Ps 145:9). Mercy, brothers,

fills heaven, fills the earth. Lord, he says, your mercy is in heaven (Ps 36:6). And the same: The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord (Ps 33:5). And indeed, brothers, all that God had made would have perished, had mercy not come to its aid. Fault and vengeance were carrying off whatever had come into this world; because frailty was always tending towards a fall, and the strictness of the one who judges was always driven to punishment. So an angel is cast down from heaven (Isa 14:12); so man is exiled from paradise (Gen 3:23); so the world is blotted out by the flood (Gen 7); so the nations are confounded in their tongues (Gen 11:7–9), are given to the sword (Gen 14); so cities are burnt up by divine fire (Gen 19:24); so the people led out of Egypt was hidden away in the desert (Exod 19); so the gaping earth swallows a people (Num 16:32); and, not to say much, so the Roman army, avenger of Christ's blood, destroyed Judaea (Matt 24).

This is Christ's great, generous, sole mercy, which has kept all judgement for one day, and has assigned to man the whole of time as a truce for penance; so that what infancy takes on of vices, youth seizes, manhood invades, old age at least may correct; and that he may repent of sin at least then, when he feels that he can no longer sin; and may abandon guilt at least then, when guilt has already left him; may make a virtue of necessity, may die innocent who has lived wholly in crime. Hence it is that the Prophet runs wholly to mercy, because he had no confidence in his own justice: Have mercy on me, he says, O God, according

to your great mercy (Ps 51:3). And why great? Because your mercy, he says, is great upon me; and you have rescued my soul from the lower hell (Ps 86:13). And if God gives back through mercy what had perished through judgement, man, what did you think would stand, what would hold firm for you without mercy? So it is proved to you that not fasting alone but all the virtues totter without mercy.

Ardent humanity, spent on God, makes Abraham the chief of the heavenly banquet (Gen 18): for because he received two with God at an earthly table, he received the people of the East and the West at the heavenly table. They will come, he says, from the East and the West, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 8:11). Lot, because he received angels in hospitality, forestalled the judgement (Gen 19). Hence he overcame Gehenna in the flesh; the divine fire does not know how to burn up the merciful man. So he shows mercy who wishes not to fear the fire of Gehenna.

Indeed, when Christ comes, he discusses mercy before he judges guilt. When he has sat, he says, upon the throne of his glory, he will say: I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat (Matt 25:31, 42). He did not say: "You killed, you committed theft"; but: I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat. He will not have to answer a cause of crime whose cause of mercy stands proven. Why? Because: Give alms, and behold, all things are clean for you (Luke 11:41). He will

not be judged for his fault to whom the judge offers praise for his generosity; he does not exact vengeance who acknowledges a debt of humanity. I was hungry, he says, and you did not give me to eat. God eats in heaven the bread that the poor man has received on earth. As long as you did it to one of these least, you did it to me (Matt 25:40). Give, then, bread, give drink, give clothing, give a roof, if you want to have God as debtor, not as judge; nothing will harm us on earth if mercy is our patroness in heaven.

Sermon XLIII.

On prayer, fasting and almsgiving

To the people one must speak in the people's way; the congregation must be addressed in common speech; what is necessary for all must be said in the manner of all; natural language is dear to the simple, sweet to the learned: let the teacher speak what will profit all; so today let the learned pardon an unlearned word. There are three things, three, brothers, by which faith stands, devotion holds firm, virtue remains. Prayer, fasting, mercy. What prayer knocks for, fasting obtains, mercy receives. Prayer, mercy, fasting: these three are one, these give life to one another. For fasting is the soul of prayer; mercy is the life of fasting. Let no one tear these apart: they do not know how to be separated. Whoever has only one of these, or does not have them together, has nothing. So let him who prays fast; let him who fasts show mercy; let him hear the one who asks, who in asking wishes to be heard; he opens God's hearing to himself who does not close his own hearing to the suppliant. Let the faster understand fasting; let him feel for the hungry man who wants God to feel that he is hungry; let him show mercy who hopes for mercy; let him who seeks piety practise it; let him who wants to grant

to himself, grant. He is a shameless petitioner who asks for himself what he denies to another. Man, be yourself the pattern of mercy for yourself: in the way you want, as much as you want, as quickly as you want mercy to be shown to you, so quickly, so much, in such a way show mercy to others yourself. So let prayer, mercy, fasting be one patronage for us before God, let these be one advocacy for us, let these be for us one threefold prayer.

These, brothers, these are what hold the citadel of heaven, what knock at the secret chamber of God the judge, what plead the causes of the human race before the tribunal of Christ, what ask indulgence for the unjust, what merit pardon for the accused. He whom these do not stand by in heaven does not stand firm on earth; these, since they hold rule in heaven, govern the sum of things on earth; these direct prosperity, these drive back adversity; these quench vices, these kindle virtues; these make bodies chaste, hearts pure; these give peace to the limbs, rest to the minds; these make the human senses a school of discipline; through these human breasts rise up into a temple of God; these make man an angel, these bring to man the honour of the Godhead. Hence it is that by their support Moses becomes God (Exod 7:1), and commands all the elements for himself to military triumphs: he bids the sea part, the waves harden, the depths dry up (Exod 14), the sky rain; he gives grain, he compels the winds to scatter meat (Exod 16); he lights up the night with the brightness of the sun, he tempers

the sun with the veil of a cloud (Exod 13); he strikes the rock, to give cold streams to the thirsty from its fresh wound (Num 20); he is the first to give the earth the law of heaven, he writes the norm of life, he fixes the bounds of discipline (Exod 24; 34). Through these Elijah does not know death, leaves the earth, enters the heavens, dwells with angels, lives with God (2 Kgs 2:11): and an earthly guest possesses the mansions above. Through these John becomes an angel in the flesh, heavenly on earth, and by hearing, sight and touch he alone grasps, holds and embraces the whole Trinity. And we, brothers, if we wish to be joined to the glory of Moses, the life of Elijah, the virtues of John, the merits of all the saints, let us persevere in prayer, give ourselves to fasting, serve mercy. He who has lived in these, who has been fortified by them, will not fear, a Christian armour-bearer, a warrior of the Lord, the darts of sin, the weapons of the devil, the engines of the world, the wedges of vices, the evils of the flesh, the snares of pleasures, the arms of death.

But we who rise to uncertainties, who spend the day among ambushes, who endure the changes of the hours, the shifts of the moments, the slips of words, the perils of acts, why is it that we will not enter the church in the morning? Why is it that we will not ask, by morning prayer, for the safekeeping of the whole day? why is it that we are glad to stand by a man the whole time, and are not glad to attend on God for a moment? It is not our doing, brothers, it is not our doing; this stealth is the enemy's: he prepares to deceive

those whom he does not allow to be fortified by prayers. Why does he complain of adversity who does not pray for prosperity for himself? Let us hear the voice of God admonishing: Pray, that you may not enter into temptation (Matt 26:41). He goes into temptation who does not go to prayer. Knowing this, the Prophet sang: Come, let us worship, and fall down before him, and weep before the Lord who made us (Ps 95:6). Do you think that he deigns to shed tears before God who does not deign to utter words? Let us rise early, let us pray, at least from human fear, if not from divine love; if not invited by good things, at least compelled by evils. It is contempt of God that makes the times bad for us; the course of the times does not.

What we have lost by contempt, then, let us regain by fasts: let us sacrifice our souls by fasts, because there is nothing more excellent that we can offer to God, as the Prophet proves when he says: A sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit; a contrite and humbled heart God does not despise (Ps 51:19). Man, offer God your soul, and offer the oblation of fasting, so that it may be a pure victim, a holy sacrifice, a living sacrificial victim, which both remains yours and has been given to God. He who has not given this to God will not be excused, because one who is to give himself cannot be without it.

But that these may be accepted, let mercy follow; fasting does not sprout if it is not watered by mercy; fasting dries up with the drought of mercy: what rain is to the earth, that mercy is

to fasting. Though the faster cultivate his heart, cleanse his flesh, root out vices, sow virtues, if he has not given streams of mercy, he gathers no fruit. Faster, your field fasts when mercy fasts; faster, what you have poured out in mercy overflows for you in the barn. Man, then, so as not to lose by keeping, gather by dispensing; man, by giving to the poor, give to yourself: for what you have left to another you will not have.

Sermon XLIV.

On the counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners and the chair of pestilence, on Psalm 1

A skilled physician, whenever he wishes to bring full medicine to those worn out by various sickness, opens the deep causes of diseases, explains the hidden onsets of pestilence, warns them to beware of pestilential regions, shows a great many kinds of remedies, sets out the powers of herbs, speaks of the qualities of medicaments, promises the obedient the longest health: so he persuades the sick to hard and harsh cures and brings them through. Hence it is that the holy Prophet, about to bring forth from heaven the medicine of body and soul, lays open the deep recesses of ungodliness, bares the covered diseases of sinners, displays iniquities, and with wonderful reasoning brings out the secret poison, the natures of vices, the origins of offences, the roots of crimes. So, with a tender moderation, according to age, sex, season and strength, he leads the sick minds of mortals by a divine cure continually to health. The psalm that we sang today is the preface of the Psalms, or rather the psalm of the Psalms, the title of titles; it is the argument that begets arguments, it is the whole cause of the songs that follow. And as the key of a royal hall,

once it has opened the first door, makes the inner and manifold apartments accessible, so this psalm, once it has unlocked the first entrances of understanding, opens the mystery of all the psalms, opens their secret.

Blessed is the man who has not gone away in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners, and has not sat in the chair of pestilence (Ps 1:1). Blessed is the man: as for one about to fight with beasts and undergo the dangers of the heaviest contests the prizes, rewards and crowns are proclaimed beforehand, so the Prophet set beatitude first, to rouse man to conquer the whole savagery of crimes which he enumerates afterwards. Blessed is the man who has not gone away in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners. That he said "go away in counsel" and "stand in the way" may perhaps seem absurd, since to stand firm in counsel and to go away on a way is more in the usage of men. To the perverse, indeed, all things are perverse, and things that are not done in order cannot keep order. Yet here the Prophet speaks not of the gait of the body but of the mind; he does not forbid the slips of the feet, but wards off the ruin of souls.

Blessed is the man who has not gone away in the counsel of the ungodly. He has gone away, the ungodly man has gone away from himself, when he has withdrawn from God; nor does he stand in counsel who wanders in ungodly thoughts. Such a man is now carried to heaven, now carried back to earth, tossed over the seas, lifted on the waves,

sunk in the deep: and since he is always rolled about in his own mind like a drunkard, he does not reckon himself, and reckons the heavens. He who thinks he knows everything does not know himself; if he knew himself, he would never worship the sky, the sun, the moon, wood, stones, which have all been given and subjected to his service; but he worships a stone, serves a block of wood, who has scorned to serve the living God, the true God. And to unfold the deeds of ungodliness from the very beginning of things: the counsel of ungodliness led the angel down from the heights to the underworld, changed the messenger of the heavenly secret into the devil, sent man from the governance of life into the exile of a mortal dwelling, drove him from the delights of paradise to the toilsome labours of the world; it cast woman down from the glory of virginity to childbirths that know groaning. Hence it is that before she rejoices she is not without knowledge of pains, and pays the penalty for guilt before she rejoices in the coming forth of offspring. Multiplying, he says, I will multiply your sorrows and your groanings; in sorrow and groaning you will bring forth children (Gen 3:16). What sort of end is there where the origin is penal? whom will joy hold in life who takes the beginning of life from mourning? The Prophet knew this who said: In iniquities I was conceived, and in offences my mother bore me (Ps 51:7).

If thus, brothers, we are thrown from the womb on to the way of sinners, and run the road of offences through all our ages, let us think of the

vanities of infancy, the slips of youth, the ruins of manhood, the diseases of old age, and then we shall see that thus we are taking not the way of life but the way of sinners. Christ marks out this way, speaking thus: How wide and spacious is the way that leads to perdition, and many are those who enter by it (Matt 7:13). Wide with offences, spread wide with billows, spacious with crimes, the present life is truly a way, on to which man comes and on which he goes. A generation, he says, goes, and a generation comes, and the earth stands for ever (Eccl 1:4). And therefore he said before: Blessed is the man who has not gone away in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners. He did not say, "has not come"; for there is no one who does not come on to the way of sinners, on to which the very law of nature and of death leads us; but: Blessed is he who does not stand on it. He stands, he lingers on it, who lifts up the burdens of sins; and, a laden traveller, he arrives late, and finds the heavenly dwelling shut against him. Hampered by these weights the Prophet wept, saying: My iniquities have gone over my head, and like a heavy burden they have weighed heavy upon me (Ps 38:5). And because he carried them the whole time of his life, he cries out: I have been made wretched, and I have been bowed down to the end (Ps 38:7). That traveller passes right through the way of sinners who sees the evils of this life, but despises them; feels them, but tramples on them; suffers them, but conquers; and in fleeing them, he runs the more: hence the heavenly doorkeeper runs to

meet him, the heavenly dwelling does not shut itself against him.

But why is it that he thus set the counsel of ungodliness before the way of sinners: Blessed is the man who has not gone away in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners? Because, although man, once born, comes at once on to the way of sinners, yet at first he lies there: he does not at once run along the way of sin, but when he has begun to taste the poisons of ungodliness, then he draws a relish from the richness of sins. The ungodly man aims against God, goes away from God when he does wrong; sinners God scorns, he who commanded beforehand that they ought not to sin. Darkness flees the light, darkness returns as the light departs: where God is, no sin; where sin is, God is not there. And that you may know, man, that man runs up and down the way of sinners away from the sight of God, hear the Prophet: God is not in his sight; his ways are defiled at all times (Ps 10:4–5). So man slips more gravely on the way of sinners when he slides into it down the precipices of ungodliness.

And has not sat in the chair of pestilence. He who does ungodliness approves it, loves it; he who loves it cannot but teach it: hence it is that, teaching ungodliness, he sits in the chair of pestilence, and thus with honeyed speech pours out on his hearers the poison of deadly doctrine. As the chair of pestilence he set up philosophy, which taught either many gods, or taught that he who is either does not exist or cannot be found;

and he gave creation itself to nature, so as to deny the Author of nature. The chair of pestilence the Pharisee set forth, who, putting human traditions before heavenly decrees, overthrew the great light of the people of the Jews. In the chair of pestilence the heretic has sat, who under the appearance of faith cleaves, breaks, tears apart unity.

Blessed, then, is the man who has not gone away in the counsel of the ungodly, and has not stood in the way of sinners, and has not sat in the chair of pestilence. And plainly blessed, because by turning aside from these three he has deserved to come to the beatitude of the Trinity. Let him meditate, then, on the law of the Lord, and meditate day and night, so that he may deserve to see in the future what follows, and to hear it more fully at a suitable time.

Sermon XLV.

On frail man praying God not to rebuke him in anger; on Psalm 6

The responsory that we sang today as the Prophet made supplication, suited to the season, fitting for the present evils, your affection approves and recognises together with me. Lord, he says, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your wrath (Ps 6:2). And does God swell with anger? grow hot with wrath? Far from it, brothers. God neither lies subject to passion, nor is kindled with anger, nor troubled with wrath: but the anger of God is the penalty of those who do wrong, the wrath of God is the punishment of sinners. Brothers, compacted of dust, moulded of clay, we are trampled by vices, subjected to offences, worn out by cares; we wither in our limbs, are dissolved by death, become a horror in fetid sepulchres; and thus, unfit for the virtues, we are found fit for the vices. So the Prophet, mindful of human frailty and conscious of his fleshly substance, since he had no confidence in his merits, flew to the help of mercy, so that God's judgement about him might stand on loving-kindness, not on severity.

Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger. That is to say: rebuke me, but not in anger; chasten me,

but not in wrath: rebuke me as a father, not as a judge; chasten me not as a master, but as a parent; rebuke me, not to destroy me, but to chasten me; chasten me, not to slay me, but to amend me: and why this? Because I am weak.

Have mercy on me, he says, Lord, for I am weak (Ps 6:3). What is weaker than man, whom sense misleads, ignorance deceives, judgement cheats, pomp harms, time deserts, age changes, infancy dulls, youth hurls headlong, old age breaks? For God, then, to be angry with him in anger, indignant with him in wrath, is not the part of a loving Creator, but of the severest examining judge.

Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am weak. And what do you want? Heal me, Lord. He feels the wounds of his state, feels the bite of the ancient serpent, feels the ruin of the first parent, acknowledges that by being born he has come into these weaknesses, acknowledges that by nature he has arrived at death: and because human art could not remove death, he is compelled to seek divine medicine; and in order to obtain the cure of his illness more easily, he opens the causes of the illness itself, recounts its qualities, unfolds its greatness, expresses the force of the pain. Heal me, Lord. Why? For my bones are troubled. The bones carry the whole structure of the body; and if the bones are troubled, what firmness is there in the limbs? what strength in the sinews? where is the pitiable substance of the flesh? The bones are troubled, brothers, by the weight of sins, by the dread of death, by the terror of judgement. Hear him saying this elsewhere: There is no

health, he says, in my flesh before the face of your anger; there is no peace for my bones before the face of my sins (Ps 38:4). And afterwards: My soul is filled with mockeries, and there is no health in my flesh (Ps 38:8).

Rightly, then, he adds: And my soul is greatly troubled (Ps 6:4). Between the commandments of God and the passions of the heart, between virtues and vices, between adversity and prosperity, between penalties and rewards, between life and death, standing in the battle line, sustaining wars, receiving wounds, seldom standing, falling in sense, the soul is troubled, greatly troubled, because, hampered by the weights of the flesh, before it comes to the virtues it is first made captive to the vices. The Apostle describes these wars when he says: The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: so that you do not do the things that you will (Gal 5:17). And elsewhere: I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and leading me captive in the law of sin (Rom 7:23).

So the blessed Prophet, alleging these weaknesses, these wars, these disturbances of minds, appeals to God with such a voice: And you, Lord, how long? That is: how long will you bear it? how long will you look away? how long will you not come to our aid? how long will you allow your work to be scattered, your image to be blotted out, your own creature to perish for you? Where is your Christ, so often announced through the Law, promised again in many ways through us, through the prophets? Let him come, let him

come, before, as the world perishes, he finds nothing in the world to save again. Let him come, let him come, to restore the flesh, renew the soul, change nature itself into a heavenly substance. Let him come, to take away sin, blot out death, destroy hell, give back life, grant heaven, so that earthly stain may no longer be able to find in us anything to destroy.

That the Prophet asks this, the following word shows: Turn, Lord (Ps 6:5). Does a man so speak to God, the accused to the judge, the condemned man to the examining judge? Turn, Lord. Man sins, and God turns? Even so, brothers, because, according to the prophet: He bears our sins, and feels pain for us (Isa 53:4). And blessed John: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He took up sin, so as to take sin away, not to have it. Turn, Lord. From where? to where? From God into man, from lord into servant, from judge into father, so that your turning may show you loving, whom your power threatens as terrible.

Turn, Lord; deliver my soul. From the lower hell (Ps 86:13). Save me for the sake of your mercy. Not for the sake of my merit, mine, whom toil afflicts, groaning wounds, tears dissolve, anger troubles, the enemy assails. But that this may be clear, let the Prophet's prayer itself be sung through. Save me for the sake of your mercy. Why? Because there is no one in death who is mindful of you; but in hell who will confess to you? (Ps 6:6) I have laboured in my groaning;

every night I will wash my bed: with my tears I will water my couch (Ps 6:7).

Holy David said this when he was set on the royal summit, he who so exercised the rule of human power as to keep in himself the holiness of the spirit, the grace of a prophet; and we, set in the whole anger of God, do not know how to say: Lord, do not rebuke me in your wrath. The earth refuses its fruits, the sky its mildness, the air its wholesomeness: hence a pestilence spread everywhere, through cities, through fields, consumes every kind of mortals with various kinds of diseases; and yet we do not say: Lord, do not rebuke us in your wrath, nor chasten us in your anger. He, after his triumphs, filled nights and days with groans and tears; we, lying under the enemy's sword, give no time to God, pour out no tears to God even for an hour: but continually we hand ourselves over and give ourselves up to robberies, frauds, perjuries, deceits, detractions, so as to stir up the anger of God against us more and more with the fuel of crimes.

Come, brothers, come with the Prophet: Come, let us worship, and fall down before him, and weep before the Lord who made us (Ps 95:6); come, let us say: Lord, do not rebuke us in your anger, nor chasten us in your wrath. So that, mindful of his mercy, he may change anger into mercy, give back what was lost, set the captives free; and grant us now to serve him with joy, he who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon XLVI.

On spiritual exultation and the confession of sins, on Psalm 94 (95)

As to one who burns with heat and is inflamed by a long thirst a cool spring comes, very gladdening and very wholesome, so to us, set in mourning and weighed down by the excessive weight of tribulations, the song of the prophetic voice today stirs us to joy: Come, he says, let us exult in the Lord (Ps 95:1). Come: where? or from where? From yourself, man, into yourself, where not a change of places but a turning of the senses drives away adversity, puts mourning to flight, casts off despair, shuts out distress, and enters the abode of a sincere breast, and makes ready an eternal dwelling for divine joy. Let us exult in the Lord. And where is that saying: Blessed are those who mourn (Matt 5:4), and: Woe to you who laugh (Luke 6:25)? Plainly, blessed are those who mourn to the world, and woe to those who laugh to the world: but blessed are those who exult in the Lord, who know nothing of robberies, know nothing of frauds, do not know how to rejoice at the tears of their neighbours. Let us exult in the Lord. He exults in the Lord who by word, act and deed exults not for himself but for his author.

Let us exult in the Lord. He exults in the Lord for whom God is always his only and his whole joy.

Let us shout with joy, he says, to God our Saviour. This is not the voice of the sheep, it is the shepherd's: who with sweet jubilation and varied melody either leads the flock out to pasture, or keeps the weary herd at rest under the shady grove, or urges them, with the desire of more wholesome grass, to climb the heights of the hills, or to go down gently, as all need requires, to the slopes of the valleys. But blessed are those sheep that admit the voice of their shepherd, draw others, nourish, gather them, and truly shout with joy to their shepherd: those that strive to multiply for the Lord the young of their flock.

Let us go before his face in confession (Ps 95:2). And who goes before the examining judge of sins, the searcher of hearts, the one who is aware of thoughts, who foreknows what is to come, present always and everywhere? But he must be gone before not by nearness of the senses, but by sharpness of wit; not by speed of feet, but by the provident homage of confession: for he did not say: "Let us go before him" only, but: Let us go before his face in confession. That is, while there is hope of mercy, while it is the time of pardon, while there is room for penance, let us confess to the father, so as not to feel the judge; let us reveal what we have done to loving-kindness, so as not to be compelled to pay to severity for what we keep silent; let us tell our offences in the time of indulgence, so that we may not, if we keep silent, weep at receiving the

sentence. And what more, brothers? It is not the judge but the judgement that the most clement Prophet urges us to go before. And in psalms, he says, let us shout with joy to him. So that jubilation, left unspoken in our breast, might not be thought irrational. In psalms let us shout with joy. So that in the psalms the divine mystery may resound, and what may move the minds of the hearers to the advance of salvation.

For God, he says, is the great Lord (Ps 95:3). Here he opens the mystery of the Lord's body, because God even in our body is the great Lord. And a great king above all gods. As in that verse: Who will be like God among the sons of God? (Ps 89:7) For although all the powers above rule the rest, they themselves are nevertheless ruled by Christ. For in his hand are all the ends of the earth (Ps 95:4). For what is in the hand of God cannot be obtained without God, if we desire to widen our borders, to extend our boundaries, to recover what has been lost. Let us, then, beseech God with the strength of faith, through whose disfavour these things are being lost to us; and by his propitiation they come back enlarged, he who gives as he wills, takes away, and when he wills; if he cannot give back, he is not held almighty; he does many things as a sign of his majesty, as an example for our amendment and correction. Other defences are empty, if the help of our king does not come to our aid.

For the sea is his, and he made it (Ps 95:5). Do not think it was sought out, found, and not founded by God. The sea is his, and he made it,

and his hands formed the dry land. Where are those who invent the tale that God shaped the world out of matter, and above all out of water? Our God, in heaven and on earth, not as the finder but as the Maker of matter, accomplished all things from nothing.

Come, he says, let us worship (Ps 95:6). What follows, brothers, shows to those who do not understand the Prophet as though he had been forgetful of his own exultation, when he calls those he has roused to joy straight away to weeping. Come, he says, let us worship, and fall down before him, and weep before the Lord who made us. He had said: Come, let us exult; but here the Prophet wishes us to pour out with him tears of our joys: because tears are always brought forth by joy as by great pain, and they indeed set forth and bear witness to the affection of the inner breast. So he wants us, who used to fall prostrate before stones and wood, now that the true God is at last known, to worship, to fall down, and to repay with tears and with the continual homage of devotion what we neglected for long and for a long time. So he weeps in repenting of the past, rejoices in the present, burns and fears for the future. That they were tears of perfect joy the words that follow show thus: Come, let us worship, and fall down before him, and weep before the Lord who made us. And as if he were asked why, he gives the causes, opens the reasons: For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand (Ps 95:7). From this, surely,

as devoted as he is who rejoices, so ungrateful certainly is he who is saddened.

But now let us hear more attentively what he admonishes: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation, on the day of temptation in the desert, where your fathers tempted me: they put me to the test, and saw my works (Ps 95:7–9). Forty years I was near to that generation, and I said: These always err in heart; but they have not known my ways; to whom I swore in my anger, if they shall enter into my rest (Ps 95:10–11). When he says "today", he addresses you, he speaks to you, whoever you are, man, who hear, so that, having heard his voice, you may not incur the guilt of contempt, the crime of contumacy, you whom neither commandments nor example have corrected. For this is why he told the hardness of the Jews at such length: to make you, Christian, more cautious, you with whom God not only lives and dwells for forty years, but whom through the whole time of life he obeys, and for whose salvation he does battle.

Sermon XLVII.

On the parables of the pearl found and of the net cast into the sea

Christ our God, in founding heaven, earth, sea, and in them creatures great, many and varied, showed wondrous proofs of his power: but in that he takes up what is human, acts as man, enters times, passes through ages, teaches by word, heals by power, speaks in similitudes, sets forth examples, he opens in himself the weight of our affection, he reveals that there is in him the ineffable charity of human love. Hence it is that he commends heavenly things by earthly examples, gives us to understand future things from present ones, represents invisible things by visible proofs; this is proved by the similitudes that the Gospel proclaims to our hearing today: The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking good pearls: and having found one precious pearl, he went away, and sells all that he had, and buys it (Matt 13:45–46). Let the name of merchant offend no one who hears this: here he speaks of a merchant who gives mercy, not one who is forever giving out the interest of a loan; who provides the ornaments of virtues, not the incitements of vices; who carries the gravity of good morals, not the weight of stones; who bears the necklaces of

honour, not of luxury; who wears not the pomp of pleasure, but the insignia of discipline. This merchant, then, sets out these pearls of heart and body, not for human commerce but for divine exercise; not for present advantage but to purchase the future; not for earthly glory but for heavenly: so that he may be able to acquire the kingdom of heaven at the price of the virtues, and with countless goods buy the one pearl of perpetual life.

The Lord added a similitude, saying: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea, and gathering of every kind of fish: which, when it was full, they drew out; and sitting by the shore, they chose the good into vessels, but the bad they threw out (Matt 13:47–48). The kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea. This similitude reveals why Christ chose fishermen for the apostolate, and made catchers of fish into fishers of men: so that the type of the divine judgement might be shown by the fisherman's art. The catch gathers the fish all mixed together, but sorting delivers the chosen into the vessels: so the Christian calling gathers the just and the unjust, the bad and the good; but the divine election distinguishes the good and the bad.

The kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea. To the sea of this world, swelling with pomp, lifted high in its crest, billowing with sects, tossing with ignorance, loud with lawsuits, roaring with anger, savage with unbelief, shipwrecked by sins, sunk in ungodliness, Christ sent his fishermen, that is, Peter, Andrew, James,

John, proved in their craft, when he says: Come after me, I will make you become fishers of men (Matt 4:19). So he sent his fishermen carrying nets knotted with the precepts of the Law and of the Gospel, bordered with admonitions, widened with the gifts of the virtues and with grace, gathering an endless catch into the bosom of the Gospel. This is the time now, this is what is being done, brothers: through the nations, through the peoples, the nets of Christ are now being drawn, and they bring in persons from the whole world, caught all together without distinction.

But since the end of the world is near, and the nets of our catch are already drawing near to the shore of judgement, the fish, that is, men, who roam the deep of the world in a free and holiday course, troubled by the dryness of the shore, that is, by the nearness of the end, dash themselves against the whole dispensation of things: seeing ungodly nations enlarged by triumph upon triumph, Christian peoples hemmed in as captives throughout the world, the ungodly rejoicing in prosperous successes, the godly trampled by an unbroken succession of evils, masters subjected to servitude, servants lording it over masters, sons rebellious against parents, the old an object of contempt to the young, and every state of nature, the order of life, perished. But though these things are so, they do not trouble the strong; rather they trouble the weak; the strong they cannot trouble, because these take strength from the similitude, fortitude from the figure. The fish cast up from the deep toss for a little while indeed

on the shore in their confusion, but swift sorting, in throwing away the bad, chooses the good; this brief confusion, soon to pass, makes the good, does not trouble them. This is the sorting from above, which gives the bad to punishments, snatches the good away to honour, leads the ungodly down to Tartarus, sends the godly on to the kingdom; fathers, old men, the just, the elect, all of them to be consoled with perpetual glory for a little dishonour.

The comparison itself proves this, when it is said: At the consummation of the world the angels of God will go out, they will separate the bad from among the just (Matt 13:49). At the consummation of the world: he who believes the consummation of the world, who complains of the lessening of the world, who trusts that things that will remain are to follow, why does he seek to have things that will pass? Brothers, the world takes its beginning from its end; by the end creation is renewed, it does not fail; the age fails not for the Creator but for crime; nor are the elements ended for the just, but for sinners. At the consummation of the world the angels will go out to separate the just. And let no one doubt that the angels will obey the saints, to whom Christ too promises his homage. It is the voice of Christ: I will gird myself, and serve you (Luke 12:37). The angels of God will go out and separate the bad from among the just. Bear it, you just, bear it, or rather, you just, grant a truce: this brief mingling will be made up for by a long separation.

They will separate the bad from among the just, and will cast them into the furnace of fire (Matt 13:50). See what kind of dwelling they choose for themselves who throw out their neighbours, who drive out guests; see: those who here prepare delights for themselves by the hunger of the poor, by the punishments of others, what a fire they kindle for themselves there from a little pleasure! There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. How ill he gnashes there who ill laughs here; and he who now rejoices at the evils of the poor will then mourn over the goods of the poor, because he could have rejoiced with the poor man, but would not: but you, faithful, rejoice in the Lord always (Phil 4:4).

Sermon XLVIII.

On Christ called the craftsman's son, and on envy

The Evangelist, about to bring to light today the envy of the Jews towards Christ, began thus: Jesus came, he says, into his own country, and he taught them in their synagogues, so that they marvelled and said: Whence has this man wisdom and power? (Matt 13:54) Is this not the craftsman's son? (Matt 13:55) Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas; and his sisters, are they not all with us? (Matt 13:55–56) Whence, then, has this man all these things? Clouds do not so blind the sky, nor night the day, nor darkness the sun, as envy blinds and darkens the mind. This the spite of the Jews proves, which marvels at Christ's wisdom, is astounded at his mighty works, extols his deeds, receives his sayings, and yet, so that divinity may not be seen in him nor the Godhead perceived, recalls and spreads abroad the names of his fleshly parents.

Jesus came, he says, into his own country. Let no one wonder if the Maker of things, the Lord of the heavens, the God of all, has a country and a place allotted to him, when he shuts himself in a womb, measures himself by a cradle, busies himself at the breast, confines himself in a lap,

gives himself into arms; and to take away human straits, he gave himself up and fitted himself to human straits. Man, through these things God lays himself down to you, through these he follows you, through these straits he seeks you out; so that whom he formed by his work he may reform by his example; whom he drove away by judgement he may lead back by affection, and may keep in himself the one he sees to have perished apart from him.

Jesus came, he says, into his own country, and he taught them in their synagogues. Not in his temple, but in their synagogues. The synagogues could not be his, in which crowds of unbelief, not of faith, gathered; in which a people of envy, not of love, came together; in which there sat the council of the malignant, not the council of good discipline. He taught in their synagogues, so that they marvelled. They marvelled with indignation, not with gratitude; they were astounded with spite, not with praise; they raged because a humility that stood brought forth what the proud benches could not understand, so that they marvelled, and said: Whence has this man this wisdom? So speaks the man who does not know God, from whom is wisdom, from whom is power; so speaks the man who does not know that Christ is the wisdom of God, is the power of God. Whence wisdom comes Solomon proves, who, when as a little boy he had taken up the summit of the kingdom, in order to rule the people entrusted to him by virtue, not by pride; by wisdom, not by swelling; by heart, not by height,

wished for, asked for and received wisdom from God.

Whence has this man this wisdom and power? That the power which gives eyes that nature did not give, which restores hearing shut off by infirmity, which in the dumb loosens the ties of their speech, which brings the lame back to running, which compels souls already bound in the underworld to return to their own bodies, is from God, no one would deny but one who envies salvation. But the Jews knew that the works of Christ were of divine power, not of human possibility; but the cloud of spite, the smoke of malice, darkened the sight of those who looked on, so that they should not see through to the light of Christ, to the time of the Gospel, when they said: Is this not the craftsman's son? They said: "This is the craftsman's son"; but whose craftsman's son they did not say; they said "the craftsman's son", so that under a mean craft the craft of the author might lie hidden, and the craftsman's name might hide the name of the Godhead. Christ was a craftsman's son, but the son of that craftsman who made the fabric of the world not with a hammer but with a command; who fitted together the members of the elements not by ingenuity but by order; who forged the mass of the world by authority, not with coal; who kindled the sun not with earthly fire but with heavenly heat; who formed the moon, the darkness, the night and the seasons; who distinguished the stars with varied light; who made all things from nothing, and made them, O man, for you, so that

you might weigh the artificer by your estimate of the work. But you, Jew, sneer at the son of this craftsman, to whom, for such great benefits, you ought to make return in his son: hence it is that you do not receive the things to come, because you are ungrateful for the present.

Is this not the craftsman's son? Is not his mother called Mary? Again, Jew, you cry out the mother's name, you hide the Father's; you say father, you do not say the name; you say craftsman, you do not say the work. Jew, these things deceive you; they do not deceive those who are to believe. Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas; and his sisters, are they not all with us? If the mother, if the brothers, if the sisters are with you, where is the father? He is not with you, because God hates the false, deserts the envious, turns away from the ungrateful, does not allow the cruel and the ungodly to dwell with him.

And his brothers and his sisters, are they not all with us? Cunningly you thrust brothers forward, you parade sisters, so that by a numerous childbearing the virginity of the holy mother may lie hidden, her integrity be obscured, and the whole of what is human be perceived in the son, and nothing divine. Jew, those whom you call the brothers and sisters of Christ are the sons of Cleopas, the sister of Mary, not of Mary; and both the divine law and human kinship call the sons of brothers and sisters brothers. So it was not the virginity of the mother, who remained a virgin after childbirth, that made Christ's broth-

ers, but that of his mother's sister: the assertion of kinship made them. Blessed Mary, had she as mother had other sons besides Christ, would not, at the very time of the cross, at the very moment of death, be handed over to a disciple, would not be commended to a stranger.

Envy cast the angel down from heaven (Isa 14:12), shut man out of paradise (Gen 3:23). It was envy that first defiled the earth with a brother's blood (Gen 4:8). It drove brothers to sell their brother (Gen 37:28). It put Moses to flight (Exod 2:15), roused Aaron to wrong his brother, stained Miriam with spite against her brother (Num 12:1); and, not to be long, what the mind dreads, what the sight trembles at, what the hearing cannot take in, it aimed at and reached the very blood of Christ. Envy is worse than all evils: those it has caught cannot be freed; those it has wounded do not come to a cure, do not return to health. Envy is the venom of offences, the poison of crimes, the mother of sins, the origin of vices: he who has not seen it sees good things; he who has not known it does not know evils; he who has fled it lives. Envy can be escaped by flight; it cannot be overcome by combat.

But now let us hear what the Lord answered: A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house (Matt 13:57). Christ indeed came into his own country and into his own house, because it is written: He came to his own, and his own did not receive him (John 1:11). But by saying: A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and his own house, he

teaches that to have power among one's own is a bite, is a burning; to stand out among one's fellow citizens burns up the glory of one's neighbours; if kinsmen owe honour to a kinsman, they count it servitude.

And he did not do many mighty works there, he says, because of their disbelief (Matt 13:58). No mighty work is done there where disbelief does not deserve it. Although Christ demands no fee when he heals, he is nevertheless indignant when injury is offered to him in place of honour, he who is God over all, blessed and glorious for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon XLIX.

On the same, according to Mark

Whenever the holy Evangelist relates that the Lord underwent or did human things, so often he throws the senses of the carnal into turmoil, as with a whole upheaval of waves. For feeble minds do not know how to hear, discern and dispense the mysteries of the Lord's body, as today's reading shows, which says: Going out from there, Jesus went away into his own country (Mark 6:1). From where does he go out, where does he go in, who is contained by no place, shut in by no place? To what country does he go, who made and possesses the whole world? as the Prophet says: Yours are the heavens, and yours is the earth: the world and its fullness you founded (Ps 89:12). But Christ goes out and goes in not for himself through himself, but through you for you, until he brings in you who were expelled, calls back the exile, leads back and carries back the one cast out.

So Jesus went away into his own country. Not to give his own country back to himself, but yours back to you, which Adam had lost. He went away into his own country. If born, how not man? if man, how not a citizen? if a citizen, who would wonder that he has a country? But what it acknowledges here is the manner of manhood, not

the order of divinity: because he who is, and who was before the ages, our God, our parent, willed to be the last of things through the ages; so as to save by loving-kindness those he had made by power, and by suffering with them to receive back those whom he had made outcasts by rebuking and commanding. For whatever we read that Christ did or bore through the man he took up, let us hear it not as an injury to his divinity, but as having served the glory of man. And his disciples, he says, followed him. Rightly do the disciples follow Christ as he returns to his own country, whom so great an election, the fullness of so great a grace, had already made citizens and burgesses of the heavenly country, enrolled in the register of the order above, as the Lord says: Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

And when the sabbath had come, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many hearing him marvelled at his teaching, saying: Whence has this man all these things, and what is the wisdom that has been given to him? and such mighty works as are done by his hands? (Mark 6:2) Unhappy and detestable wickedness of the Jewish mind, always readier to discuss than to believe! it is eagerly stirred by divine powers not to faith but to calumny, even because it merited to hear so great a wisdom. But whence is it that, maliciously curious or querulous, suspicious of good things, very ready for harmful ones, it despises the teaching that it marvels at; scorns the precepts that it approves; hesitates towards God, is headlong towards idols; is astute

in divine things, wholly slack before wood and stones; rebellious against prophecy, contrary to the truth, lost in auguries and lies? I ask, to whom is it a cause for caution that the blind man sees? to whom a cause for anxiety that the dead man rises? to whom a matter of doubt that the dumb man speaks? Surely, who would not know that he is God by whose command alone every infirmity is cured? Moses had done many signs, Elijah had shown the greatest proofs of powers, nor had Elisha done unlike works: why does no one discuss their person? why does no one raise a question about their standing? why has no one, ungrateful, inquired with such curiosity whence they were, or who they were, whence these things came, and through whom they did them? But this one alone is judged, who alone refused to judge so as not to punish; he is examined with wicked severity who, to grant pardon, made no inquiry: and though he alone, the innocent one, found all guilty, as a sign of his immense loving-kindness he chose to take the sentence upon himself rather than to annul it, so as to give back to mortals the life once lost and to restore the slain. Truly, as the Apostle said: Great is the mystery of godliness, which is manifested in the flesh of our Christ (1 Tim 3:16).

Yet this carnal rivalry, whose thought is always hostile to the truth, stretches out its curiosity still further: it does not allow Christ to be believed God by his powers and his wisdom, but on the evidence of his neighbours, parents, brothers, kinsmen by marriage, it asserts, longs,

wishes, understands him to be man only, saying: Is this not the craftsman's son, and Mary's, the brother of James and Joseph, and Simon and Judas? and are not his sisters also here with us? (Mark 6:3) Caiaphas prophesies with a profane mouth; and since he was priest, he overcame the sense of his own falsehood by the office of truth; he proves the sentence not by his own authority, but by that of the one condemned (John 11:51). Balaam blesses with a cursing mouth, and, hired for wickedness, speaks all the mysteries of truth (Num 23–24): and as in thorns a rose, that is, little flowers of wondrous fragrance spring up in a bristling shrub, so sometimes the senses of the worst are driven against their will to good things by the impulse of divinity, so that what they speak is a matter not of merit, but of mystery.

This we see happened then to the malice of the Jews, which, to insult the Lord's generation, while through Joseph's craft it magnifies the truth of Christ's lineage, confesses and speaks of the quality of his true Begetter, saying: This is the craftsman's son. Well did it keep silent about the person, so as to reveal the Begetter by the craft, saying not "Joseph's", but "the craftsman's son". And what craftsman is such as this one, who out of nothing fashioned so great and such a world? and what craftsman is such that he alone is the author, alone the giver of every good craft? Say, then, Jew, "the craftsman's son", so that unwillingly you may acknowledge the Son of God; say "Mary's", so that, compelled, you may confess a true man, but the Son of the Virgin; say "broth-

ers", so that you may proclaim and set forth the great condescension of your Creator.

And though you yourself try by this to hide the virtues of the holy bearer, yet the truth of the Evangelist proves and asserts that those whom you call brothers were the sons not of Joseph and Mary, but of Cleopas her sister; for the usage even of the present time is known to call the sons of brothers and of sisters brothers. For the Lord would never, against the order of piety, have commended his mother from the cross to a stranger, that is, to John, if she herself had received other sons besides him: but he hands over a virgin to a virgin, so that between such as these there might be held only the care of the mystery, only the society of religion; and so that this great disciple might not serve worldly solicitude, but, being about to preach the childbearing of virginity, might have at home the means to prove it to those who doubted. But James could not take care of one woman and mother, he who, among the beginnings and in that Jewish fury of the time, ruled alone the church of Jerusalem.

Rightly the Lord added: A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country (Mark 6:4). See how carnal citizens think; see how worldly kinsmen feel and honour. Blessed is he who, having merited to have God as father, seeks nothing besides the heavenly country.

Sermon L.

On the paralytic healed

That Christ performed divine mysteries in human acts, and carried out invisible business in visible things, today's reading has shown. He went up, he says, into a boat, and crossed over, and came into his own city (Matt 9:1). Is he not the one who, putting the waves of the sea to flight, laid bare the depths, so that the people of Israel might pass with dry footstep between the astonished waters, as through the hollows of mountains (Exod 14:22)? Is not this the one who bowed down the crests of the sea under Peter's feet, so that the liquid path offered human steps a solid service (Matt 14:29)? And why is it that he so refuses for himself the servitude of the sea as to cross the passage of a very small lake for a boatman's fare?

He went up, he says, into a boat, and crossed over. And what wonder, brothers? Christ came to take up our weaknesses, and to bestow on us his powers; to seek what is human, to grant what is divine; to receive injuries, to give back dignities; to bear wearinesses, to bring back healths; because a physician who does not bear weaknesses does not know how to cure weaknesses; and he who has not been weak with the weak cannot

bestow health on the weak. So Christ, if he had remained in his own powers, would have had nothing in common with men; and unless he had fulfilled the order of the flesh, the taking up of flesh would have been idle in him. So he sustained these necessities, so that he might be proved true man by human necessities.

He went up, he says, into a boat. Christ goes up into the ship of his Church, ever ready to calm the waves of the world, so as to lead those who believe in him to the heavenly country by a tranquil voyage, and to make burgesses of his city those whom he has made sharers of his manhood. So it is not Christ who needs a ship, but the ship needs Christ, because without the heavenly helmsman the ship of the Church cannot come to the heavenly harbour through the sea of the world amid such and so great peril.

This we have said, brothers, as far as concerns the spiritual understanding: but now let us follow the order of the narrative itself. He went up, he says, into a boat and crossed over, and came into his own city. The Creator of things, the Lord of the world, after he had straitened himself for our sake in our flesh, began to have a human country, began to be a citizen of a Jewish city: he began to have parents, he who is himself the parent of all parents, so that love might invite, charity draw, affection overcome, humanity persuade those whom dominion had put to flight, dread had scattered, the force of power had made outcasts.

He came into his own city, and behold, they were offering him a paralytic lying on a bed, and Jesus, he says, regarding their faith, said to the paralytic: Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven you (Matt 9:2). The paralytic hears pardon and is silent, and gives no thanks in reply, because he was intent more on the cure of the body than of the soul; and he so bewailed the temporal miseries of his loosened body that he did not bewail the eternal penalties of the loosening of the soul, judging the present life more welcome to him than the future. Rightly Christ does not regard the faith of those who were offering him, and regards the folly of the one lying there so, that by the support of another's faith the paralytic's soul was cured before his body.

Regarding, he says, their faith. You see in this place, brothers, that God does not seek the wills of the foolish, does not look to the faith of the ignorant, does not search out the foolish desires of the sick, but comes to their help at the faith of another, a help he was bestowing by grace alone, since he would not refuse whatever belongs to the divine will. And indeed, brothers, when does a physician either seek or regard the wills of the sick, since the sick man always desires and demands what is contrary? hence it is that now the knife, now fire, now bitter draughts he forces upon them and applies to them against their will, so that when healthy they may feel the cure which when sick they could not feel. And if a man disregards insults, scorns curses, so as freely to bestow life and health on those wounded by dis-

ease, how much more does Christ the physician, of his divine goodness, draw to salvation, even against their will and refusing, those wounded by the diseases of sins and suffering from the frenzy of crimes? O if we would, brothers, O if we would see through the whole paralysis of our mind, see our soul, destitute of virtues, lying on the beds of vices, it would be clear to us how Christ both regards our harmful wills daily, and draws us to saving remedies, and urges us on against our will.

Son, he says, your sins are remitted to you. Saying this, he wished it to be understood that he was God, he who through the man was still hidden from human eyes; for in mighty works and signs he was compared with the prophets, who through him had themselves also done mighty works: but to give pardon to sins, since it is not in man's power and is the singular mark of the Godhead, set it in human breasts that he was God. The spite of the Pharisees proves this: for when he had said: Your sins are remitted to you, the Pharisees answered: This man blasphemes; for who can remit sins but God alone? (Matt 9:3; Mark 2:7) Pharisee, you who in knowing do not know, in confessing deny, while you bear witness attack: if he who remits sins is God, why is Christ not God to you, who by the gift of his one indulgence is proved to have taken away the sins of the whole world? Behold, he says, the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

But that you may be able to grasp greater marks of his divinity, hear that he has penetrated

the secret of your breast; see that he has reached the hiding places of your thoughts; understand that he lays bare the silent counsels of your heart. And when Jesus had seen, he says, their thoughts, he said: Why do you think evil things in your hearts? (Matt 9:4) For which is easier, to say: Your sins are remitted to you, or to say: Rise and walk? (Matt 9:5) But that you may know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic: Rise, take up your bed, and go into your house; and he rose, and went away into his house (Matt 9:6–7). The searcher of souls forestalls the malignant counsels of minds, and showed the might of his Godhead by the witness of a work, in that he puts together the members of a dissolved body, tightens the sinews, joins the bones, fills the vitals, firms the limbs, and rouses to running the steps already buried in a living corpse.

Take up your bed. That is: carry what carried you, exchange all the roles, so that what is the witness of illness may be the proof of health, so that the bed of your pain may be the token of my cure, so that the greatness of the weight may declare the greatness of the strength regained. Go, he says, into your house, so that, healed by the Christian faith, you may no longer linger in the ways of Jewish unbelief.

Sermon LI.

On the deaf and dumb demoniac healed

Because the heat had poured itself upon the earth more than usual, I have long been silent, lest the crowding that is born of the desire to hear should itself produce for us the blaze of the dog-day heat: now that the mildness of autumn has tempered the air, we are called back, with the Lord's help, to the Lord's word. When a certain man brought before the Lord, to be healed, his son, possessed by the fury of a deaf and dumb spirit, the Evangelist related that the Lord, beyond the wont of his patience, was so moved that he inveighed against the father's wound before he was moved to the cure of the son. One of the crowd, he says, answering, said: Teacher, I have brought my son to you, who has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down, and he foams, and gnashes his teeth, and withers away; and I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not (Mark 9:17–18). He, answering them, said: O disbelieving generation! (Mark 9:19)

One of the crowd answering: why is it that when one asks, many are struck? why is it that when one disputes, all are branded with disbelief? why is it that at the voice of one the whole

generation is named proud in unbelief? Why is it? Because this man had come not to God, but he had come to a teacher; demanding the cure not from power but from skill; laying the slowness of the cure not to the cause but to the one curing; assigning the disciples' inability to the master's lack of skill; satisfying the Jewish spite of the scribes' envy with such a clamour: And I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not. That is to say, that it was a devil that did not believe Christ, a demon that could hold the power of Christ's name cheap. The disciples drove demons out of possessed bodies not in their own name, but in Christ's. So the fact that the demon did not yield when the disciples commanded, this man was dragging to the weakness of Christ's name, not to the fault of the disciples. So the Lord, seeing the crowds of the Jews standing round thinking thus, brands thus the unbelief of the fathers in the sons, and strikes thus the poisonous offspring in their begetters. O disbelieving generation!

The Lord, coming, he says, to his disciples, saw a great crowd around them, and scribes disputing with them; and at once all the people, seeing Jesus, were astounded, and they were afraid (Mark 9:14–15). Fearing, surely, that at the master's coming they would lose the ground on which they had mocked the disciples; and that, once so great a demon had been put to flight, the very thing that had been the occasion of confusion would become for the disciples a cause of glory. Hence it is that the Lord, when one was asking

for all, answered: O disbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? By whose disbelief not even one demon is put to flight from a captive body.

How long shall I be with you? "And shall I not send to the Gentiles? where at the voice of one disciple of mine temples fall, images flee, altars of sacrifice are consumed, idols fall, groves are cut down, the whole power of demons is driven, groaning and trembling and wailing, from its ancient and decrepit seats: shrines are changed into churches, altars of sacrifice are turned into altars, the victims of dead beasts are transformed into the living victim of the heart, auguries, divinations, dreams are set in the sole will of God, in the choice of God alone." How long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? He bears with them by patience, not by fear; not by necessity, but by mercy; with expectation, not with dread, he bears with them, carries them, waits for them, he who wills that the ungodly man return, not perish.

Bring him to me: as if he could not cure him placed far off; but bring, you, the cause of your disbelief, the title of your faithlessness, the proof of your unbelief. Bring him. So that you who would not believe God even when he taught may at least believe when a demon confesses, and may feel yourselves more wicked than the devil himself, when you see him confess, and tremble at once at the presence of his examining judge.

And they brought him; and when he had seen him, at once the spirit threw him into convul-

sions, and dashed to the ground he rolled about foaming (Mark 9:20). The man rolled about, but the devil was tortured; the cure shook the one invaded, but the majesty of the judge convicted the invader; the captive was set before him, but the enemy was punished; the devil's punishment was showing in the torment of a human body. There is need, brothers, there is need of the light of God, so that in the work of God human eyes may not be so deceived.

And he asked his father: How long a time is it since this happened to him? And he said: From infancy (Mark 9:21). The author of time asks the time of the suffering; the physician asks the time of the suffering, not as one who does not know, but so that, knowing, he may make it known to those who do not know. Indeed, by such a question he opens the time, unfolds the age, goes back over the infancy, so that the cause of so great an evil may touch not the offspring but the parent, because the pledge given him by God he had brought back to the devil's favour, to the honour of demons, as Scripture says: And they offered their sons and their daughters to demons (Ps 106:37). What crime had infancy committed, that it should make room in itself for the devil? what guilt? but little ones are filled with a demon when they are offered by their parents to the devil, are brought to the care of demons. Indeed, he is loosed by the father's faith whom the father's faithlessness had bound.

It is the father's voice: If you can do anything, help us, having pity on us (Mark 9:22). That is:

help us, have mercy on us, whose guilt weighs down the innocent, to whose punishment the danger of the child thus redounds. And well does the Lord ask faith back from the parents, saying: If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes (Mark 9:23). And the father: I believe, Lord; help my disbelief (Mark 9:24). The father believes; and, as we have said, he is freed by the father's faith who had been condemned by the father's faithlessness. For him whom his begetter's faith profited, how could his begetter's unbelief fail to harm? But how he was healed, or why the disciples, who had cast out many demons, were unable to drive this one out, we shall set forth, with the Lord's help, in the following sermon.

Sermon LII.

On the same

It is the teacher's office to discuss what has been read, and to establish and show in clear speech what is obscured by mystical senses, so that a lesser understanding may not breed ruin for the hearer from the very thing from which it ought and was able to bring him saving knowledge.

This, then, is the tenor of today's reading. And one of the crowd, answering, said: Teacher, I have brought my son, who has a deaf and dumb spirit (Mark 9:17). He did not say: "I have brought my son, deaf and dumb", but: I have brought my son, who has a deaf and dumb spirit. Can it be that spiritual wickedness is marked off by human members and confined by human senses, so as to bear our infirmities, our passions; and that it cannot see except through the windows of the eyes, nor take in hearing except through the openings of the ears, nor utter speech except by the office of tongue or mouth, and so endure the miserable state of the deaf and dumb, when its thin and airy nature knows no flesh, rejects bones, like a breathing breeze crosses the whole world in a moment of time, takes on diverse appearances, is changed into various forms, pen-

etrates hearts, mocks souls, breathes in ungodly and most shameful thoughts, and is not perceived whence it comes or where it returns, and so, like a flying dart, pierces innocent minds with a deadly wound and with all ease? It would be little if the father alone had said this in his supplication, when he said: I have brought my son, who has a deaf and dumb spirit, had not the Lord himself driven out the unclean spirit with such a rebuke: Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, go out of him (Mark 9:25).

But now let us go on to what belongs to the solution of the question. God, who is going to burn the demons with perpetual fire, who already, even in the present, binds them with chains, racks them with torments, presses them with punishments, can also, when he commands, maim them with total infirmity, and, in the way in which they see, in which they hear, in which they speak, make them blind, make them deaf and dumb, so that they cannot speak. But in this place let it be declared what the devil did to the man. The ancient deserter, when he found that God had come to the earth, blocked the ears of men, bound the tongue, and, the doors of the human senses barred, made and prepared the human breast as the hiding place of his cave, thinking that the hearing of the word, the power of the divine name, would not come there; at the same time, deceitful and cunning as he is, he believed that with such a fiction he could catch the father and deceive the parents, so that they would despair that one could be cured who could

neither hear nor speak; and so that what was the devil's work they would believe to belong to human infirmity, would lay to the account of the child, would ascribe to nature, what the enemy shut up within had brought in.

Indeed, as Matthew relates of the same, he had deceived this wretch's father with another pretence too; for he begs him thus: Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is moonstruck, and is grievously tormented (Matt 17:15). The demon then wished what was the work of his own art to seem to be of human nature or of a heavenly element, fitting the man's sufferings to the courses of the moon; he harassed the body as the moon waxed, so that they would believe to be the moon's what was the devil's crime and fury. So he mocked men, got round the ignorant, defamed among the idle a creature which, made only for light, does not know how to harm men, whom it is rather compelled to help with continual service. But after the examining judge of hidden things came, the most powerful inspector of secrets, whom the hidden fictions of the devil will not be able to withstand, the boy is brought to be healed by divine command; so that whatever the devil had bound might be loosed by Christ. The enemy contrived, he contrived it, that what was seen should be nature's.

But why could the disciples not cast him out? Because this man is brought forward as a figure of the Gentile people; since the Gentile people, according to the Apostle, had the spirit of this air. The spirit, he says, of the air, who now works in

the sons of distrust (Eph 2:2). This man, then, was deaf and dumb, who could neither hear the Law nor confess God, but was tossed in the fire of Gehenna and through the waters of the ever bitter whirlpool; nor could he be healed by the disciples or by any man, because Christ was of old called the hearing of faith, the confession of salvation, the redemption and the life of the Gentiles. Indeed, when the devil has been put to flight by Christ's command, what was shut lies open, the ties are loosed, speech is given back, hearing returns, the man is restored, and the devil alone laments that he has been thrust out of his long possession. Hence it is that one who comes from the Gentiles is first cleansed of the demon by the laying on of the hand and by exorcisms, and receives the opening of the ears, so that he may be able to take in the hearing of faith, so that he may be able to come to salvation with the Lord accompanying him.

Sermon LIV.

On Zacchaeus

Lately the blessed Evangelist, in describing the life and the end of the inhuman rich man, moved and saddened our human feelings; but today, by relating the humanity and the faith of the rich man Zacchaeus, he has lifted us up and carried us forward to heavenly joy. And having entered, he says, Jesus was walking through Jericho (Luke 19:1). Why does he walk through, not walk? Because what Moses had walked, Christ was walking through; and the people whom Moses led into the way, Jesus brought to the rest of the promised dwelling. He was walking through Jericho. Jericho is that very city which Joshua son of Nun overthrew with the sevenfold blast of the trumpets (Josh 6:20). But because Christ came to save what had perished, he enters Jericho, so that what the Law had cast down with its terrible shouting, Jesus might raise up with the cry of loving preaching.

Jesus, he says, having entered, was walking through Jericho; and behold, a man named Zacchaeus, and he was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich (Luke 19:2). Chief of the publicans: in a lost city Zacchaeus is written to have held the chief place in a lost trade; from the place,

the person, the office, the greatness of the guilt is shown, so that from the greatness of the crime the greatness of the one who remits it may shine out.

And he sought to see Jesus (Luke 19:3). Whoever seeks to see Christ, let him look at heaven, whence Christ is, not at the earth, whence gold is. So the rich man who looks upward does not carry his riches, but tramples on them; he is not bowed down by riches, but lifted up; and he drives his riches to the service of the one who lavishes them, not to the servitude of avarice for riches; the avaricious man is the servant of his riches, not their lord: but the merciful man proves that he has as many servants as coins. He sought to see Jesus, and could not because of the crowd, for he was small of stature. Very great in heart was he who seemed small in body; for with his mind he touched the heavens, he who in body did not equal men. Let no one, then, take care for the shortness of his body, to which he can add nothing; but let him take care that he stands high by faith.

And running ahead, he climbed into a tree (Luke 19:4). By what steps, do you think, did this man reach the branches of a very high tree? He trod on the earth, climbed over gold, passed beyond avarice, and stepped over the whole mass of riches, so that, leaping into the tree of pardon, he might lay hold of the fruit of mercy, and from the watchtower of confession behold the bestower of indulgence. He climbed into a sycamore tree. For a mystery, not for the occasion; he climbed into

a sycamore tree, so that from where Adam had covered the nakedness of his body, from there Zacchaeus might veil the foulness of his avarice. He climbed into a sycamore tree, to see Jesus, for he was to pass that way. Truly he said "to pass", for Christ had come through the ways of earth and the labours of men not to stay, but he had come to pass through.

And when Jesus had come to the place, looking up, he saw him (Luke 19:5). As if he would not have seen, had he not turned his eyes there, he who, while he was absent, saw Nathanael from afar under the same tree (John 1:48): but he saw him, saw him for pardon, looked on him for grace, gazed on him for life, contemplated him for salvation. Whom God sees, he does not desire to recognise as one who is ignorant, but, as one who knows, he wills to see him for glory.

He saw him, and said to him: Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay in your house. If he had done well to climb, why is he told: Come down? Above he said: Running ahead, he climbed the tree. The servant runs ahead of the Lord, and Zacchaeus climbed a tree before the Ruler climbed the cross; hence it is that he is told: Make haste and come down. If you are wise, make haste and come down: come down from the tree of Adam before the Lord does, so that after the cross of the Lord's Passion you may climb. Unless someone has taken up his cross, and followed me (Matt 10:38); he did not say, "gone before me". Come down, then, to lay down the burdens of so much fraud, the weights

of greed, the mass of usury, the mastership of the publican, the chief place in a most cruel exaction, so that, unencumbered, you may enter the school of poverty, the discipleship of mercy, the practice of piety, the discipline of patience, the pursuits of the virtues, the knowledge of divinity, the endurance of sufferings, the philosophy of death, and, made perfect at last, climb among the heights of the tree of life.

Come down, for today I must stay in your house. He whose house Christ has not entered will not come to the divine dwelling; and he at whose table Christ has not sat here will not recline at the heavenly table. And making haste he came down, and received him joyfully (Luke 19:6). He rejoices, because he has received the one who receives him, because he feeds his shepherd, because the accused inclines the judge with the vote of his humanity, because with a loan of food and drink he makes his debtor his own and acquires him; and so it comes about that this publican does not lose his gain, but changes it.

And when they saw it, he says, they all murmured, saying that he had turned aside to a sinful man (Luke 19:7). And who is without sin? And if no one is, he denies pardon to himself who accuses God because he goes in to sinners. God, when he seeks a sinner, seeks not the sins, but the man: so as to despise the sin, which is man's work, so as not to lose his own work, which man is. Hear the Prophet saying: Turn away your face from my sins (Ps 51:11), that is, from my works. But of himself: Do not despise the works of your

hands (Ps 138:8). A judge, when he wishes to forgive, looks at the man, not at the fault; a father, when he wishes to have mercy on his son, thinks of his affection, not of the offence: so in man God is mindful of his own work, so as to forget the human work.

You, then, who reproach, who murmur that Christ turned aside to a sinner, take from such an entering the way of salvation, the example of pardon, the hope of mercy, and beware lest that be for you matter for blasphemy which is for you an occasion of salvation. Where should the physician go, if not to the sick? It is not the healthy, he says, who need a physician, but those who are ill (Matt 9:12). Where should the panting shepherd go, if not to the lost sheep? When does a king go in among the enemy, unless when he wishes to set a captive free? And he who loses a precious pearl does not disdain to enter squalid places, and does not shrink from searching for it among the very dung. Over what precipice will a mother not throw herself after her son? And is God blamed, who created man to his image and likeness (Gen 1:26), because he seeks man among his sins with the charity of a Maker? You murmur, man, that God seeks man among sins: what will you do when you see him, for man's sake, penetrate the very darkness of Tartarus?

Hear, however, what Christ did when he had gone in to the sinner. Standing, he says, Zacchaeus said (Luke 19:8). You see how he who lay low has been raised up. We lie in vices, and we lie oppressed; we stand when, with good works, we are

raised up to advancement. Standing, he says, Zacchaeus said: Half of my goods I give to the poor. This man believes that he will live after death, who already sends half his goods ahead to the life to come. Granted that he is perfect who always sends ahead from here all that he has to the place where he will live; yet this man is a companion of the virtues, a sharer of prudence, a partaker of faith, who sends even half to God, because what a man leaves here, he loses. And indeed, brothers, just as this man believes that he will live there, since he sends his things over there, so that other man, I tell you, does not believe that he will live, who has prepared for himself nothing there that he may have. For if we can scarcely bear poverty in time, who will endure becoming a beggar for ever? What soldier does not send home whatever he acquires by the sweat of war, so that a delightful old age may make up for the labours of his youth? And the Christian, for whom living in the world is a soldier's service, how does he not take thought to console his earthly dangers with heavenly leisure? How the Christian is to do this, Zacchaeus himself both teaches by word and shows by example.

Half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by fraud, I restore fourfold. He who pays out what is another's plunders more by giving than by stealing; nor does he thereby silence the groans of those in pain, but prolongs them. I dare to say it: he who offers to God out of fraud heaps up crimes, he does not wash them away; because in such a gift God looks

on the spoils of his poor, not on works of mercy. Without cause does he weep before God, against whom the cause of the poor man will justly have wept before God. It is the voice of God: If you take your brother's tunic in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down (Exod 22:25). As the lamp betrays the thief, so the sun accuses those who defraud.

If we wish to offer to God what is ours, if we wish to possess with God the things that are ours, let us also merit to hear such words as Zacchaeus heard: Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham (Luke 19:9). The inhuman rich man, though he was a son of Abraham, became a son of Gehenna; this man, though he was a son of plunder, by giving what was his and restoring what was another's, is adopted as a son of Abraham. Yet let no one think that Zacchaeus, by offering half his goods, held the summit of perfection, he who, after all that was his, gave himself also to the Lord, so that, upheld by the honour of the episcopate, he passed from the table of the publican's gain to the table of the Lord's body; and, leaving behind the fraudulent riches of the world, he found in the poverty of Christ the true riches of the world.

Sermon LV.

On God's fatherly love for us, on fathers' love for their sons, and on the punishment of the Jews

After the precepts of the Law, spread through volumes, heaped up in books, did not suffice to commend divine love to us, God's affection is planted and insinuated into the hard hearts of men by comparisons, by examples. Which of you, he says, if his son asks his father for bread, will he give him a stone? Or a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he hand him a scorpion? (Luke 11:11–12) If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your sons, how much more will your heavenly Father give a good spirit to those who ask him? (Luke 11:13)

Which of you, if his son asks his father for bread, will he give him a stone? Charity has no guile; piety does not admit fraud, nor affection falsehood. If he is a father, he cannot not love; if he loves, he does not know how to give anything but what is good. He denies his father who is suspicious of his father's bounty; he does not know himself to be a son whom his father's gifts make uneasy. He shuts out all that belongs to piety who does not believe that whatever a father gives is salutary; or how will a father be able to give

evils instead of goods to his sons, who is always ready to bear evils for his sons, who for his sons does not flee from death, does not avoid dangers? And therefore God made you a father, therefore he willed that man be procreated from you, he who, since he had made you from the earth, could surely have made a great many: but he so acted that by begetting you might know how great is the affection of one who begets, and might prove in yourself the love of your author to be as great as that which you yourself, the author of a child, strive to spend on your child.

Certainly God willed you to feel what the affection of one who begets is not only in yourself, but in wild beasts, and in cattle, and in birds he willed you to see it: though he brought them forth from the earth by his command alone, he afterwards compelled them to feel the labour of begetting, to change their homes, to seek out places fit for lairs, to fortify their young by the difficulty of the places, to bring them forth with groans, to rear them with the greatest labours, and not to refuse themselves to death if they see their young being taken. Hence, if not by the comparison of man, at least by that of wild beasts, by the likeness of cattle, by the examples of birds, learn how great is the sincerity in a father's charity.

If, then, you believe God, and have confessed him father, whatever he commands, whatever he chooses for you, believe that it is very salutary for you, believe that it is very life-giving. A mother's gifts may not be examined, a father's warnings

ought not to be revised; so, though the look of a father's command be rather sad, the thing itself is salutary and life-giving. So Abraham, when he believed God a father, did not attend to the harsh and bitter forms of the commands; he receives a shameful circumcision (Gen 17); and what the heavenly Father commands, he does not examine, but judges glorious: he weighs a most wicked parricide; but because God commands, he commits everything to piety. Hence Isaac, when he saw his father's sword over him, when he could have shuddered, when he could have felt pain, rejoiced to be a victim (Gen 22). Hence Jephthah's daughter paid her father's gift, her father's vows, with her own death, with all thanksgiving (Judg 11). Why, then, does one who now knows God dispute about his father's gifts? When a little and innocent child asks of his father, does he not receive what is good and profitable for him?

But let us search out why the Lord made these likenesses. Which of you, he says, if his son asks his father for bread, will he give him a stone? He could have said: will he give cockle, will he give darnel, which from its nearness and likeness passes itself off as bread, but brings on anguish? But Christ had come to sons, that is, to the Jews, whom he complained, with such a cry, that he had begotten: I have begotten sons and exalted them; but they have despised me (Isa 1:2); he had come, then, to sons, the bread from heaven had come, who said: I am the bread that came down from heaven (John 6:41). But for the Jews he was turned into a stone of stumbling and a

rock of offence (Rom 9:33; Isa 8:14), as the Lord says: Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (Rom 9:33). Why a rock? Because they were eager to bite a rock, not to seek bread from their father. Many dogs, he says, have surrounded me (Ps 22:17). Indeed, after they are shown to have been turned from men into dogs, the heavenly bread was turned for them into a rock, not by the vice of the giver, but by the wickedness of the receivers, so that it would not refresh them, but kill them; nor, laid in the foundation, had it raised them to the summit, but those who were bent on their father's murder it cast down and rolled into deep ruin.

He added another likeness: Will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Christ too was a fish, lifted from the bed of the Jordan, who, laid on the coals of the sufferings, after the resurrection provided his own, that is the disciples, with a food that was then life-giving; but for the Jews this fish is changed into a serpent, as the Lord says: As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up (John 3:14). The Jews saw Christ in the serpent, because the impious eye cannot see God, cannot see loving-kindness.

He spoke a third likeness too: If he asks for an egg, will he hand him a scorpion? It is customary and usual for little ones always to ask for an egg, and for parents not to refuse an egg to small children who ask: but because Christ had come to gather as a hen her chicks (Matt 23:37), he brought forth the egg of the word, by which the holy offspring of the Church were to be nour-

ished. But because the Jew, out of envy, wished rather to spill that egg than to take it, he found a scorpion in that very place, so that, according to the Apostle, the commandment which was for life to them became for them a thing of death (Rom 7:10). In commendation of loving-kindness the Lord brought forth and showed three examples, so that by three testimonies, as by three witnesses, he might both rouse the godly to faith in his love, and refute the impious: that it was not by the father's vice, but by their own, that they had not received the grace of charity.

Sermon LVI.

On the Apostles' Creed

The sudden and confused storm of a premature birth would make me anxious, and the unripe shootings of the offspring would trouble me, were it not that often, the delays of time broken through, by a rough robbery, the bars of the womb burst open, those about to be born seek and snatch the sudden gains of living. Hence it is that a man often, disdaining the term of the tenth month, in the seventh month casts off and deserts the narrow mansions of his first house, the tight mansions of the womb, so that, a new fighter, he may rejoice to have overcome time before he himself pays his servitude to the times.

And if this is permitted to human nature, what will be able to stand against heavenly and divine nature? Or what can the Holy Spirit not do, if the flesh can do this? Or how does heavenly grace not accomplish what human frailty obtains and fulfils? Did not Paul so trouble, with bitter pain, the way and the womb of our bearer, that by a heavenly whirlwind and with the whole storm he forestalled the times of the Church in labour, so that he was born suddenly, and on the way (Acts 9:3), he who was to provide the Gentiles with the way to faith? Rightly he calls himself

one untimely born (1 Cor 15:8), and marvels that he was born, he who knows that he endured no times of conception. For while he himself, still an enemy, was striking from outside the womb of the holy mother, and dashing her venerable children at their very birth, suddenly he who had been the most ferocious persecutor of that very shoot is changed into a holy shoot. The eunuch too is begotten on the way (Acts 8:36–38). So that him whom human rashness had castrated for the servitude of a man, and whom an unwilling chastity had placed within a king's court, a willing chastity, a vowed chastity, might advance and transfer to the glory of the heavenly court, to the service of the eternal King. Blessed is he, to whom it was given not to lose the insignia of the palace, but to change them.

This is what reason says, little children: that you, whom we received sad into the mother's womb, we may bring forth most joyful in one and the same moment. Hear the faith, learn the prayer. But since, as time hinders us, neither can we open the mystery to you, nor can you solemnly give back to us what is handed over, see to it that you now learn the words of the Creed simply, and at Easter time, when these things are handed over more fully, you may come to know the inner things of the sacrament itself. Take what you wish, seize what you desire, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and those who do violence carry it off (Matt 11:12). Take what you wish; and what force can carry off, let grace bestow.

The entrance of life, the gate of salvation, the way into faith, is taught thoroughly to be a confession single, innocent and pure, as the Prophet says: Enter his gates in confession (Ps 100:4). Hence the same Prophet, so admonished, asks for entry to the houses of God, who spoke within him, saying: Open to me the gates of justice, and having entered them I will confess to the Lord (Ps 118:19). You see that he cannot confess who has not entered this house of salvation and faith, into which, as confession admits, so denial without doubt shuts out of it. But let us hear how one must confess. With the heart, says the Apostle, one believes for justice, and with the mouth confession is made for salvation (Rom 10:10). And he showed what was to be believed. If you believe, he says, the Lord Jesus in your heart, and have confessed with your mouth, you will be saved (Rom 10:9). With the heart one believes for justice, with the mouth confession is made for salvation. Great, little children, is the short way of our faith that we see in this, since between the heart and the tongue the whole mystery of human salvation turns and is accomplished. You have, man, the means by which you ought to believe: with the heart one believes for justice; you have the means by which you ought to confess: with the mouth confession is made for salvation. And what shall I say? That man has everything in himself who has himself; and he has himself who has God; and he has God who believes him to be his own, and confesses him his author.

Sign yourselves. The faith which is taken in by hearing, believed with the heart, uttered with the mouth for salvation, is to be placed in the secret of the mind, and committed to the very vitals of our breast, lest, by being incautiously written down on paper and in ink, it should not be kept for believers for life, but betrayed to unbelievers for ruin. In yourself, man, you must guard what, placed outside you, could be lost to you.

Sermon LVII.

On the Apostles' Creed

Blessed Isaiah, no less an evangelist than a prophet, laments that he has unclean lips and that he dwells in the midst of a people that has unclean lips, saying: O wretched am I, for I am pierced with compunction, because, though I am a man and have unclean lips, and dwell also in the midst of a people that has unclean lips, I have seen with my eyes the king, the Lord Sabaoth (Isa 6:5). He is struck down by a pain beyond the human, because what he perceives and sees of God he is not able to speak, cannot announce, cannot confess. As narrow as the flesh is, so tight are the lips for his heart, so short is the tongue as interpreter of his mind. In the flesh a fire pants, shut in, steams through the veins, inflames the bowels, seethes in the marrow, and ever sets on fire all the inner parts of a man, because what he contemplates with the affection of the mind, he is not able to bring forth with the mouth, to pour out with the lips, to articulate with the tongue, and wholly to breathe out in speech. Hence it is that Isaiah, when he saw the king of heaven, that is Christ, and beheld in clear vision that he is the Lord Sabaoth, wept over his own lips and those of his people as unclean; because, as the divinity

of Christ, confessed, enlightens hearts, purges mouths, cleanses lips, so the majesty of Christ, denied, defiles them. But let us hear what this groaning of the prophet achieved. And there was sent, he says, to me one of the seraphim, who had in his hand a coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar, and he touched my mouth, saying: Behold, this has touched your lips, and has taken away iniquities, and has purged away sins (Isa 6:6–7).

This is not the time to say why one is sent, and who he is that is sent, and how great is he who thus fearlessly carries in his hand the coal of heavenly fire, or rather so tempers it with his touch that he purges the prophet's lips and does not burn them up; but now let us too be pierced with the whole affection of the heart, and acknowledge that we are wretched in this wretchedness of the flesh, and lament with pious groans that we too have unclean lips, so that this one of the seraphim, with the tongs of the law of grace, may bring down to us the fiery mystery of faith taken from the altar above, and touch the mouths of our lips with such restraint as to take away iniquities, purge away sins, and so kindle our mouths into the flame of full confession, that this may be a burning of salvation, not of pain. Let us ask also that the heat of this coal may reach even to our hearts, so that from such great sweetness of the mystery we may take not only a taste on the lips, but full satiety in the very senses and in the mind; and as Isaiah, after the cleansing of his lips, spoke of the ineffable childbearing of

the Virgin, saying: Behold, a virgin shall receive in the womb, and shall bear a son (Isa 7:14), so may we tell the sacrament of the Passion and the glory of the resurrection: "I believe in God the Father almighty."

Rightly do you confess today that you have believed in God, when you rejoice to have escaped gods and goddesses unequal in sex, confused in number, common in their crowd, base in birth, shameful in repute, greatest in impiety, first in wickedness, singular in crime, accused even by the very faces of their sepulchres; for it would be a matter of wretchedness, pain and misfortune to have had as little slaves as many and such as you have endured until now as masters. But rejoice that you have come to the one God, living, true, alone, but not solitary, saying: "I believe in God the Father." Let him who names the Father now confess the Son: because he who willed to be called Father, to be named Father, showed in his clemency that he has a Son, whom he did not get from time, did not beget in time, did not take on for a time. Divinity neither takes a beginning nor receives an end, nor admits a successor, since it knows no setting. God does not bring forth the Son in pains, but shows by powers that he is; nor does he make outside himself what is from himself, but he begets; and while he is in himself, he opens and reveals. The Son proceeded from the Father, he did not withdraw; nor did he go forth from the Father to succeed a father, but he went forth to remain always in the Father. Hear John saying: This was in the beginning (John 1:2). And

elsewhere: What has been from the beginning (1 John 1:1). What "was" certainly was not added; what "has been" is plainly shown not to have begun. I am, he says, the first, and I am the last (Isa 44:6). He who is first is not after another; he who is last leaves no other after him; but when he says these things, he does not shut out the Father, but shuts up all things in himself and the Father.

But let us come to what follows: "And in Christ Jesus, his only Son, our Lord." As kings are named by the titles of their triumphs, and gain very many surnames from the names of subject nations, so Christ is named by the titles of his benefits: for he is called Christ from chrism, who as a loving healer poured the ointment of divinity into the now dry limbs of mortals; and as Christ from chrism, so he is called Jesus from salvation, who poured the divine ointment on us for this purpose, that he might restore to the sick a sure salvation, to the lost a perpetual health. "And in Christ Jesus, his only Son." Because, though there are many sons by grace, he is one and only by nature. "Our Lord." Who seeks us out, freed from the servitude of so many, such cruel, such base masters, not to claim us back for our former condition, but to set us free into perpetual liberty.

"Who was born of the Holy Spirit." Thus and in such a way is Christ born for you, until he changes for you, man, the order of being born, so that you may have a new rising in life, you for whom the old setting always remained in death. "Who was born of the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary." Where the Spirit begets, a virgin brings

forth, all that is done is divine, nothing human; nor is there any place for weakness, where power is associated with power. Adam was put to sleep, so that a virgin might be taken from the man (Gen 2:21); now the Virgin was astonished (Luke 1:29), so that the man might be restored from the Virgin. What can nature claim for itself from so great, from such a childbearing, where, while it sees its order made new, it beholds all its rights changed, and perceives and marvels that its author has come into its offspring? Let this seem base to unbelievers; to believers it is a great mystery.

"Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried." You hear the name of the judge, so that you may also recognise the time of the Passion; you hear "crucified", so that you may recognise that the salvation which was lost has been restored to us through that by which it had perished, and may see the life of believers hang there where the death of unbelievers had hung. You hear "buried", lest the death be thought a pretence. This is the sign of divine power: when death dies by death, the author of death is cut down by his own sword, the robber is caught by his own prey, hell is burst open by the life it has swallowed.

"On the third day he rose from the dead." Christ spent the three days of his burial so as to profit three dwellings, the underworld, the earth, heaven; to restore the things that are in heaven, to repair those that are on earth, and to redeem those that are in the underworld, so that at the

same time he might lay open to men, for salvation, the grace of the Trinity given in the mystery of the three days.

"He ascended into the heavens." He ascended, not to carry himself back into heaven, he who always remained in heaven, but to carry you through, whom, bound as you were, he released and withdrew from hell. Understand from where, to where, man, you have been raised through God, so that you might be steadfast in the heavenly places, you who were slippery and ever tottering on earth. "He sits at the right hand of the Father." But for his own the Father has nothing on the left. Our confession assigns not places in the divine sitting together, but signs of power: God knows no places, Divinity admits nothing on the left.

"From there he will come to judge the living and the dead." Granted the living: how will he be able to judge the dead? But they are alive who are reckoned dead by us. Confess, then, that those will rise again for judgement whom faithlessness reckons to have perished; so that those who have died, and those who will be found alive, may alike render account of their deeds and of their life.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit." After you have confessed the mystery of the flesh taken up, you must confess the Godhead of the Spirit, so that the unity of the Trinity, equal in power, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through all things and in all things, may guard and hold in our confession the entire truth of the faith. "The holy catholic Church." Because neither are the members sepa-

rated from the head, nor the bride from the bridegroom: but then, by such a joining, one spirit comes to be, and God becomes all things and in all things. Therefore he believes in God who confesses the holy Church in God.

"And the remission of sins." He grants himself pardon who trusts that his sins can be remitted to him through Christ. "The resurrection of the flesh." You believe well, if you believe that you can rise from death through God, for whom the elements are always rising again: so time from time, so day from night, so seeds from their burial. Nor will you be able to perish, since they come to life again: nor is it hard for God to make of you, an old man, what you yourself are always making of a seed. "Eternal life."

This faith, this mystery, is not to be committed to paper, not to be written in letters, because paper and letters speak out safeguards rather than grace; but where the grace of God, the divine gift, stands, faith suffices for the pact, the depth of the heart for the secret: so that this Creed of salvation, this pact of life, the divine arbiter may know, the false witness may not know.

Sign yourselves. And may the Lord our God himself guard your senses, your hearts; and in the things that he has commanded you, may he himself stand by you as your helper.

Sermon LVIII.

On the same

He who seeks faith does not seek reasons; he who asks for divine things sets aside human ones; he who is born with God for begetter transcends nature, and owes nothing to time, he who merits the author of time. Behold, we see that you, the pious shoots of faith, wish to be born before you are conceived, to receive the kingdom of heaven before you endure the narrowness of the womb; so to strive for the joys of the father as to pass by the sicknesses of the mother; and you do not think untimely what you believe to be ripe through Christ. So Paul the apostle is born ripe through faith, he who cries out that he is untimely born as to time (1 Cor 15:8). Receive, then, faith by faith alone; and do not seek to have the grounds of faith itself laid open to you, which you, so as not to ask for them, have shut up within faith by your haste.

To faith, children, the faith of your author invites you today, who fulfils the faith of his promise before he receives the faith of your pledge; and this he has restored to human affairs, as long ago he had promised by word through the Prophet. Open wide, he says, your mouth, and I will fill it (Ps 81:11). That is: you open wide in con-

fession, and I will fill it with the mystery of that very confession, and enrich it with mystic speech, and fill it with the whole utterance of the heavenly secret. And indeed, children, whatever the obedience of the one who hears, whatever that of the one who answers professes, this redounds to the grace of God who gives and teaches. About to receive, then, the Creed, that is, the pact of life, the agreement of salvation, and the indissoluble tie of faith between you and God, prepare your breasts, not paper; sharpen your sense, not a pen; and write down what you hear not with ink, but with the spirit as minister: because the eternal and heavenly secret cannot be committed to perishable and corruptible instruments, but must be placed in the very ark of the soul, in the very library of the inner spirit; lest a profane arbiter, lest a wicked examiner find what he may tear apart, and what was given for the salvation of one who confesses and believes become the ruin of one who despises and does not know. But to the Prophet who says to you: Open wide your mouth, and I will fill it, may you be able to answer: In my heart I have hidden your words, that I may not sin against you (Ps 119:11).

"I believe in God the Father almighty." He who has confessed the Father confesses the Son also, because without the Son he cannot be called Father; and because nothing can be increased for God, nothing added to God. The Son always was, because the Father too always was; the Son does not know how to begin, because the Father does not know how to fail; nor does the Begotten grow,

where the Begetter does not grow old: the eternal and co-eternal substance of the Father and the Son is to be reckoned not by human degrees, but by divine powers.

"In Christ Jesus, his only Son, our Lord." Understand Christ as anointed not with common oil, but with the holy one, the Spirit of whom he was born. "Who was born of the Holy Spirit." By such a birth manhood was consecrated in God; by such a condescension Godhead was not lessened in man. "Who was born of the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary." Virginity believed God, because only through God could she be both a virgin and a mother.

"Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried." It names the judge, to mark the time; it recalls "crucified", to set forth what kind of Passion it was: and so that faith may gather the proof of divine power and of a true resurrection from that from which impiety presumed to take matter for insult and occasion for error. Crucified on a cross, on a height, before all his enemies, who watched with all cruelty and observed with all bitterness, he took up death. He suffers burial, lest the impious should boast that he did not go to death in order to conquer it, but feigned it in order to elude it. "Buried, on the third day he rose." And if in the Passion he proved that he had the true substance of our flesh, through the figure of the three days he rises into the whole glory of the Trinity.

"He ascended into the heavens." He ascended carrying us through, not carrying himself back,

he who never withdrew from heaven. "He sits at the right hand of the Father." The order there is divine, not human; the Son sits at the right in such a way that the Father does not sit on the left: unique and singular is the divine sitting together, where the power on high admits nothing on the left. "From there he will come to judge the living and the dead." Let men cease, let heretics cease to judge their judge; let them hope for pardon, lest by such presumption they incur sentence.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit." Now your confession in the Trinity is complete, when with faithful voice you have confessed the Holy Spirit of one substance with the Father and the Son. "And the holy Church." Because she is so joined to Christ that she is carried over into the whole glory of divinity. "The remission of sins." Acquire pardon for yourself by your faith: because he is very much an enemy to himself who does not believe that this is given him which the most bountiful giver of indulgence promises with all kindness.

"The resurrection of the flesh." Believe the resurrection of the flesh: because he who does not believe this has no faith in what was said before, as the Apostle says: If the dead do not rise, neither has Christ risen (1 Cor 15:16). Whom will God judge, over whom will he reign, if resurrection does not give back to life, to judgement, those whom death has taken from the world? "Eternal life." It is plain that eternal life follows when death itself dies.

Sermon LIX.

On the same

You have heard the voice of the Father, you have heard the voice of one calling: "Come, children, come, come, for the time of faith has come, the day of belief, the hour of confession." Come, seekers of the faith, bring a sincere breast, a clean heart, a pure voice, so that what the word of salvation conveys through us, you may take in with holy hearing. Faith comes from hearing, hearing from the word (Rom 10:17). Hear with all simplicity of sense the agreement of faith, the pact of grace, the Creed of salvation, so that at the time of confession you may be able both to hear it and to give it back: because to give this back is to have it; he who has given back the divine gift does not lose it.

God, about to give the Law, commanded that the people wash their garments, wash their bodies, and cleanse themselves wholly from every contagion of the flesh (Exod 19:10), because man cannot approach God polluted with bodily dregs, with worldly squalor. That Law, which held the shadow and figure of grace, rightly seeks so great a purification, rightly demands so great a purity. For those who are to hear the whole mystery of the Divinity, how great a purity of mind, how

great of body is needed? Let us then cleanse our hearts, purify our bodies, open our eyes, unbar our sense, throw wide all the doors of the soul, so that we may be able to hear, grasp, hold, and always keep in the very secret of our heart the Creed, which is the pact of faith.

"I believe in God the Father almighty." We believe in God if we deny gods, if we renounce idols, if we abjure the devil and his angels. Hear, he says, Israel: the Lord your God is one (Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29). And again: You shall have no other gods besides me (Exod 20:3). He will therefore have the true God, the one God, who will not have another god. We believe in God, and confess the same to be Father, so that we may believe that he has always had a Son: to have had a Son, however, not conceived, not begun, not separated by childbirth, not increased by time, not lessened in rank, not changed by ages, but a shoot remaining for ever within the eternal Begetter. I, he says, am in the Father and the Father is in me (John 14:10). We have heard the Father: let us believe the Son by divine power, in an order not human, by the secret of God, not by worldly reason, not by the law of the world, but by might from on high. What it is permitted to know, it is not permitted to discuss; it is fitting to believe, it is not fitting to pry: for this reason we have said "almighty God", that we may think nothing impossible for God.

"And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord." Christ from anointing, he is called Jesus from salvation: because the anointing too, which once had run through kings, prophets and priests as a

figure, poured itself out with the whole fullness of the Spirit of divinity into this King of kings, Priest of priests, Prophet of prophets; so that the kingship and priesthood which it had sent ahead in time through others, it might pour back into its very author and render everlasting. And Jesus, that is, Saviour, is rightly called salvation, because he both gave being to things, and the same gives salvation to the perishing. "His only Son." In himself he is the only Son, who, what he gives to others by his grace, himself possesses for himself, unique, by nature. "Our Lord." As we said above, the Lord God: one God stands firm in Christ: because whatever he is, both by Godhead and by manhood he is one God. In Christ the diversity of substances ceased, where the flesh began to be what the spirit is, what Man God is, what the one majesty of our body and of the Godhead is.

"Who was born of the Holy Spirit, from the Virgin Mary." What earthly thing is born, where, with the Spirit as author, she is called virgin in childbearing? Who would not believe it divine, when she who gave birth felt nothing human? A woman carried God in a virginal temple: hence it is that she both acquired the honour of a mother and did not lose the glory of virginity.

"Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried." We say the name of the judge so that the time of the Passion, the truth of the deed done, may thus be plain. "He was crucified." So that, because death had come through wood, life might return through wood. "And buried." So

that he might fulfil all the duties of death, that death might die by death, that from the seed of that body the whole sowing of human bodies might rise and be lifted up into a living harvest.

"On the third day he rose from the dead." So that in three days the benefit of the Trinity might be laid open, so that through a space of three days the human generation of the three times might be saved, that is, before the Law, under the Law and in grace. "He ascended into the heavens." Not as claiming the heavens, but as claiming them back. No one has ascended into heaven, he says, but he who descended from heaven (John 3:13). "He sits at the right hand of the Father." But he does not have the Father on the left. The sitting together of Divinity admits nothing on the left. "He sits at the right hand of the Father", as in the one Godhead of the Father. "He sits at the right hand", lest he be less in rank, later in order, but that he may reign together with the Father in one divinity, with equal power: I and the Father, he says, are one (John 10:30). "From there he will come to judge the living and the dead." If we believe that the judge will come, let us prepare ourselves innocent for the judge: he denies that there is a judge who does not believe that he will come: he who lives badly very much doubts that he will be judged. He judges the living, he judges the dead also, whom indeed, being about to judge them, he raises up.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit." Having confessed up to here the mystery of the Lord's birth, Passion, resurrection, ascension, coming, we now

come to the confession of the Holy Spirit: so that, as one believes in the Father and the Son, so one may believe in the Holy Spirit, in such a way that we proclaim in the Trinity one Godhead, power, glory. "And the holy Church." We believe the Church also, which we believe to have been received by Christ and confirmed, and which we confess for glory. "The remission of sins." He who is to be born into the new man, what will he have of the ancient guilt, of the old sin? He who does not believe that his past debts have been remitted to him doubts that he will receive the things to come.

"The resurrection of the flesh." Believe, man, that you can rise from death, because before you lived you were nothing: or why do you doubt that you will rise, when everything that is in the world rises again for you daily in this way? The sun sets, and rises again: the day is buried, and returns: months, years, seasons, fruits, seeds, when they pass, themselves die, when they return, come to life again by their own death; and so that you may be taught by a constant and homely example that you will rise again, as often as you sleep and wake, so often you die and rise again. "Eternal life." "Amen." It must be that he who rises lives for ever, because if he did not live for ever, he would rise not to life, but to death.

Sign yourselves. This pact of hope, this agreement of salvation, this Creed of life, this security of faith, let the mind hold, let memory preserve, lest cheap paper cheapen the precious gift of divinity, lest black ink darken the mystery of light,

lest an unworthy and profane hearer have the secret of God. If your charity always offered me silence like this, your hearing would reach all the expositions of my preaching: but may our God deign to grant both to me confidence in speaking, and to you the desire of hearing.

Sermon LX.

On the same

If the Canaanite woman, with a sudden cry, a sudden faith, by Christ's help, both received what she asked and wrung out what was refused (Matt 15:22–28); if the Ethiopian eunuch, passing by, found on the way the secret of the life-giving washing, and seized it in passing (Acts 8:36–38); if Cornelius the centurion came to Christ before he entered baptism (Acts 10:44–48); if the thief, at the very moment of death, broke into paradise (Luke 23:43): who will deny you, too, the life which you seek at the last moment of time? From faith, then, receive faith, and that you may be able to know the mystery of faith, labour as the time draws on.

Moses, about to bring the Law, calls heaven and earth: what will the priest call upon, about to bring forth grace? He said: Give heed, heaven, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth (Deut 32:1); I will say: "Give heed, God, I will speak; and let man hear the words of my mouth." He said: Let my speech be awaited like rain, and let my words come down like dew (Deut 32:2); I will say: "Let your spirit come like dew, and your grace flood like a river, and may there now be the water of the heavenly Word springing

up into eternal life." He said: Because he has called on the name of the Lord, give magnificence to our God (Deut 32:3); I will say: "Because I have called on faith, give belief to your God."

And because the ships of our bodies have been cared for by the Lenten fast, we must now say the agreement of faith, the Creed of the heavenly commerce, so that under a sure hope, through all the seas of the world, through the faithless waves of the age, we may acquire gains that will last for ages. Receive, then, faith, await the thing itself: because for him in whom faith does not go before in the seed, the thing itself does not follow in the fruit.

Sign yourselves. The word creates hearing, hearing conceives faith, faith gives birth to belief, belief nourishes confession, confession gives perpetual salvation. Hence it is that it comes to meet on my mouth and on yours; thus faith meets itself, belief thus embraces itself; salvation thus salutes itself with the kiss of confession.

"I believe in God the Father almighty." This utterance acknowledges and opens the whole mystery of the Trinity. It says God, not gods, because the Christian faith believes one God in the Trinity: it knows the Father, knows the Son, knows the Holy Spirit, knows no gods. Divinity is threefold in persons, but divinity is one in the Trinity: the Trinity is distinct in persons, it is not divided in substances: God is one, but in trinity; God is alone, but not solitary; divinity is neither divided by trinity nor confounded by unity: this is what faith perceives when it says, "I believe

in God." At once it added: "Father." He who believes that the Father is, confesses the Son; he who believes the Father and the Son, let him not perceive ages, not think of degrees, not suspect times, not seek a conception, not know a birth: he who believes God has confessed divine things, not human.

But the heretic says: "How is he Father, if he does not go before? How is he Son, if he does not follow? How does he who begets not give a beginning? How does what is begotten not take its beginning from the one who begets? Reason teaches this, nature proves this." You are wrong, heretic: human reason has this, divine reason does not have it; the nature of the world accepts this, the nature of the Godhead does not admit it; human frailty is conceived and conceives, is brought forth and brings forth, is begotten and begets, receives a beginning and gives an end, receives death and passes it on, and keeps in its offspring whatever belongs to its condition and nature. But God the Father did not beget in time, because he does not know time; he did not give a beginning, who knows no beginning; he did not pass on an end, who has no end: but he so begot the Son from himself, that all that was in him should be and remain in the Son. The honour of the Begotten is the honour of him who begets, the perfection of the Begotten is the form of him who begets, the lessening of the Begotten is shown to be the injury of him who begets.

But hearing these things, heretic, do not say: "How can these things be?" You have said God,

you have believed the Father, you have confessed him almighty; if you doubt, you have lied; if you say "I believe", how do you not believe, if you discuss? If you think it impossible, you have taken away the omnipotence which you confessed; but let us, who confess the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit of one majesty and glory, now speak of the faith of the Lord's body.

"And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord." After the Son of God, like rain on a fleece (Ps 72:6), poured himself into our flesh with the whole ointment of divinity, he was named Christ from the ointment: and he alone became the author of this name, who was so poured over God, and poured in, that man and God were one God. This name of the ointment, then, he poured out upon us, who from Christ are called Christians; and that was fulfilled which is sung in the Song of Songs. Your name is ointment poured out (Song 1:3).

"And in Christ Jesus, his Son." The former is the name of the mystery, the latter of the triumph: for as, anointed by God, he obtains his name from the unguent, so, when he gave back to the world the salvation it had lost, he took the name of Saviour from saving. We have often said already that what is called Jesus in the Hebrew tongue is called Saviour in Latin. "And in Christ Jesus, his Son." Whose? Surely of God the Father; when you say, then, "in Jesus his Son", you confess that Jesus who was born of Mary is the Son of God. Beware, then, of perceiving any longer in Christ that he was man, but always confess that

he is God, as the Apostle says: Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we no longer know him (2 Cor 5:16). "Our only Lord." This fits both, because he is both the only one of the Father and our only Lord: others have received by grace to be sons, others to be lords; Christ alone has and possesses by nature to be son, to be Lord.

"Who was born of the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary." If, according to the Evangelist, what has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20), because God is spirit (John 4:24), let the heretic now confess God born of virginal flesh; and let him no longer drag the heavenly mystery, the childbearing of virginity, down to the conceiving of the world, to the injury of earthly frailty.

"Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried." You hear the name of the judge, that you may recognise the time of the Passion; you hear "crucified", that from the ignominy of the death you may perceive the greatness of the charity; and may know that the death which came through wood has been put to death through wood; and may believe that greater things have been given back to you through the tree of the cross than you sighed to have lost through the tree of paradise. You say "buried", so that the confession of the burial may prove the true flesh of Christ and a death not perfunctory: to have taken up death and conquered it, to have entered the underworld and returned, to have come under

the laws of Tartarus and to have loosed the laws of Tartarus, is not frailty, but power.

You confess that he rose on the third day, so that you may understand that the resurrection of Christ was the victory of the whole Trinity. You say that he ascended into the heavens, so that you may believe him the Lord of heaven, so that you may acknowledge that he has returned whence he had come, because, the devil overcome, death trodden down, the world set free, Christ triumphs above the heavens, he who was thought to have been vanquished on earth. You cry out: "He sits at the right hand of the Father." So that, because the Godhead of the Father and the Son is one, the power equal, in the heavenly sitting together there may be no injury of a seat on the left. "From there he will come to judge the living and the dead." Because when Christ comes, the dead will rise, the living will be made to stand, so that they may alike plead their causes on the account of their deeds.

And because we have now spoken of the mystery of the Lord's body, let us come to confess the Godhead of the Spirit. "We believe in the Holy Spirit." Whom the divine voice proclaims to us to be God, when it says: For God is spirit. "We believe in the Holy Spirit." Whom the Prophet sings as co-worker of the Father and the Son: By the word of the Lord the heavens were made firm, and by the spirit of his mouth all their power (Ps 33:6). He is wholly God, and the whole power of God, who is proved to be the Creator of the heavenly powers.

"We believe the holy Church." Whom Christ so took up into himself that he made her a sharer of his divinity. "We believe the remission of sins." Because he who through Christ and the Church has been born into the new man will have nothing of the old offence. "We believe the resurrection of the flesh." So that we may believe that this was the cause of the Passion, death and resurrection of Christ: that we might rise from the dead. The flesh will rise, it will rise as we ourselves are, so that the recognition of persons may remain, so that both the martyr may take joy from the persecutor's penalty, and the persecutor take torment from the martyr's honour. "We believe eternal life." Because after the resurrection there is no end either for the good or for the wicked.

Sign yourselves. The faith which we believe and teach let us commit, not with ink, but with the spirit, to the breast, not to paper; let us give it to memory, not to a book, lest human things violate the divine gift, lest a profane arbiter take hold of the heavenly secret, lest what is for life to believers turn out ruin to unbelievers. The sun gives to bleary eyes not light, but darkness; wine does not restore the strength of the feverish, but weakens it; without a physician the cup of life becomes deadly; so for unbelievers the mystery of faith without faith is pernicious. As the Apostle says: Let faith be taken from hearing, and hearing be taken from the word (Rom 10:17); and let the agreement of life, the pact of faith, the law of salvation not cling to the dying, but be fixed in living senses.

Sermon LXI.

On the same

Were I not consoled by the sudden and unexpected conversion of blessed Paul (Acts 9), I would scarcely believe that you could be changed so easily from earthly stain into heavenly glory. For a sudden confession at once made him an apostle from a persecutor, and gave to the Church a distinguished teacher, whom it had found a raging devastator of the Christian name. No less does the example of that eunuch encourage me, whom faith carried off to grace before the chariot could bring him back to India and home (Acts 8:27–39). There is added also that wonderful proof of the thief, who carried off paradise at the very time when he was hung up to pay the penalty of his robbery (Luke 23:43).

Hence, little children, since you have so timed your regeneration that neither can we say what is needful, nor can you hear what you ought, entrusting faith to faith, we hand over briefly what we cannot commend more fully. For how could you come to know, as we expound it, the mystery of the Creed, you who are scarcely able to grasp the Creed itself in memory? This alone we warn: let no one commit to letters what he is to entrust to his heart in order to believe, as the

Apostle warns: With the heart one believes for justice, and with the mouth confession is made for salvation (Rom 10:10).

About to hear the form of faith, the rule of belief, the order of confession, make ready the hearing of body and heart together. As a spring flowing from a narrow mouth is widened into the great waters of rivers, so the faith of the Creed, in a shortened speech, opens the broadest channels of belief. And as a root fixed deep stretches itself out into a lofty shoot, so faith, rooted in the depth of the breast, is lifted up to the lofty summit of belief. Therefore purge from your hearts the mire of unbelief, so that the pure streams of faith may run through you; cut out by the roots the thickets of disbelief in you, so that the sturdy plantings of your belief may grow up to the heights. And because, on the Apostle's authority, with the heart one believes for justice, with the mouth confession is made for salvation, now give into the voice of confession what you already believe in your heart.

"I believe in God the Father almighty." He who believes in God, let him not presume to discuss God; it is enough to know that God is; he who asks whence God is, how great God is, what God is, does not know him; the sun darkens an importunate gaze, an access to God not granted is blinded; let him who wishes to see God learn to keep the measure of seeing him; let him who wishes to know his God not know the gods of the nations; he who speaks of gods contradicts God. To serve one is liberty; to serve many, captivity.

The God whom you have confessed, believe to be Father; so that, believing the Father, you may learn that there is a Son; saying Son, you may recognise that he is begotten of the Father; recognising that he is begotten of the Father, you may not ask how he is begotten, because you have said: "I believe in God the Father almighty." The Almighty can do all things, and if he can do all things, who will deny that he has the Son in himself, from himself, and always with himself? The generation of God has no beginning, knows no end, admits no going out, since the Begotten persists in remaining in the Begetter, as the Lord himself says. I am in the Father, and the Father is in me (John 14:10). I and the Father are one (John 10:30).

You have confessed the Father, you have confessed the Son, you have confessed the secret of divinity: confess the mystery of the Lord's incarnation. "And in Christ Jesus, his Son." Christ is so called from the ointment on high, for he is infused with the whole fullness of divinity; Jesus is a name from salvation, the name which everything that is in heaven, that is in hell, trembling, kneeling, with head bowed, confesses (Phil 2:10–11). "And in Christ Jesus, his only Son, our Lord." As the Godhead of the Father and the Son is one for us, so let the lordship be one for us.

"Who was born of the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary." The Spirit and a virgin are no earthly coupling, but a heavenly secret: hence it is that what is born is divine. Therefore that he was born must be confessed, how he was born

must be kept silent; because what is secret cannot be known, what is closed does not know how to be opened, what is singular is not explained by example.

"Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried." You hear the name of the judge, lest you be ignorant of the time; you hear "crucified", so that the manner of the death may become known to you, and that you may understand what he spent for you, who for your sake underwent the penalty of so great a death. You hear "buried", so that you may know that the death was not perfunctory, but true. Not to wish to die belongs to human fear, to have risen from death belongs to divine power; here, then, do not let the hearing of death cause you to stumble, where the glory of the resurrection hides the injury of death.

"On the third day he rose." Because what dies belongs to man, what rises belongs to the Trinity. "He ascended into the heavens." Carrying man there, where he always remained. "He sits at the right hand of the Father." He sits at the right hand, because the Godhead has nothing on the left. "From there he will come to judge the living and the dead." He will judge the living and the dead, because those will rise for judgement who are thought not to exist after death, whom paganism reckons to have perished with the world.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit." So that you may believe and understand that in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit there is one Godhead. "I believe the holy Church." So that you may confess that the Church, the bride of Christ, will remain

in the perpetual society of Christ. "I believe the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh." He who does not believe the remission of sins, who does not believe the resurrection of the flesh, takes pardon away from himself, himself withdraws life from himself.

What you have heard and believed, what you have confessed, let the heart have, let memory hold, let paper not know, let the scribe be ignorant of, lest the mystery of faith be spread abroad in public, lest the secret of faith be passed on to the faithless. May God, who has given you both to hear and to believe the mystery of faith, himself bring you to eternal salvation.

Sermon LXII.

On the same

A tender nurse, unless he has been wholly reduced to a little child, never brings a little child through to perfect manhood; indeed, then he thins his voice, lays aside words, acts by nods, sets aside his senses, weakens his inward parts, casts off his strength, loosens his limbs, slows his step, longs not to walk, but to creep: he pretends to laugh, feigns to fear, lies that he weeps; because in him a lie is piety, to have played the fool is prudence, weakness is power. This, I think, is what blessed Paul did, when he says: I became a little one in your midst, as if a nurse were cherishing her children (1 Thess 2:7).

But perhaps someone may be astonished when he sees a nurse doing these things: he does not laugh if he is a parent, if he is a father he does not wonder: he cannot call this folly who knows how to love. Hence I beseech you who are already fathers, already strong, already prudent, to allow me to pay to the little ones of my Lord the services of the nursing I owe them: and today to bring out words more suited to caresses than to skill; not to square my sermons, but to liquefy them, and to pour them out like milk for throats still tender, as the Apostle teaches: I gave you milk to drink, not

solid food (1 Cor 3:2); to change my voice, to love varied affections, and what more? To be taken up in mind, heart and body with the weak minds of little ones.

But now I call you, the pious shoots of the Church, with the prophetic word. Come, children; hear me (Ps 34:12), or rather, through me and through my voice, hear the commands of the true begetter, for God calls you by my mouth. Come, children. Come where? And for what? The fear of the Lord, he says, I will teach you. And who should come to fear? He who desires life, he who longs to see good days; he who wishes to do good, to flee evil; he who, after the conflict of flesh and spirit, desires to obtain the rest of divine peace. Come, children; hear me: the fear of the Lord, he says, I will teach you. Who is the man who desires life, and longs to see good days? (Ps 34:13) Keep your tongue from evil, and let your lips not speak guile (Ps 34:14). And as crimes vitiate the conscience, so guile defiles the lips, curses contaminate the tongue; and so one defiled in lips and tongue cannot confess to God. And since with the heart one believes for justice, with the mouth confession is made for salvation, sanctify your hearts, cleanse your lips, justify your tongue, so that the voice that bears the faith may come forth from a pure breast with the whole example of holiness.

Sign yourselves. An agreement or pact which contains the hope of a gain that is coming, or that is to come, is called a symbol, as we are taught by human contract too: yet this symbol between

two parties is always made firm by a written deed made double, and human caution renders it secured in the stipulation, so that bad faith, ever the enemy of contracts, may not creep up on anyone, may not deceive anyone. But this is among men, among whom fraud always does harm, either to the one by whom it is done or to the one to whom it is done; but between God and men the Symbol of faith is made firm by faith alone: credit is given not to the letter, but to the spirit; and it is entrusted to the heart, not to paper: because a divine loan does not need human security. God does not know how to commit fraud, he cannot suffer it, because he is not shut out by time, not overcome by age, not deceived by concealment; he sees hidden things, holds what is stolen, possesses what is denied. With God his account is always safe, because, as for what he has lent, there is no place where it may perish; and if it perishes for the man who denies it, not for God, it does not perish for him who lends at interest.

But you say: "He who cannot be deceived, why is it that he demands an agreement? Why does he seek the Symbol?" He seeks it for your sake, not for his own; not because he doubts, but so that you may believe: he seeks the Symbol, because he who came to your lot does not disdain to come to your contract; he seeks the Symbol, because he who, though he himself always lends everything, wishes to be owed; he seeks the Symbol, because he now calls you not to the thing itself, but to faith, and through the present agreement draws you on to the future and invites you to gain.

The Apostle recalls this when he says: From faith to faith (Rom 1:17). And elsewhere: The just man lives by faith (Gal 3:11). Let no one, then, be unmindful of the Symbol, let no one forget the agreement entered into with God; let no one, when he has only just received faith, require the thing itself; when he has come to hope, let him not complain that he does not at once receive what he hoped for. Hear the Apostle saying: We have been saved in hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what one sees, why does he hope for it? (Rom 8:24) But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom 8:25). Hope reaches out to things to come, faith carries across to things promised; when the things themselves have come, and the promises too have arrived, hope ceases, faith comes to an end.

A letter is sweet, but only until he comes himself who sent it; a bond is necessary, but only until the payment of the debt; flowers are welcome, but only until one comes to the fruit. But presence does away with the letter, payment breaks the security, flowers are consumed by fruits: and therefore know yourself now designated by faith son of the Father on high, heir of God, co-heir of Christ (Rom 8:17), partaker of the heavenly kingdom, confessor of the divine judge, dweller in heaven, possessor of paradise; know yourself advanced now in hope, not in the thing itself. And therefore receive faith, hold hope, say the Symbol, so that you may be able to come to the thing itself and to those good things which we spoke of before.

Sign yourselves. Today, man, your soul has been presented to God. "I believe in God." Long before, it spoke of God, but did not know him; it called on God, but was ignorant of him; ignorant, surely, of him whom it sought in such a way through stones and wood. Let it say, then, now, let it say: "I believe in God the Father almighty." For so long, when it saw stones, it did not see in whom it should believe: but he is truly God, who has granted you to see by not seeing, you whom the gods of the nations, by being seen, had made not to see. Hear the Lord saying: For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind (John 9:39).

"I believe in God the Father." There is loving-kindness in God, there is always affection in God, fatherhood remains with him; believe, then, that the Son always was, lest you blaspheme that the Father was not always. But you say: "If he begot, how did he always have him? How did he beget?" You who ask in this way deny the faith which you acknowledge. You have said "I believe": if you believe, where does "how" come from? "How" is the word of one who doubts, not of one who believes. "I believe", you have said, "in God the Father almighty": if there is anything he cannot do, he is not almighty; but you think that he begot the Son from something, he whom you confess to have made the whole from nothing; from something, surely, if from time: but if the Father does not admit time, the Son knows no beginning. But how wretched, that you should make him

temporal, who has made you everlasting! Not, then, by a conception of times, not by a suffering of the womb, but the Father begets the Son, while he reveals him to us.

"And in Christ Jesus, his only Son, our Lord." Attend, man, with what reverence faith is conveyed and handed over to you: hear the Father, so as to perceive, understand, believe, not discuss the Son; and confess that he is, without inquiring, a rash investigator, whence, and when, and how he is. Hence it is that the heavenly word, as soon as it announces the Father to you, sends you on with your whole mind to Christ, to Jesus, to the Son, to our only Lord, so that when you see that you can neither attain, nor reckon, nor grasp the things of his that are human, you may not dare to touch the things of his that are divine.

"That he was born of the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary." Come, man, if indeed you are a man, go forth in your heart, rise up in your mind, widen yourself in your senses, raise the sharp points of your wit, rouse the powers of your knowledge; whatever there is of reason in you, rouse it, examine, discuss, search through, and now, astonished as you are, lay open by yourself what it is that the Spirit begets, the Virgin conceives, the Virgin gives birth, the Virgin remains Virgin after childbirth; how the Word becomes flesh, God man, man is carried over into God; how a cradle holds him whom heaven does not hold; how he who sustains the whole world is carried on shoulders; why he himself who made all things, established the universe,

governs everything, willed to be born of you, to be ruled by you, appointed to be nursed, so as to live with you for his parent, whose servitude he had before disdained. And if you are able to reach this from the storehouse of divinity and bring it forth from the secret of the Godhead, then go further in, climb higher, gaze more freely, and then, a new explorer, a singular discoverer, a betrayer of divinity, set forth the times of the Father, the beginnings of the Son.

Be greater than Isaiah, who said: He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb without voice before its shearer, so he did not open his mouth; in humiliation his judgement was taken away; his generation who will declare? (Isa 53:7–8) Whose? The generation of him who like a sheep was led to the slaughter. If the generation of Christ was human, if divine; and if, as he is begotten, it cannot be told, what wave, man, what billows have carried you to this shipwreck? What spirit has driven you to flit through the air to ruin? Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one Godhead, one power, one everlastingness, one majesty: but whatever the Son is lessened in, receives, grows in, is of my body, not of his substance. Or do you wonder, man, that he who deigns to have a mother on earth calls on a Father in heaven?

"Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried." Why, man, do you accuse him who in himself is equal to the Father for this alone, that in you he willed to be less? Him whom you hear stood while Pilate sat, was judged while Pilate

examined the case, why do you take hold of this alone, that he was handed over to criminal accusers, condemned at the pronouncement of an accused man? But he willed to be born of your flesh, he willed to be occupied at your breasts, to lie on your bosom, he willed to be carried on your shoulders, he who willed always to be loved by you, not feared. Seek out what he commanded first in the Law, and then you will see what he sought for grace. The Lord, asked, as the Evangelist said, which was the first commandment in the Law, said: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matt 22:37); hence it is that he came to your heart and to your mind, because from the beginning he sought to be loved by you with spirit, heart, body.

"Who under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried." Thus far the Jew; the heretic follows; let him wait: let none of those who feed and fatten on injuries to Christ come near to what went before. But you, little children, listen, so that after the passion of death you may put to flight the grief of burial by the joys of the resurrection. "On the third day he rose." So that the resurrection of our body might be the power, the grace, the benefit of the Trinity. "He ascended into the heavens." Through me, he who through himself was never absent from heaven. "He sits at the right hand of the Father." By the order of divine power, not of human honour. We have said it: the Son sits at the right in such a way that the Father never sits on the left. "From there he will come to judge the

living and the dead." And what does death owe to the judge? Hence it is that it rises again: so that it may owe.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit." He denies him in whom he believes, who denies the Holy Spirit. "In the holy Church." Because the Church is in Christ, and Christ is in the Church; whoever, then, acknowledges the Church has confessed that he has believed in the Church. "The remission of sins." Give yourself pardon, man, by believing, you who have slipped into all sins by despairing. "The resurrection of the flesh." This is the whole lesson of faith: whether you believe that the flesh, which has been corrupted, which has rotted, which has perished, can rise again, be framed together again, return through God, of whom, when you confessed him almighty, you then swore that he can do all things.

"Eternal life." Rightly he added "eternal life", so that he who will rise through him might believe that he will rise: through him who with God the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, now and always, and through the immortal ages of ages. Amen.

Sermon LXIII.

On Lazarus raised from the dead

After the reading from the Apostle, as we long to return to the mighty works of the Gospel, at once Lazarus, come back from the underworld, meets us, bringing the pattern of death to be overcome, carrying the example of the resurrection. If it pleases you, then, before we enter the open sea of the reading, before we tackle the waves of its questions, before we penetrate the depth of such a deed, let us contemplate the sight of the resurrection: for we see that this is the sign of signs, we perceive that it is the mighty work of mighty works, we discern that it is the wonder of wonders. The Lord had raised the daughter of Jairus, ruler of the synagogue, but while the funeral was still warm, while death was still midway, while the body was still present, while the man still lingered among men, while the spirit was still on its way, while the soul still knew nothing of the bars of Tartarus; and, not to say more, he gave life back to the dead girl in such a way that the right of hell remained. He raised also the only son of his mother; but in such a way as to hold back the bier, to forestall the sepulchre, to suspend corruption and to come before the stench, to give life back to the dead man before

he had entered as a dead man into all the rights of death. But what is done concerning Lazarus is wholly singular: his death, his resurrection have nothing in common with those just told; in his case both the whole force of death was fulfilled, and the form of the resurrection shines out in its fullness. I dare to say it: Lazarus would have carried off the whole mystery of the Lord's resurrection if he had come back from the underworld three days dead; for Christ came back three days dead, as Lord; Lazarus is called back four days dead, as a servant.

But to prove what we have said, let us now take a first taste of something of the reading. His sisters sent, he says, to the Lord, saying: Lord, behold, he whom you love is ill (John 11:3). Saying this, they knock at his affection, they appeal to his love, they call upon his charity, they are eager to remove one tie by another tie: but Christ, for whom it is more to conquer death than to remove a sickness, whose way of loving is this, not to relieve the one he loves but to lead him back from the underworld, at once prepared for the one he loved not the medicine of the sickness but the glory of the resurrection.

Indeed, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, as the Evangelist says, he stayed in the same place two days (John 11:6). You see how he gives place to death, gives leave to the sepulchre, lets corruption have its power, denies nothing to putrefaction, nothing to the stench; and he allows Tartarus to seize, to drag, to hold; and he acts so that all human hope may perish and the whole

force of the world's despair may come on, so that what he is going to do may be divine, not human. And he remains in the place awaiting death just so long that he himself announces the dead man, and only then declares that he is going to Lazarus.

For he says: Lazarus is dead, and I am glad (John 11:14–15). Is this to have loved? Christ was glad, because the grief of death was soon to be turned into the joy of the resurrection. And I am glad for your sake. Why for your sake? Because in the death and resurrection of Lazarus the whole figure of the Lord's death and resurrection was being painted; and what was soon to follow in the Lord was already going before in the servant. Once and again he said to his disciples: Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified (Matt 20:18–19). And as he said this, he saw them grow very doubtful, very sad, very much exiled from consolation; and he knew that they would be so crushed by the very weight of the Passion that nothing of life, nothing of faith, nothing of light could remain in them, but that they would be darkened by an almost total night of unbelief. And so he drew out the death of Lazarus to the fourth day, he let it prevail as far as the stench, so that the disciples might have no doubt that the Lord could rise after three days while still fresh, when they had seen the servant rise after four days already stinking; and might believe that he could easily give life

back to himself, who had called another back to life in such a way. Hence it is that he says: I am glad for your sake, that you may believe. The death of Lazarus was necessary, then, so that the faith of the disciples too might rise together with the buried Lazarus.

Because I was not there. And was there a place where Christ was not? And how was he not there, when from there he was announcing to the disciples that Lazarus was dead? Brothers, Christ, God, was there, but the man Christ was not there; Christ, God, was there when Lazarus was dying, but Christ was to come to the dead man now, when Christ the Lord was about to undergo death: and so he said, Because I was not there. That is, in death, in the sepulchre, in hell, where through me and my death the whole power of death is to be overthrown.

Martha, he says, when she heard that Jesus was coming, ran to meet him, saying: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died (John 11:20–21). Woman, you both confess God and say: If you had been here? Places do not make God absent, nor do times make him present. Lazarus would not be dying if the Lord had been there, he who was there: that is, if you, woman, had not been in paradise; woman, you sought out tears, you found groans, you bought death at the price of gluttony, and do you accuse the absence of God, when you do not deny that your presence was the cause of death? When death was procured by you, then it was matter for lamenting; but now it has become the occasion of power,

because then it was given for the punishment of the sinner, now it is permitted for the glory of the one who raises again; then Tartarus found man, now it loses him. But now seek through faith, woman, what you lost through unbelief.

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died; but even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you (John 11:22). This woman does not believe, but tries to believe; her belief is confounded by disbelief. Whatever you ask of God, God will give you. God gives from himself; he does not ask from himself. Why do you bring delays to supplication, woman, when he who is about to grant is already standing by? Woman, he whom you want as advocate is himself the judge; in this there is the power of the giver, not the necessity of one who asks: I know, she says, that whatever you ask of God, God will give you. Woman, to believe this is not to believe; to know this is not to know. The Apostle proved this: that when a man thinks he knows something, then he does not know (1 Cor 8:2).

But now let us hear what the Lord answered. Your brother will rise (John 11:23). And the woman: I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day (John 11:24). Martha, again you know what you do not know: you know that your brother can rise on the last day, but that he can also here, you do not know; or can it be that God, who then can raise all, cannot now raise one dead man? He can, God can raise one dead man for a sign in time, he who then will raise all

the dead to perpetual life. I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you, and I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day. Martha, the resurrection that you send so far away is before you.

I am, he says, the resurrection (John 11:25). And what is I am the resurrection? And not "I raise again"? What is it? Because he took up man, he took up death: so that he who raises one by commanding might, by rising in himself, raise all; and that to those for whom Adam was the well of death, Christ might be the fountain of life; and that the word of the Apostle might be fulfilled: As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive (1 Cor 15:22).

I am, he says, the resurrection and the life: whoever believes in me, even if he has died, will live; and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die (John 11:25–26). Do you believe this? And the woman: Yes, Lord, I have believed and I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, who have come into this world (John 11:27). He who had come to Lazarus, why is he so taken up with Martha? Why? So that she might rise in faith before he was raised in the flesh. So acts he who has come to take thought both for the living and for the dead: nor does he fear delays in the doing, he with whom remains the power both of the deed and of its fulfilment. Brothers, bear with the word's being put off today, if you wish to hear more fully what follows.

Sermon LXIV.

On the same

If the single words of Scripture were committed each to a single book, not even so would the mysteries that are in them shine through to the hearers; and what will a sudden and short sermon do, which, like lightning, has already fled before it lights up the eyes, and gives those who see not light but fright? Pray, then, that since we live in the darkness of the world, and, placed in the flesh, spend the time of night, not of day, Christ may light for us the lamp of his word, so that with it going before us we may enter the dark places of the heavenly mystery, and with slow step come to as much brightness of divine knowledge as we can: like those Magi who, measuring the eyes of their mind, do not dare to entrust themselves to the splendour of the sun or to the divine brightness, but, taking by night the tender light of a star with eyes more tender still, came to the most tender cradle of Christ. But now, as we promised, let us go through what remains of the Gospel reading.

Martha, he says, when she heard that Jesus was coming, ran to meet him. Was there then no servant, no neighbour, no friend, surely some comforter who was there, that the woman alone,

through the midst of the crowds, through the whole village, outside the town and at a time of mourning, should run to meet the Saviour as he came? Brothers, in these persons it is not events that run their course, but mysteries that are signified. The woman runs for death, she who ran to death; she hastens to pardon, who hastened to fault; she comes to the loving Redeemer, she whom the most wicked seducer reached first; she seeks resurrection, who sought ruin; and she herself, who brought death to the man, pants to bring life back to the man.

Hence it is that Christ stood still in the place, that Christ waited, that he did not enter the crowds, did not press on to the house, did not turn aside to the sepulchre, did not hasten to Lazarus, for whose sake he had come; but he waits for the woman, he lingers for the woman, he received the woman first, whom the persuader first infected; from the woman he drives out unbelief, to the woman he calls back faith, so that she who was at the service of perdition may herself be the minister of salvation; and that she may at last be through God the mother of the living, who through the devil was long the mother of the dead. And because the woman had been the head of evil, he takes up the case of death, so as to wash away the crime before he grants pardon, to remove the cause before he annuls the sentence; and he takes care lest the man should shrink from having as a partaker in life the woman through whom he had once been deceived; and, not to say more, the woman would have perished if Christ

the Lord had come first to the man. Hence it is, brothers, that Christ is born through a woman; hence it is that woman always raises man from the sepulchre of her womb, to call back by her pains him whom she drove out by her blandishments, to restore by weeping him whom she lost by eating.

Indeed, when Martha had made her confession to Christ, and by her devout confession had blotted out whatever fault there was in the person of the woman, she is sent to Mary, because without Mary neither could death be put to flight nor could life be restored. Let Mary come, let her come who carries the name of the mother, so that man may see that Christ dwelt in the secret place of a virginal womb, so that the dead may come forth from the underworld, the dead go out of the sepulchres. Jesus, he says, seeing Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come with her weeping, groaned in the spirit and troubled himself, and said: Where have you laid him? (John 11:33–34) They answered: Lord, come and see; and Jesus wept (John 11:34–35). Mary weeps, the Jews weep, Christ too weeps: do you think, with a like compassion? Granted that Mary, his sister, should weep, because she could neither keep her brother nor stand in the way of death: although she was secure about the resurrection, yet she could not but weep for the loss of present comfort, for the delay of so long an absence, for the sadness of a lasting separation; and also because so grim, so deadly, so cruel an image of death could not but touch, could not but move a mind

however faithful. The Jews wept, both mindful of their own condition and possessed by despair of the life to come. Since death is very bitter to the living, it disturbs greatly by its very departure, it disturbs more deeply by its example: as often as anyone sees a dead man, so often does he wail that he is destined for death. So a mortal cannot but grieve over death.

Which of these is Christ? And if none of these, why was he weeping? Surely he who had said, Lazarus is dead, and I am glad, laments over the very one in whose death he rejoices, then when he raises him; he who does not weep when he loses him, then bewails him when he receives him back; then he pours out mortal tears, when he pours back the breath of life. Brothers, the nature of the human body has this: that the force of joy, the force of grief, produces tears. For as often as the inward parts are constricted by an excessive impulse either of gladness or of sadness, the eyes at once break out into tears. Hence it is that Christ wept not at the pains of death, but at the remembrance of that joy, he who by his voice, by one voice, is to raise all the dead to perpetual life. He groans in spirit and troubles himself with all the stirring of his inward parts, because he was as yet raising Lazarus alone, and not yet all the dead. Who then would think that Christ wept here out of human weakness, when the heavenly father bewails his dissolute son not while he was going away, but when he receives him back (Luke 15)?

Christ wept over Lazarus as he received him back, not as he lost him; indeed, it is not when he

sees them weeping that Christ weeps; but when he asks, and sees that nothing of faith remains in those who answer — he had said: Where have you laid him? But they answered: Lord, come and see. They thought that he did not know where he had been laid in the earth, he who knew where dread Tartarus was holding him. By asking in this way he was demanding faith, holding out knowledge, so that the bystanders might know that death, that the sepulchre, that corruption, that putrefaction, that stench had come upon men not from God's making, but from the offence of man. For when he says, Where have you laid him, he rebukes the women, he reproves the women; that is: Him whom I placed in paradise, in the region of life, see where you have laid him.

But the Jews too answered as to the ignorance of the one who asked. Lord, come and see. What? Would they believe that he gives orders to death? What? That he gives orders to the underworld, they who believed that he did not see what was before their eyes, who argued in such a way about his tears? He who could open the eyes of the blind man, how could he not bring it about that this man should not die? (John 11:37) He could have brought it about that he did not die, but he who wished to raise the dead man for his own glory permitted him to die: he permitted him to go down into the underworld, so that God might appear when he leads man back from the underworld. But, Jews, your hearts appear more blocked than the underworld, your inward parts harder than the dead, your eyes darker

than sepulchres, since the voice that opened Tartarus did not open your secret places, since the command that rouses the dead man does not rouse your minds, since the law that lights up the sepulchre does not illumine your blindness. But let this suffice, so that with Christ we may see more plainly the glory of Lazarus rising.

Sermon LXV.

On the same

Since in a twofold sermon we have already touched on the death of Lazarus, the weeping of Mary, the tears of Martha, the lamentation of the Jews, let us now unburden our hearts, cast away our cares, free our senses of all business, so that with the joy of so great a resurrection we may with our whole minds both grasp and hear. The Evangelist proclaims thus that the Saviour came to the tomb. Jesus, he says, again groaning in himself, came to the tomb: now it was a cave, and a stone had been laid upon it (John 11:38). Jesus, groaning, came to the tomb. Christ groans, that flesh may live again; life groans, that death may be put to flight; God groans, that man may rise; indulgence groans, lest the sentence should gainsay it: Christ groans as he subdues death, because he cannot but groan who snatches a singular victory from the enemy. And as to his saying, again groaning, he groans again to show the twofold tokens of the resurrection: because, as by the voice of Christ those dead in body are raised from the sepulchres to life, so those dead by unbelief rise again to the life of faith.

It was, he says, a cave. It would have been enough to say that he came to the tomb; why is

it that the Evangelist makes so much of the cave? A cave indeed, where the devil's banditry stowed man away; a cave, where the fraud of the woman buried the man; a cave, where the rapacity of death shut in God's handiwork. And a stone had been laid upon it. The door of hard death, harder still, was shut with the hardest stone: but what does one who weeps at the sepulchre achieve, when the voice of the weeper does not pierce barriers so hard and so heaped up? Christians, let us weep to God for our sins, and, since the dead do not hear, let us not weep with the Gentiles.

Jesus says: Take away the stone (John 11:39). Amid divine mighty works does Christ need human help? Is he not equal to moving a stone, who is equal to putting death to flight? Has he not the strength to unbar the bars of the sepulchre, who is mighty to open the gates of Tartarus? He had said through the prophet: I will take away the heart of stone from their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh (Ezek 11:19); so he commands the Jews to take away from themselves the heart of stone, to roll away the rock of unbelief, to cast out the flint of hard disbelief, so that souls dead through faithlessness might leap out of the sepulchre of the breast, and rejoice not so much that Lazarus had risen as that they themselves had risen together with Lazarus. Take away the stone. Take away the homage of wretched humanity, so that the works of blessed divinity may now shine out. Take away the stone. The stone you laid, so that I may now set back in his place the man whom I set there.

Martha answered: He already stinks (John 11:39). Woman, and the stench, whose is it? He already stinks. Now what came from you belongs to you: you would not perceive the stench at the sepulchre, if in paradise you had refused to listen to the persuader. He already stinks. What stinks to the destroyer does not stink to the Creator. He already stinks. What the overthrower of another's work shudders at, the lover of his own work does not abhor. But by speaking thus, you bear witness to the death which you, woman, brought in; you cry out the stench, so that full death may become known to the hearers, so that, when Lazarus rises, it may be the spirit of one returning, not of one in hiding. Let it be of divine power, not of human art; and let the Jews, who say that we cast out demons by the prince of demons (Matt 9:34), not say again that we raise the dead not by the command of God but by human aid. He already stinks, he is four days dead (John 11:39). She states the time too, so that they may know that he is the author of times, to whom no times set bounds. He already stinks, he is four days dead. By speaking thus she heightens the despair, so that those present may see that it is God who thus gives life to the dead, health to the despaired of, vigour to the stinking.

Lifting up, he says, his eyes on high (John 11:41). He lifts up his eyes on high to give us the form of supplication, not to prepare for himself a way of obtaining: for he looks up who is always on high with the Father; the Father is always in him, and he is always in the Father: I, he says,

am in the Father, and the Father is in me (John 14:10); Father, he says, I give you thanks, because you have heard me (John 11:41). He gives thanks for what has been granted; and that the Father has heard, this is said; that the Son has asked, this is passed over in silence. Brothers, between the Father and the Son there is the affection of hearing, there is not the necessity of supplicating; there is the charity of assent, not the severity of command; there all things are done by love, where there is no need of homage, as becomes clear from what follows.

Father, I give you thanks, because you have heard me: but I knew that you always hear me (John 11:41–42). The care of calling upon has no place where there is a sure confidence of being heard. Or what does the labour of asking do there, where the cause of granting is common? Let no one, then, so lessen the Son by his prayers, lest he so lessen the Father concerning the salvation of men. Why the Son speaks so, he himself discloses, saying thus: Father, I give you thanks, because you have heard me: but I knew that you always hear me; but I said it for the sake of the people who stand around (John 11:42). You see that by saying such things he lifts up, he reveals his own and the Father's affection, he lays open grace, he speaks unity. He had said: All that the Father has is mine (John 16:15); and if all things are his, how does he ask? He who asks from what is his own, what he asks is not of necessity, but of love.

Father, I give you thanks, because you have heard me: but I knew that you always hear me; but I said it for the sake of the people who stand around, that they may believe that you sent me. He said that he was sent, so that the peoples might know that Christ came from heaven, not that he withdrew from heaven. Thus, then, he is sent, thus too he receives what he has, as he did not withdraw from the place he had come from; thus, then, both the Son receives what he has, and the Father does not lose what he has given. Brothers, that he is heard, and that he is sent, and that he comes, and that he receives, and that he is born, and that he suffers, and that he dies, and that he rises again, this is not of his divinity, this is of our weakness, this is of our nature: all of which he bore for our sake in our body; he did not endure it for his own sake in his own majesty.

But let us return to what we set before us. What is it that he says: Father, I give you thanks, because you have heard me? What is it? When Christ began to knock at the doors of the underworld, to thrust back the gates of Tartarus, to open the portals of death, to annul the ancient law of Gehenna, to overturn the most ancient right of punishments, to demand back the soul of Lazarus, to open anew the way of return from the underworld, the whole raging power of Tartarus met him, displaying the edict of the prince on high, carrying the decree of the most high king, bearing the sentence pronounced so many ages ago by God's own speaking; and seeing a man, it asked who this was, what he dared, what

he wanted, why he alone, or without trembling, provokes and assails the dreadful approaches of death. To it, as it asked who he was, the angels, ministers of the resurrection, answered with the prophetic voice: He is the king of glory, he is strong and mighty in battle (Ps 24:8). But Tartarus replies: "I know that the king of glory presides in the heavens over all the heavenly powers, whose nod the whole creation cannot bear; but this one I see to be one of the earthly, compounded of slime, hedged in by a mortal body, and in the very condition of a man more worthless than men, and, in short, soon to be given to the sepulchre, to be put at once under my sway." But as the angels persisted and repeated: "He is the Lord of powers, he is the king of glory (Ps 24:10); he is the ruler of heaven, he the Creator of the world, he the saviour of the age, he the redeemer of all, and he himself the giver of the sentence over which you rage, he who is to tread on your head, he who is to crush your empire, he who is to destroy you by his judgement; you who, ordered to seize the guilty, drag off the innocent, plunder the saints, threaten the very Son of God. Give back one, then, before you are forced to pay out many."

But Tartarus, still not believing this, runs back to heaven by its usual messengers, lamenting with this invidious appeal: "I, Lord, though the last of your creation, though bound over to a sad servitude, keep your precepts by an inviolable law; I keep watch lest any new violator change the ancient right of your sentence; but there

has appeared a man who is called Christ, boasting himself your Son; he censures your priests, reproves your scribes, violates your sabbaths, breaks your law, and forces souls released from the flesh, and already assigned to punishment and to my custody, to return to the bodies in which they had lived wickedly; and every day he goes on with such daring that he is trying to drag out Lazarus, already shut in our prison, already bound by our law, already remaining under our right, by breaking the bars of the underworld: either come to my help quickly, or, if he once opens the gates, you lose now all whom we have kept for so many ages." To this the Son answered from the bosom of the Father: "Father, it is just that the prison should hold not the innocent but the guilty, that punishment should torment not the just but the unjust. How long, under the fault of one man, on account of the trespass of Adam alone, will this executioner not cease to drag to himself with cruel hostility patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, confessors, virgins, widows, those who remain in the chastity of marriage, all ages, both sexes, surely the little ones who know neither good nor evil? Father, I will die, so that all may not die; Father, I will pay Adam's debt, so that through me those who through Adam die to hell may live to you; Father, for the sake of your sentence I will shed my blood, provided only that your creation return to you; let the price of my blood, dear to you, be the redemption of all the dead." To this the consent of the whole Trinity both commanded Lazarus to come out, and Tar-

tarus was ordered to obey Christ by giving back all the dead: hence it is that the Son cries out: Father, I give you thanks, because you have heard me.

The Apostle bears witness that Christ is our advocate with the Father; indeed, when he sits, he judges together with the Father; when he stands, he performs the office of an advocate. Then Christ, his pleading done, cries with a loud voice: Lazarus, come out (John 11:43). Then Tartarus brought Lazarus back to the world above, his hands and feet bound: fearing and trembling lest, while it was loosing him, while it was making delays, while it was bringing back the one too slowly, it should be forced to bring them all. Thus he who had been accustomed to be the robber of the dead was made the restorer of the living. For why did Christ burst the chains of hell, loosen the ties of death, if not to show us the dreadful servitude of hell? For if the devil disputed with the angel over the body of Moses (Jude 9), how would Tartarus not dispute with Christ over the life and the resurrection of Lazarus? Pray, brothers, that we who have received a taste of the resurrection, with Lazarus pouring the cup, may merit, when Christ returns, to hear the voices of the universal resurrection.

Sermon LXVI.

On the rich man and Lazarus

Today we have had two readings, set out by two evangelists, read in such a way that your understanding might come to meet our sermon, and hidden things might lie open. Why the occasion of Lazarus rising has compelled us to make mention of another Lazarus, you will hear from what follows: now we are eager to bring forward and set before you the astonishing reversals, the fearful successions, the conditions much to be lamented of the inhuman rich man and of Lazarus the poor man; because the rich man, who in our present life disdained to hear the poor man as a partaker, did not merit to find the poor man compassionate in the evils to come; nor did he, burning, receive the refreshment of water, who denied the refreshment of bread to the poor man burning with hunger.

When he was, he says, in torments, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom (Luke 16:23). In vain does he now look up at Lazarus above, who before disdained to see Lazarus below. Of such men the Prophet said: They have set their eyes to bow down to the earth (Ps 17:11). When he was in torments. Punishment pricks him whom repentance did not prick to

compunction, and torments vex him whom the wounds of Lazarus did not move: nor is it without cause that he feels the goads of punishments, who rolled ungrateful in purple. He saw Abraham far off. Abraham was far from him to whom the poor man had not been near. He saw Abraham, a sharer in riches but no sharer in inhumanity; and Abraham was rich, but more in humanity than in wealth; you, rich man, by your inhumanity proved greater than your riches; Abraham, a stranger for himself, was a citizen for his guests; you, who possessed palaces, did not give a roof to the poor man; Abraham, in welcoming servants, thus received the Lord, and setting bread before all men, welcomed the Lord himself at his table; you, in denying crumbs to a single poor man, have lost a drop of refreshment.

And he, crying out, said (Luke 16:24). So he cries out there, who here disdained to hear those who cried out; there the voice is void, there the cry is empty. Hear the Prophet saying: But in hell who will confess to you? (Ps 6:6) In hell what place is there for mercy? In torments what hope of pardon? And in the hour of the sentence who looks for the time of indulgence? Father Abraham, have mercy on me. Cruel son, what mercy do you ask, which by denying it to the poor man you denied to yourself? And send Lazarus. Wretched son, if Lazarus had come to your table, you would not have come to this place at table. To dip the tip of his finger in water. He who closes his hand to the poor man thus begs the alms of a fingertip, and thirsts for a drop of water, who

shut up vats of wine so as not to give a drop. To dip the tip of his finger. He who did not give his riches by having pity on the poor man thus lessens mercy for himself. And cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. As though he had the rest of his body free from the burning: but the tongue burns more, which neglected to order that mercy be done; in the tongue he feels the greater burning, the tongue that cursed the poor man, that gainsaid mercy; the tongue is first in torments, which, by disparaging the poor man, blasphemed the poor man's author.

But let us now hear what Abraham answered. Son, he says, remember that you received good things in your life, and Lazarus likewise evil things (Luke 16:25). Let no one, hearing this, think that the rich man received good things for good, when he is the more guilty on this account, that, though he received good things from God for evil, he disdained to render to God good things for good. For out of such great riches he neither gave food to the poor man, nor paid to God the sacrifice of the smallest offering. But the poor man, rich in wounds, naked of wealth, stripped of his body, clothed with punishments, continually offered to God as a victim his soul, which alone the wounds did not hold. Hence it is that he receives rest for pains, glory for reproach, honour for insults, grace for contempt, immortality for punishments, rewards for wounds, a fountain of refreshment for thirst, the everlasting delights of the heavenly table for hunger; and him whom the rich man's corner did not take

in, the bosom of divine consolation encloses. You, rich man, once shining in purple, now be covered with dung; instead of scarlet, be clothed with flames; instead of a soft couch, endure the hardness of torments; instead of choice dishes, feast on punishments; make up for plenty with want; sleep off your drunkenness with thirst; instead of perfumes, be sprinkled with stench: and you whom the homage of pleasure attended, let the ministries of punishment now attend you, because by despising the poor man you yourself have changed these things for yourself in this way.

But Abraham added, saying: Besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who wish to pass from here to you cannot, nor cross over from there to here (Luke 16:26). By speaking thus he declares that both the just and the unjust were in the underworld before the coming of the Lord, and makes plain that they were set apart by places only, not divided by regions. But after the Lord, rising from the dead, opened hell, threw open the heavens, unbarred the bars of paradise, he gave the saints to enter the rest of paradise, to come to the glory of heaven. He who believes these things thus understands what Christ, by coming, has given to mortals. Foolishly, then, does the rich man think that places are changed in the underworld, when man, by acting well or badly here, fixes for himself there the term either of punishment or of rest. Foolish in life, the rich man is found more foolish in punishment; and he who did not know

the time of his good things does not, poor wretch, recognise the time of his evil things either.

I ask you, Father (Luke 16:27). Now you ask; now it is for you the time of suffering, not of asking. I ask you, Father? For what? That you send Lazarus to my father's house. How well Lazarus lay before at that gate, at which with his hunger he fixed up the inscriptions of your inhumanity, where he wreathed your doorposts with his ulcers, where he painted your crumbs with his matter! Allow the reversals, then, to stand; lay aside your tricks now; it is plain that you cannot bear to see Lazarus so: it is known, it is known, that the happiness of Lazarus tortures you more than the fire of Gehenna.

Abraham answered: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them (Luke 16:29). That is: if they not only did not hear Moses, who wore down the kingdoms of Egypt with the elements fighting on his side (Exod 7), who dried up the sea (Exod 14:21), who made the waves stand firm, who turned rocks into streams (Exod 17:6), who covered the sun with a cloud, who lit up the night with light (Exod 13:21), who made the sky rain meat and drop bread like dew (Exod 16:13–14), but even tried to kill him, will these deign to hear Lazarus, whom as many wounds hedge about as mighty works girded Moses? Bear with me too in feeling what I begot, and you, bear what you have done.

No, father Abraham (Luke 16:30). Truly not father, because he was not Abraham's son, but Gehenna's. No, father Abraham, but if someone

goes to them from the dead, they will do penance. This the rich man says from the heart of all, this he asks from the desires of everyone, this he speaks from the wishes of all worldly men; for we are all accustomed to whisper: "O if someone came from the dead, and reported here what is done there, all would believe him." Indeed, as the doubters would say: "Who has come from there, from where no one comes? That someone exists after death, who will prove it? We all speak what we have heard, we feel what has been instilled by words: for what truth faith holds is sunk in the deep."

But that it is of unbelief, not of ignorance, that we speak so when we do believe thus, the reading from blessed John the Evangelist that followed today has shown. For, just as the rich man asks, God sent Lazarus for Lazarus. But what he achieved by being sent, by being longed for, by rising again, hear patiently. The chief priests, he says, planned to kill Lazarus, because many of the Jews were going away on his account, and believing in Jesus (John 12:10–11). As though, longed for, he had come for this: to bear the perils of a second death. They will not, they will not report what they have seen, who wish what they have heard not to be believed.

We know, we know both that life is prepared for the good and that torments are prepared for the wicked: but because, held captive by vices, we do not want the time of virtues to come, we pretend not to know what we know, and we do not want anyone to come from the underworld

to tell what there is after death, when Christ, coming from heaven and himself returning from the underworld, has both taught by his word and confirmed by his example what awaits the good in heaven and what awaits the wicked in hell. But perhaps it is for this reason that we neither believe these things nor want Christ to come, that we do not want to pass out of the world; or rather, not because we do not want to pass out of the world, but because we grieve to leave our vices behind. Christ comes not to put life to flight, but death; to put death to flight, not life; to call the world back, not to take it away; to destroy vices, not to destroy utterly his own creation. But pray, brothers, that when he comes he may find us such as he desires and commands the sharers of his kingdom to be.

Sermon LXVII.

On the Lord's Prayer

You have received the hearing of the faith, dearest brothers; hear the form of the Lord's Prayer. Christ taught us to pray briefly, he who wishes to grant quickly what is asked. Or what will he not give to those who ask him, who gave himself to those who did not ask? Or what delay does he make in answering, who in dictating the prayers so forestalls the wishes of the suppliants? What you are going to hear today the angels are astonished at, heaven marvels at, earth trembles at; the flesh does not bear it, the hearing does not grasp it, the mind does not reach it, the whole creation cannot sustain it: I do not dare to say it, I cannot keep silent. May God grant both that you may be able to hear and that I may be able to say. What is more to be trembled at: that God gave himself to the earth, or that he gives you to heaven; that he himself enters into society with the flesh, or that he makes you enter into the fellowship of the divinity; that he himself takes on death, or that he takes you back from death; that he himself is born into your servitude, or that he begets you for himself as free-born children; that he takes up your poverty, or that he makes you his heirs, the co-heirs of his Only One? It is surely

the more awesome that earth is carried over into heaven, that man is changed by the Godhead, that the lot of servitude obtains the rights of lordship. But although this is to be feared, yet because the cause looks not to the one who teaches but to the one who commands, let us draw near, little children, where charity calls, love draws, affection invites: let our inward parts feel God as father, let our voice resound, our tongue speak, our spirit cry out, and let all that is in us answer to grace, not to fear; because he who changed the judge into a father wished to be loved, not feared.

Our Father, who are in heaven (Matt 6:9). When you say this, do not take it as though he were not on earth; do not understand it as though he who encloses all things were enclosed in a place; but understand that you have a race from heaven, since your Father is held to be in heaven; and act so that, by living holily, you may answer to a holy Father. He proves himself a son of God who is not darkened by human vices, who shines with divine virtues.

Hallowed be your name (Matt 6:9). Whose race we are, by his name too we are reckoned: we ask, therefore, that his name, which in itself and through itself is holy, be hallowed in us; for the name of God is either honoured by our action or blasphemed through our actions. Hear the Apostle saying: Through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles (Rom 2:24).

Your kingdom come (Matt 6:10). And when did God not reign? We ask, then, that he who always reigned for himself may now reign in us, so

that we too may be able to reign in him. The devil reigned, sin reigned, death reigned, and mortality was long held captive: we ask, then, that, with God reigning, the devil may perish, sin may fail, death may die, captivity may be taken captive, so that we, set free, may reign into perpetual life.

Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth (Matt 6:10). This is the kingdom of God: when both in heaven and on earth the will of God alone is, when in all men God is the mind, God lives, God acts, God reigns, God is all, so that, according to that word of the Apostle: May God be all in all of you (1 Cor 15:28).

Give us today our daily bread (Matt 6:11). He who gave himself to us as father, who adopted us as sons for himself, who made us heirs of all things, who raised us high by his name, who has endowed us with both his honour and his kingdom, he himself has bound us to ask for daily bread. In the kingdom of God, among divine gifts, what does human poverty seek? Does so good, so loving, so generous a Father grant bread to his children only when he is asked? And where is that saying: Do not be anxious what you will eat, or what you will drink, or what you will wear (Matt 6:25)? He commands us to ask for what he forbids us to think about, inasmuch as the heavenly Father urges us, heavenly children, to ask for heavenly bread. He himself said: I am the bread that came down from heaven (John 6:41). He is the bread which, sown in the Virgin, leavened in the flesh, made ready in the Passion, baked in the furnace of the sepulchre, laid up in the churches,

brought to the altars, daily supplies heavenly food to the faithful.

And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors (Matt 6:12). Man, if you cannot be without sin, and you want always to have everything forgiven you, forgive always; as much as you want to be forgiven you, so much forgive; as often as you want to be forgiven, so often do you forgive; or rather, because you want everything forgiven you, forgive everything: man, understand that by remitting to others you have given yourself pardon.

And do not lead us into temptation (Matt 6:13). Because in the world life itself is temptation. Temptation, says that one, is the life of man (Job 7:1). Let us ask, then, that he not leave us to our own choice, but in every act hold us fast with a father's loving-kindness, and make us firm on the path of life with heavenly governance.

But deliver us from evil (Matt 6:13). From what evil? From the devil, of course, from whom is all evil. We ask to be delivered from evil, because he who has not been without evil cannot enjoy good.

If those not yet born, if those still placed in the womb ask for bread, seek the kingdom, why is it made a question that the Son of God always remained in the secret place of God the Father? If the Church begets, it is not reason, it is a heavenly mystery; that the Son of God was in God the Father, there is no way for it to be handled by human reasoning; not in a human manner is divinity to be reckoned. You have heard

"God": think nothing earthly, nothing human; you have heard "Father of Christ": believe this by substance; you have heard "your father": believe this by grace: he always had it that he was the Son; to you he has now given to be a son. So know yourself a son in such a way that you are not ignorant that you are a servant; so hear that you have been brought back to the likeness of Christ, that you may always know that you are subject to Christ.

Sermon LXVIII.

On the same

Mortal condition, earthly frame, substance of slime, uncertain of life and of death, worn by toil, consumed by punishments, a nature subject to rot and dust, cannot grasp, is not equal to reckoning, does not dare to drive away, is afraid to believe, what today it is compelled to confess. Such grace of God's gifts, such greatness of his promises, such generosity of his bounties: whence human frailty might be able to merit them, it cannot find. This, I think, the prophet Habakkuk beyond doubt foresaw with the gaze of his mind, when, shaken with such great fright, so agitated by trembling at this report, he says: Lord, I have heard your report, and was afraid; I considered your works, and was dismayed (Hab 3:2). He feared the report, not because the prophet, great as he was, had then heard the Lord, but because the servant then found his Lord turned towards him, and heard him as a father; not because he was dismayed at contemplating the fabric of this world harmonising out of elements so discordant among themselves, but because, considering then the works of such loving-kindness towards himself, he was shaken with the trembling and the fright of wonder. I considered, he says, your

works and was dismayed. He was astounded then that he had been adopted as a son, when he had lost even the confidence of servitude.

Indeed, so that you may know the affection of this prayer, which the Divinity today instils and pours into you, the prophet then dares, freed as it were from fright at this gift received from heaven. See what he said next. I kept watch, he says, and my belly was terrified at the voice of the prayer of my lips (Hab 3:16). After he had felt the generosity of the divine gift, he kept watch over himself, lest he should again bear with himself as enemy, as foe, as robber, as in paradise. He becomes more watchful, a more solicitous keeper of himself, who, after the loss of so great a thing, kept himself, a heavenly treasure, in earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7). And my belly was terrified. Here the prophet calls the inner parts of the heart the belly; for as the belly is fed and filled with food, so the heart is with perceptions. And my belly was terrified at the voice of the prayer of my lips. If the understanding of the heart had poured the voice into the mouth, had given the words to the lips, why was he terrified at his own vows, at his own desires, at the very thing he was about to obtain by prayer? Because he was speaking not by the prompting of his own heart, but by the breathing of the divine Spirit. Hear Paul saying: God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying: Abba, Father (Gal 4:6). And when he passed what he had heard into his inward parts, he marvelled that he had merited so much, and all the inward parts of the man trembled. Rightly he added: And

trembling entered into my bones (Hab 3:16), because the very inward parts of the prophet were shaken.

And beneath me, he says, my strength was shaken. What is beneath me? Inasmuch as one and the same man, already lifted on high through grace, lay beneath through his former nature, and earthly strength could not bear heavenly strength. Mount Sinai already smoked when God, about to give the Law, came down upon the mountain (Exod 19:18). What would flesh do, when God came down into the flesh, to confer grace on flesh? He came as father, because man could not bear God, the servant could not bear the master. And because he is faithful in his words, which he spoke: Open your mouth, and I will fill it (Ps 81:11); open now your mouths, so that he may fill them with such a prayer, with such a cry.

Our Father, who are in heaven (Matt 6:9). Where are those who distrust the promise of God? See how quickly the confession of faith has been rewarded: as soon as you confessed God as the Father of his only Son, you yourself have been adopted as a son of God the Father, so that you, who were held an exile from paradise and from the earth, might be the heir of heaven; and therefore you now call: Our Father, who are in heaven. Because you once had a father who dissolved you into slime, who led you to the bars of hell and dragged you there: let him not know the earth, let him not know the love of the flesh, let him not seek the father of dust, let him permit nothing

of vice to be allowed in himself, who claims back God, the heavenly Father, by nature. And let him who believes himself a son of God answer to so great a lineage in act, life, manners, honesty, lest, going down again to earthly things, he should tend to the very injury of so great a Begetter.

Hallowed be your name (Matt 6:9). If the name of Christ gives sight to the blind, a gait to the lame, health to those exhausted by various sicknesses, life to the dead, and sanctifies you yourself, man, and the whole creation, how is it that you pray and demand holiness for that very name? Because you have been called a Christian by Christ; and therefore you supplicate that the prerogative of so great a name may be strengthened by the merits that follow in you.

Your kingdom come (Matt 6:10). He commands devotion, demands desires, himself seeks out prayers, he who holds his coming in his own power. That soldier is faithful who thirsts for the presence of his king, longs for the kingdom, seeks and covets triumphs: but here you ask that he may come to you and in you to reign, in whom the devil long held a citadel, death an empire, hell its power. Let us pray, then, my dearest ones, that Christ may always reign in his soldier, and the soldier always triumph in his king.

Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth (Matt 6:10). Blessed that day, which joins, associates, makes equal the wills of earthly beings with heavenly ones, so that among unequal substances there may be one and the same will. This is faithful peace, unshaken concord, persevering

grace: when through the ordering of one master the household, diverse in nature, becomes one in will, and is found the same in feeling too.

Give us today our daily bread (Matt 6:11). After the heavenly kingdom, who would ask for temporal bread? But he wants us to ask, in the sacrament of his body, for the viaticum of bread, daily and for each day, so that through it we may come to the perpetual day and to the very table of Christ, so that from that of which we have taken a taste here, we may take there fullness and complete satiety.

And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors (Matt 6:12). He who asks thus and does not release debts accuses himself even through what he prays; he who asks that so much be granted him, so much remitted, as he himself remits and grants, invites God to an agreement, invites God in this way to a pact. Let each demand that as much be granted to himself as he himself has granted to another. But, brothers, debts are to be forgiven not of money only, but of all causes, faults, crimes; whatever, man, you may fall into, when another has fallen into it against you, you will pardon. He asks pardon for his sins with confidence who willingly pardons the one who sins.

And do not lead us into temptation (Matt 6:13). We are compelled, brothers, to ask this a thousand times in many ways, lest frailty, daring too much and presuming rashly of itself, and not reckoning the measure of its strength, should succumb in the conflict through ill caution, and

then God, offended, should hand over to temptations those whom he forsakes.

But deliver us from evil (Matt 6:13). He thinks very humbly of himself, and does not presume to be saved by himself, who implores that he may be delivered from evil through God.

Sign yourselves. Understand, little children, how great is the glory and the authority of the perfect, how great that of the strong, when such power is revealed in the very conception, such majesty in the birth. Not yet born, he calls a father, asks for holiness, seeks a kingdom, gives laws to the earth, makes earthly wills equal to heavenly ones, and, already devoted, demands his rations for the labours that will profit him. Give us today our daily bread, he says. Blessed are you, who have begun to conquer before the fight, to triumph before you live, to come to the father's storehouses before you come to the mother's lap, to fall upon the pasture of the flock before the juice of milk, to sound with the full jubilation of victories before you answer with the wailing of the cradle. Truly, as the Apostle said, the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor 1:25). Or who will be able to tell the mystery of so great a conception? There the virgin mother gives birth every day in the world, and does not leave her offspring behind for toil, but sends her shoots ahead to eternal glory.

Sermon LXIX.

On the same

Do you think that a mortal breast can grasp the greatness of the Lord's charity towards us? Do you think that a mind weighed down by the weight of an earthly body can understand and feel the divine affection towards us? For whatever glitters, beams and shines as the adornment of heaven, whatever on earth is fragrant in flowers, tastes sweet in fruits, rejoices in living creatures, has been made for love of us, has been made over to our service. But great as they are, they are yet small as a token of the love from on high towards us. For us the principalities of the heavens, for us the ethereal powers, for us the supernal dominions, for us the offices of the angels do their service in unwearied watches. But these things are still small for asserting the divine tie with us, and lesser, and lowest by as much as the creature is less than its Creator.

God, uncontemplable in countenance, impenetrable to sight, to be reckoned by no sense, inaccessible to the mind, not fully known even by hearing itself: how often, in what ways, how variously, how diversely has he fitted himself to human gaze? How he lent and granted himself to human communion, to human familiarity, when

he makes Noah a partaker of his counsel, and forewarns him that the flood is at hand to cleanse the world, and marks out the whole age in the small seed of the ark, with Noah himself as its keeper (Gen 6); when he comes to Abraham as a guest, and, invited, enters with all graciousness, does not refuse what is offered, takes what is set before him as though hungry and weary, and in a divine exchange, as though in need, receives and accepts human things (Gen 18)! Hence it is that the old man's limbs, already dead, at once come to life again, the extinct womb of the barren old woman is raised up, and nature, buried deep in a living corpse, rises again to reveal its author, and, when its time is already past, begets very many through the one Maker whom he had believed (Gen 21). To Moses God gathers himself as fire in the bush (Exod 3:2); then he confers with his servant on what is to be done, is busied with various mighty works in Egypt, and lays himself open to the nod of his household servant; he inflicts the plagues, or takes them away (Exod 8:8); and how great he is in the sea, and how much he has given to man, the homage of the avenging wave shows, when, the deep dried up, the wave yields to the godly, and, its water made solid, provides a wall, offers a rampart to those who are to be set free, and with the whole power of its nature runs down to triumph over the most savage enemy (Exod 14). Dwelling in wondrous comradeship in the camp of Israel (Deut 23:14), God now strikes numerous nations with lightning, now touches them with hail (Josh

10:11); now lays them low by the mere blare of trumpets (Josh 6:20); so that without conflict, without a wound, God leads the victorious ranks before which he goes. He was at hand to desires, nodded assent to the prayers of each, answered at once what was asked, revealed hidden things, foretold the future, laid open what was sought, conferred a kingdom, bestowed riches, tempered the rains, made the lands fruitful, adorned marriages themselves with the abundance and the honour of children.

But he believed it still too little, if he showed his affection towards us only by granting prosperity, and not also by enduring adversity. After all this, he enters his world as a poor man: he lies in a cradle as a man; by his wailing he implores, seeks, demands the loving-kindness which he himself showed you. The parent of all has had you as parent; he became subject to you, to whom every height is subject; he feared, whom things to be feared dread; he fled, to whom all things flee for refuge; the arbiter of the heavens is a guest in the houses of sinners; he is fed with bread who will feed all. And what more? The Pantokrator of the ages is held, the founder of the earth is made to stand trial, the bestower of pardon on mankind is judged, the searcher of the heart is examined, the giver and restorer of life is punished, the resurrection of all is buried, so that the slow mind of man, and his intelligence, very sluggish, might at least by death prove in itself the affection of God, the mind which through the benefits of God already told, and innumerable others, had

not understood, had not felt the charity of God towards it. He, then, who made us to be, gave us to live, taught us also to pray, because he wished to grant everything, he who wished to be supplicated with his own prayer.

Our Father, who are in heaven (Matt 6:9). Behold, man, today Christ by your own voice adopts you as a son, to make you his co-heir of God the Father, in saying: Our Father. What is of his condescension, he wished to be of your power, according to that saying: As many as received him, he gave them power to become sons of God (John 1:12); and yet he bids you say, so that it may be the condescension of the giver, not the rashness of one who presumes: Who are in heaven. Not that he is not on earth, but he wants you, who now call upon the heavenly Father, to strive towards the heavenly nature and seek it back, so that our life may answer to so great a lineage, lest earthly manners debase those whom a heavenly nature has already endowed and enriched.

Hallowed be your name (Matt 6:9). Not that the name that hallows you is to be hallowed by your prayer; but because you have been called a Christian by the name of Christ, you must ask that by your action this name be hallowed and honoured in you. Because, as the fame of virtues answers so greatly to the glory of the name, so the infamy of one who lives badly redounds to the injury of the same name, as the Apostle says: Through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles (Rom 2:24). And in truth, children, the Gentile disparages the Christian

name when he sees a Christian live otherwise than he professes and is said to.

Your kingdom come (Matt 6:10). Not that the kingdom may come to God, who always has it; but you ask that it may come to you, who do not have it, and that you may receive what the Lord in his affection promises you when he says: Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34). Come, you blessed: he did not say, "Let us come"; receive: he did not say, "Let us receive". Let no one wonder that one who is not yet born calls a father; for if John leaps (Luke 1:41) and Jacob wrestles in the womb (Gen 25:22), let the prudent man reckon what the divine nature can do, if human conception can do so much through God.

Sermon LXX.

On the same

All that is related as said and done by God is matter for wonder, for astonishment, is to be dreaded by mortals, to be trembled at even by the heavenly ones themselves: but nothing so astonishes heaven, so frightens the earth, so terrifies the whole creation, as what you are going to hear today, as we say it. The servant dares to call the Lord father, the accused names his judge his begetter, the earthly condition by its own voice adopts itself as son of God: he who lost earthly things reckons himself heir of the divinity. But we dare, because there is no presumption in the one who speaks where there is the authority of the one who commands; for he himself who taught us to pray thus wished us to speak thus today. And what wonder if he consecrated men as sons of God, when he gave himself and fitted himself to be the son of man? Then he carried the nature of the flesh over into the divine, when he brought the Godhead down to human nature: then he made man his co-heir in the heavens, when he made himself a partaker in earthly things. Or what of love, what of gift could he deny to man, who took up all that was man's, even sin, and death? Or how will he not have man as a com-

panion in his prosperity, who in man's adversity made himself his sharer? Man, return to God, so loved by God; and give your whole self to his glory, who for your sake brought his whole self down to his own injury; and call him father with confidence, whom by so great a love you prove, feel, understand to be your begetter.

Our Father (Matt 6:9). Let no one wonder that one not yet born calls a father: for God the things that are to be born have been born, the things to come have been done for God. What is to be, he says, has already been (Eccl 3:15). Hence it is that John in the womb perceives his author (Luke 1:41); and he stands forth as messenger to his mother, he who was unaware of his own life. Hence it is that Jacob is read to have fought before he was born, to have triumphed before he lived (Gen 25:22). Hence it is that they already are for God who are not yet for themselves, who were chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Who are in heaven. Not that he is not on earth, but so that through this you may know that you are a heavenly offspring: and if you acknowledge that you are a son of God, live as a son of God, so that in act, in life, in virtues you may be able to answer to so great a begetter.

Hallowed be your name (Matt 6:9). Because you have been called a Christian by Christ, you ask that the prerogative of so great a name be hallowed in you; because the name of God, which through itself and for itself is holy, is either hallowed in us by our action, or by our action is blasphemed among the Gentiles.

Your kingdom come (Matt 6:10). He himself says: The kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21): if it is within us, why do we pray that it may come? It is in faith, it is in hope, it is in expectation; but we are praying now that it may come in the thing itself. But may it come to us, not to him who always reigns together with his Father, always reigns in the Father; but may it come to us. Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the origin of the world (Matt 25:34). We say: Your kingdom come. That God may so reign in us that in us death may cease to reign, sin may cease to reign. Death reigned, he says, from Adam to Moses (Rom 5:14). And elsewhere: Let sin not reign in your mortal body (Rom 6:12).

Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth (Matt 6:10). Now on earth many things are done according to the will of the devil, the wickedness of the world, the desire of the flesh; but in heaven nothing is done except the will of the Lord. We ask, then, that, with the devil slain, with the world made new, with the body changed, with the empire of death destroyed, with the dominion of sin abolished, in heaven and on earth, in God and in men, there may be one and the same will of God.

Give us today our daily bread (Matt 6:11). After the heavenly kingdom we are not bidden to ask for earthly bread, since he himself forbids it when he says: Do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat or what you will drink (Matt 6:25). But because he himself is the bread that came down

from heaven (John 6:41), we ask and pray that this very bread, by which daily, that is, perpetually, we are to live in eternity, we may receive today, that is, in the present life, from the banquet of the holy altar, for the strength of body and mind.

And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors (Matt 6:12). By saying this, man, you have given yourself the limit of indulgence and the measure of pardon, you who ask the Lord that as much be forgiven you as you yourself have forgiven your fellow servant. Forgive, then, the one who offends against you everything, if you yourself wish to owe the Lord nothing for your own offences: in another forgive yourself, if you yourself wish to escape the avenging sentence.

And do not lead us into temptation (Matt 6:13). God, as it is written, tempts no one (Jas 1:13); but he is said to tempt when he abandons those who go stubbornly to the snares of temptations. So Adam fell into the ambush of the tempter, in deserting the precepts of his Maker.

But whence and by whom man would be tempted he reveals by saying: But deliver us from evil (Matt 6:13). That is, from the devil, who is both the author and the origin of all evil: the devil was heavenly by nature; now he is spiritual wickedness, older in age than the world, worn by the practice of harming, most skilled in the art of injuring; whence he is no longer called evil, but Evil, from whom is all that is evil. Hence it is that man cannot be freed by his own strength, bound up in fleshly chains. We must ask, then, that God

free us from the devil, he who lent Christ to the earth to conquer the devil. Let man cry out, let him cry out to God, let him cry: Deliver us from evil, so that from so great an evil we may be delivered, with Christ alone conquering.

Our Father, who are in heaven. The theme of praying, the matter of asking, the rule of supplicating, in very few words, he himself who is to be entreated by you has granted you, so that from this you may take the sense of asking, grasp the understanding of requesting, gather the measure of obtaining, and from a very brief teaching on praying take a very broad discipline; and at the same time because, as a token of love, the king himself performed the office of an advocate, so as himself to dictate the prayers to which he was going to answer. All hesitation in obtaining has been taken away, or rather, all confidence of meriting has been conferred, when he who is asked reads himself in the prayers. Dread has no place where the son, with piety as interpreter, desires to obtain from the Father the things that are holy.

Sermon LXXI.

On the same

Dearest brothers, he who has granted you to believe has himself taught you also to pray, and has fitted the whole form of asking into a few words: because when a son asks his father, he does not toil with much prayer; for as necessity compels the begotten to ask, so charity urges the begetter to give. The Father, then, who grants of his own accord, shows not so much that he is to be asked as what is to be asked, so that the son may please by asking just things, who can displease by requesting foolish ones. Hear the Father, and believe now that you are sons, so that you may be able to obtain without hesitation what you ask.

What faith avails, what belief can do, how much confession is worth, is shown today in you. Behold, the threefold confession of the Trinity has lifted you from earthly servitude into heavenly offspring; behold, the faith which has spoken God as Father has today won God as Father for you; behold, the voice which confessed God the Son has adopted you as sons of God; behold, the belief which proclaimed God the Spirit has changed you from the mortal substance of the flesh into the life-giving substance of the Spirit.

Who will be found worthy to proclaim such loving-kindness? God the Father deigns to make men heirs, God the Son does not disdain little servants as co-heirs, God the Spirit takes flesh as a sharer of the divinity, heaven becomes the possession of earthly beings, and those made over to the jurisdiction of the underworld are received in the regions on high, as the Apostle proves when he says: Do you not know that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor 6:3) Call God, then, father, and believe now that you, though not yet born, are nevertheless already designated sons, and take pains that heavenly life may be yours, divine manners yours, and that the whole form of the Godhead may shine forth in your form; because the heavenly Father enriches with divine gifts the sons who answer to their lineage, and calls back those who degenerate to penal servitude.

Our Father, who are in heaven (Matt 6:9). The servile conscience would sink, the earthly condition would be dissolved, if the authority of the Father himself, the Spirit of the Son himself, did not rouse us to this cry. God has sent, he says, the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying: Abba, Father (Gal 4:6). The mind grows weary, our flesh fails before divine things, unless God, who commands, himself fulfils what he commands to be done. When did mortality dare to call God father, except now, when the inner parts of man are animated by power from on high? Our Father, who are in heaven. Man, what have you in common with the earth, you who confess that your race is from heaven? So show a heavenly life in an

earthly dwelling: because if an earthly thought has done anything in you, you have brought a stain upon heaven, an injury upon a heavenly lineage.

Hallowed be your name (Matt 6:9). We ask that God hallow his name, the name which by its holiness saves and hallows the whole creation. Brothers, this is the name that the powers on high dread, that they receive with trembling servitude: this is the name that gives salvation to a lost world: but we ask that the name of God be hallowed in us by our action; for when we act well the name of God is blessed, when we act badly it is blasphemed. Hear the Apostle saying: Through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles (Rom 2:24). We ask, then, we ask that, as holy as the name of God is, so much of its holiness we may merit in our minds.

Your kingdom come (Matt 6:10). As though the kingdom of Christ had not always been and were not, so we ask that it come now. And where is that saying? The kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21). It is among us by faith, but we pray that it may come in the thing itself. Brothers, as long as the devil, by various kinds of wickedness, by manifold arts of deceiving, troubles the sight of things, confounds the senses and the manners of men, rages with idols, raves with sacrileges, deceives with auguries, lies with divination, cheats with signs, mocks with the stars, occupies with spectacles, besieges with vices, wounds with sins, injures with crimes, lays low with despair, he puts off the kingdom of Christ and keeps

it absent from us. We ask, then, that the time may come when, the author of so great an evil perishing, the whole world, the whole creation, may reign and triumph to the whole glory of Christ alone; and that what follows may be done: that as in heaven, so also on earth there may be one will of the Lord. Let earth be heaven, life be God, time be eternity, our homeland be rest, our wealth be innocence, our honour be immortality, our glory be chastity, God be all.

He added: Give us today our daily bread (Matt 6:11). After the fatherhood of God, after the holiness of the divine name, after the kingdom of heaven, we are bidden to ask for daily bread. Christ is not subject to forgetfulness, Christ does not command things contrary to his own commands; he himself said: Do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat or what you will drink (Matt 6:25). But because he himself is the bread that came down from heaven (John 6:41), who was fitted into flour by the millstone of the Law and of grace, who was made ready by the Passion of the cross, who was leavened by the mystery of great godliness, who raised up from the sepulchre the leavening of a light kneading, who, to be baked by the heat of his divinity, himself baked the oven of hell, who is brought daily to the table of the Church as heavenly food, who is broken for the remission of sins, who feeds and nourishes to perpetual life those who eat him, this bread we ask to be given us daily, until we enjoy it fully in that perpetual day.

And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors (Matt 6:12). Man, in your hands is the power of pardon, in you that of indulgence; you have been appointed the author of your own remission. In vain do you ask for pardon, you who disdain to be lenient with yourself in another. Man, you yourself have been made the measure of your own mercy; as much mercy as you seek, so much do.

And do not lead us into temptation (Matt 6:13). Temptation, brothers, is a deceiving appearance, which hides prosperity in adversity, adversity in prosperity, and leads human ignorance out into treacherous falls; we ask, then, that we may not, with sins driving us on, fall into the pits of temptations. But God is said to lead in when he leaves those who run to crimes.

But deliver us from evil (Matt 6:13). Here "evil" designates the author of evil, that is, the devil. We ask, then, that by this one gift we may be free of all evils, in being free of the author of evil.

Our Father, who are in heaven. Let no one, when he cries himself a son, wonder that he remains in the condition of servitude: today you have been designated for divine offspring, not promoted; know that you have obtained the hope, not the thing itself. Hear the Apostle: In hope we have been saved: but hope that is seen is not hope, for what one sees, why does he hope for it? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom 8:24–25). Today is the day of adoption, today is the time of promise: hear, believe, wait; believe your creditor, who

gave credit to you, his debtor; wait a little for him to come, who has long borne with you so that you might come; grant him a respite on his promise, who has already remitted to you whatever there was of debt. Or why are you wearied by hope in God, when the whole human race subsists by hope, lives by faith? The farmer would never sow, panting, if he did not hope in due time for the fruit of his labour; the traveller would not undertake the toil of a long journey, unless he believed that he would reach his destination; the sailor would not enter the sea, uncertain, if he did not hope to make up for the dangers of the routes with the gains that follow; the soldier would not spend all the time of his youth in perils, if he did not hope for the most abundant honours of old age; the son would not endure the times of his father's dominion, if he did not hope to be heir of his father's substance.

And you, if you now believe yourself a son of God, in the words of the Prophet: Wait for the Lord, act manfully, and let your heart be strengthened; and wait (Ps 27:14), that you may obtain the inheritance of God by the faith of waiting and by the virtue of patience. Hear the Apostle: We are sons of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be; we know that when he appears, we shall be like him (1 John 3:2). And again: Your life is hidden with Christ in God: but when Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory (Col 3:3–4). Brothers, blessed are the sons of God, because they will both possess the inheritance of all things, and

will not see the mourning of the times over the passing of a father.

Sermon LXXII.

On the same

What I am now about to say with great trembling, what you are now about to hear with awe, or rather to call out with awe, the angels are astonished at, the powers take fright at, the highest heaven does not contain, the sun does not see, the earth does not sustain, the whole creation does not attain. What is a mortal breast before these things? What is the feeble mind of man before these things? What is the narrowness of human sense before these things? What is the breath of the human voice before these things? What is the human tongue, soon to fall silent, before this? When Paul had seen this invisibly, he revealed it by not revealing it, saying: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it gone up into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9). As soon as Isaiah had received this by his hearing, he doubts that even the faith of men could reach to it, saying: Lord, who has believed our report? (Isa 53:1) When Jeremiah had conceived this by divine hearing, he could not bear the birth of thoughts from on high, crying out: My belly, my belly, I feel pain, and the senses of my heart are troubled (Jer 4:19). This Habakkuk was declaring by the breath of the

divine Spirit, when he says: I kept watch, and my belly was terrified at the voice of the prayer of my lips; and trembling entered into my bones; and beneath me my strength was shaken (Hab 3:16). Lifted up by the power of God, he felt his own strength succumb beneath him. It would be long to pursue this mystery of fright, and to count up the examples of the saints: time does not allow me to linger long in this fear; the impulse of a heavenly birth cannot hold back those who are being born.

I say, then, and I address you, still in the womb, with a penetrating voice, I forewarn you with provident exhortation: that before you see your mother, you may call upon your father too; before your mother's caresses, you may strive and hasten to your father's kingdom; you may come first to your father's bread before you hang at your mother's breasts. And let neither your mother's necessity nor the seasons of age claim anything in you for themselves: but let everything in you answer and run to meet the divine Father, everything the heavenly author.

Our Father, who are in heaven (Matt 6:9). This is what I was afraid to say, this is what I trembled to utter, this is what the condition of its own servitude allowed no one, either of the heavenly or of the earthly, to suspect: that such a commerce of heaven and earth, of flesh and God, could suddenly come about, that God should be turned into man, man into God, the Lord into a servant, the servant into a son, and that there should come to be, in an ineffable manner, one

and everlasting kinship of divinity and manhood. And indeed the condescension of the Godhead towards us is so great that the creature cannot know what it ought most to wonder at: whether that God lowered himself to our servitude, or that he carried us off to the dignity of his divinity. Hence it is, man, that he exhorts you divinely, he who is now inflamed with so great a love for you; that while you are still in the womb God adopts you as a son by your own voice; that he wishes you not only to become free, but to be born free; that for your sake he sets nature itself free, lest the birth of the former servitude should lay on you any blemish, any stain. O you blessed ones, to whom it has been given to rule before being born, to reign before living, to come to the glory of God the Father before recognising the stock of your own lowliness. Happy mother the Church, who looks upon you such as you are, who, though she remains a virgin, marvels that she has borne you such, so great, and in such a way.

Of old this birth was signified by preceding examples. Hence it is that Jacob wrestles with his brother in his mother's womb, and snatches even the triumphs beforehand (Gen 25:22). Hence it is that in Tamar's womb the twins battle over the honour of the first place, hold back the birth, and do not desire to see the light before they conquer (Gen 38:27–30). Hence it is that John leaps beforehand, and runs to meet his author before he comes forth from his bearer's womb (Luke 1:41). And if human offspring thus do service for God before they are born to their parents, before

they live for the world, what wonder if the divine shoots of the Church, if God's own progeny, while still in the womb, already acknowledges that it is of seed from on high?

Our Father, who are in heaven. Astonishment rises up: Christ, from the bosom of God the Father, calls a mother and acknowledges her on earth; and man, from his mother's womb, calls a father and confesses him in heaven: Our Father, who are in heaven. Where has grace suddenly carried you forward, man? Where has the heavenly nature swept you away? So that, still placed in the flesh and on earth, you already know neither flesh nor earth, in saying: Our Father, who are in heaven. He, then, who confesses and believes himself a son of so great a Father, let him answer to his lineage by his life, to his father by his manners, and by mind and act let him assert that he has obtained the heavenly one by nature.

Hallowed be your name (Matt 6:9). Whose race we have certainly begun to be, by his name too we are certainly reckoned: and therefore we ask that in us the hallowing of that name may persevere, the honour and prerogative of the name which the loftiness of so great a Begetter has thus exalted.

Your kingdom come (Matt 6:10). We do not ask it for him to whom the kingdom has never been lacking, or rather, who is himself the kingdom and contains in himself the whole power of the kingdom; but he who wishes us to come to the promised glory of the kingdom warns us to seek this with all our prayers, wishes us to long

for this with our whole minds. For as rash as he is who disputes about the generation, so slothful is he who does not rejoice, burn, pant, when he strives and presses on to the promised kingdom.

Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth (Matt 6:10). As in heaven, so also on earth: then all is already heaven, then the one mind of God moves all, then all are in Christ and Christ in all, when all savour and do the will of God alone; then all are one thing, or rather, all are one man, when the one Spirit of God lives in all.

Give us today our daily bread (Matt 6:11). As in the psalm: Blessed be the Lord from day to day, daily (Ps 68:20); so here: Give us today our daily bread. We call "daily" what is perpetual; perpetual is that bread which came down from heaven: I am the bread that came down from heaven (John 6:41). This bread, then, belongs to perfect beatitude; today, that is, in the present, we already begin to live by the food of that bread by whose perpetuity, which is the "daily", we shall be filled in the future.

And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors (Matt 6:12). From the breast of the suppliant the fountain of pardon flows out, and will flow back to pardon: whatever of piety overflows and pours itself out on another, when he grants himself as much as he has forgiven another. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. The merciful man can do much indeed, who contends with God in piety, when he desires that as much be given him as he has given, that as much be forgiven him as he has forgiven. Man, let

pardon be always in your breast, if you wish not to fear your crimes.

And do not lead us into temptation (Matt 6:13). These words need interpretation, because temptation is the devil's forerunner and his bitter minister: but as long as we are held in this frail body, we necessarily pray that neither may an entrance lie open to temptation against us, nor access be given to the devil.

But deliver us from evil (Matt 6:13). May the Lord our God himself deliver us from evil, and lead us to every good, he who lives and reigns, God, now and always, and for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon LXXIII.

On the paschal solemnity

Today's festival, dearest brothers, does not bind old things to us, nor does it keep the flesh of the lamb until the morrow: but in giving the past a share in the present with solemn devotion, and in joining our Easter to Easter returning, it weans the infancy of the new regeneration, because, according to the Apostle, The old things have passed away, and behold, all things have been made new (2 Cor 5:17). The Lord's year is completed in its seasons, it does not grow old; it keeps returning in its circle until it brings us to the day of retribution. Today's paschal solemnity now drives away from the milk those whom it begot before, so that with the food of more solid nourishment they may be strengthened into the perfect man of Christ.

That Abraham made a great feast, and stirred up the gladness of his whole house when Isaac was weaned, we know from the account of the divine history (Gen 21:8). And if the offspring of old age, if the only son of a barren woman, with dancing choirs, with lyre and drum and the whole concert of the psaltery resounding, drew the hearts of the whole household and moved them to joy, how much more is it fitting that we

today exult in spiritual hymns, or in canticles, when in the Virgin's offspring the whole of fruitfulness is weaned? If Hannah, Sarah's fellow in barrenness, who with the tears of her prayers moistened the dryness of her body and of her nature for as long as posterity had been denied her through a long span of life, gave Samuel, received as a divine gift, back again as a divine gift as soon as he was weaned, and heaped up her gladness with the victims of sacrifices to the fullness of deliverance (1 Sam 1); much more ought we to offer the sacrifice of praise, to pay our vows, to burn the incense of sweetness, and with all the fatness of holocausts to offer victims to God the Father, when the virgin mother presents to the Father from the whole world pledges nourished and weaned, as many in number as the stars of heaven, that the prophetic word may be fulfilled: You will bless the crown of the year of kindness, and your fields will be filled with plenty (Ps 65:12).

Let no one, then, think this saving mystery of our festival idle, nor suppose that we are sewing new cloth on an old garment, where we join nothing of Jewish oldness to Christian newness: knowing, as the Apostle says, that a whole new creation has come forth for us in Christ (2 Cor 5:17); but we raise divine knowledge to the advancement of heavenly virtue, so that, while those lately born are taught together what they ought to do, and those begotten before are instructed how much gratitude they owe God for their perfection, those who have just been born

may hang upon the neck, and with all piety be busied at the breasts of mother Church, draw with tender throats the food of innocence, practise stretching out their arms in holy work, strive to make firm their trembling steps in the course of faith. Are those who are already nourished to be so abandoned that they are not ruled by a father's care, a father's hand, a father's choice? and not so fortified by a mother's counsel, a mother's faith, that by a prudence not human only, but divine as well, they may perceive and seize beforehand the things that save? So Jacob, very timid by his own counsel, very bold by his mother's counsel, went in to seize his father's blessing beforehand, more mystical than deceitful (Gen 27); for he did not lie in calling himself the firstborn, because he is first whom heavenly grace begets, not mortal nature; under the skins of the goats he prefigured us, who, that we may die to sin, at the urging of mother Church put on the garment of the mortified body, and are fragrant with the smell of the field through the continual fruits and the abundance of our confessions, until, playing a saving trick on the blindness of Israel, we seize the paternal blessing beforehand by the whole secret of faith, as the Apostle says: Blindness has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles should enter, in part (Rom 11:25).

Sermon LXXIV.

On the Resurrection of Christ

The labour of the vigils made us, and the weariness of the fast compelled us, to keep silent for a little while, dearest brothers; and therefore today we pay the sermon on the Lord's Resurrection, in which, if it is divine that Christ is born of the Virgin, how much more divine is it that Christ rises from the dead? What is divine, then, must not be received with human hearing.

On the evening, he says, of the sabbath, which dawns into the first day of the week (Matt 28:1). The evening of the sabbath: the day of the world does not know this, the custom of the world does not have it. Evening ends the day, it does not begin it; evening grows dark, it does not dawn; it is not turned into daybreak, because it does not know the rising of light. Evening, the mother of night, gives birth to the day; it changes its order in acknowledging its author; it makes a mystery shine out of newness; it longs to serve the Creator, not time.

On the evening, he says, of the sabbath, which dawns into the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. Late the woman runs to pardon, who ran early to fault. In the evening she seeks Christ,

she who knew that in the morning hours she had lost Adam. Mary came, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. She who had taken unbelief from paradise hastens to take faith from the sepulchre; she strives to snatch life from death, she who had snatched death from life. Mary came. This name is the name of Christ's mother; so a mother came in the name, a woman came, that she might become the mother of the living who had become the mother of the dying, that what is written might be fulfilled: This is the mother of all the living (Gen 3:20). Mary came, and the other Mary. He did not say "they came", but "she came"; under one name two came, by mystery, not by chance. Mary came, and the other Mary. She came, the same yet another, another yet the same, that the woman might be changed in life, not in name; in virtue, not in sex; and might become the messenger of the resurrection who had been the go-between of the fall and of ruin. Mary came to see the sepulchre. So that her whom the sight of the tree had deceived, the sight of the sepulchre might restore; and her whom an enticing look had laid low, a saving look might raise up.

Behold, he says, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven (Matt 28:2). The earth trembled, not because an angel came down from heaven, but because the Ruler came up from the underworld. Behold, there was a great earthquake. The chasm is moved, the depths of the earth leap apart, the earth fears, the masses of the mountains tremble,

the foundations of the world are shaken, Tartarus is arrested, the underworld is summoned to court: death is sentenced, which, aiming at the guilty, ran into the judge; having lorded it over servants, it blazed out against the Lord; raging against men, it leapt out against God. Rightly, then, the law of Tartarus perishes, the rights of hell are removed, the power of death is taken away, and as the penalty of its rashness the wrong done to the examining judge raised the dead: indeed, bodies are given back, man is made whole again, life is restored, and all is now settled by pardon, because the sentence at once passed over onto the author of life. Behold, there was a great earthquake. Now a great earthquake: O if only then even a light whirlwind had thrown down the deadly tree! O if only the smoke of a cloud had darkened that woman's sight! O if only a black cloud had dimmed the look of the lethal fruit! O if only the hand that touched forbidden things had trembled! O if only an unjust night had darkened the day of sin, and had carried off then the laments of the world, and the increase of death, and the wrong done to the Creator! But blandishments always serve the vices, sweet things pander to offences, while austere and strong things are friends to the virtues.

For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. As Christ rises, as death perishes, heavenly commerce is given back to the earthly; and the woman who had held a deadly counsel with the devil holds a life-giving converse with an angel. For an angel of the Lord came down from

heaven, and rolled back the stone. He did not say "rolled", but "rolled back" the stone, which, rolled against the tomb, proved the death, and, rolled back, stood forth as the upholder of the resurrection. Blessed the stone, which merited both to reveal Christ and to veil him; blessed, which opens hearts no less than the sepulchre; blessed, which gives faith in the resurrection, and resurrection to faith, which testifies that the divine flesh has risen. Here the order of things is changed; this sepulchre devours death, not a dead man; the house of death becomes a dwelling of life; the new form of a womb conceives a dead man, gives birth to a living one.

For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and coming up rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. And what cause for sitting had the angel, in whom there was no weariness? But he sat as a teacher of faith, as a master of the resurrection: he sat upon the rock, so that the solidity of the seat might give firmness to believers. The angel was laying upon the rock the foundations of faith, upon which Christ was to found the Church, he who said: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church (Matt 16:18). His appearance, he says, was like lightning, and his clothing like snow (Matt 28:3). Does brightness not suffice for the angel's glory? what did clothing do for a heavenly nature? But by such splendour he showed forth the appearance and the form of our resurrection, because those who rise through Christ are changed into the glory of Christ.

But for fear of him the guards were terrified, and became as dead men (Matt 28:4). Wretched men, whom the fright of death strikes at the very time when the security of life is given back: but the ministers of cruelty, the executors of another's unbelief, how could they take confidence from things above? They were besieging the sepulchre, they were barring the doors against the resurrection, and they kept watch lest life should be able to enter in any way, and death perish: rightly did the angel's coming strike them and lay them low. Wretched mortality, always its own enemy, grieves that it dies, and fights so that it may not be able to rise: it ought to have opened the sepulchre, and brought every facility it had for the rising, so that there might be a miracle from the deed, hope from the example, the thing itself from the one who returned, belief from his living. It is great madness, this: that a man should be unwilling to believe what he desires to happen to himself.

Let it suffice to have said this much today about these guards: what our faith holds, so that today may not run long, we shall say later, by the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon LXXV.

On the same

As far as I have travelled from you, so far has speech travelled from me: but pray, brothers, that as God has given me back to you, so he may deign to give back and restore speech to me. You have heard the Evangelist saying: On the evening, he says, of the sabbath, which dawns into the first day of the week (Matt 28:1). What does human sense understand here? What does human wisdom savour here? Evening, which dawns. Evening ends the day, it does not begin it, nor does it give birth to light, but to darkness; but here the author of the elements changes the courses of the elements, so that in the Lord's resurrection you may perceive all divine, nothing human. Indeed, as Christ rises, evening dawns for the faithful, the day grows dark for the faithless; for the disciples night is changed into day, for the Jews day is turned and changed into night. From the sixth hour, he says, darkness came over the whole earth until the ninth hour (Matt 27:45). So that the very brightness of noon, which is entire, might be darkened, and what is written might be fulfilled: The sun will set for him at noon (Amos 8:9); it will set for them, that is, for the Jews; but for ours: Night will be lit up

like the day (Ps 139:12). For the evening, which always sinks into deep darkness, then stretched itself and rose up into the whole light of Christ, and with its whole splendour filled all the hearts of mortals as Christ rose from the underworld. The evening of the sabbath. Because the sabbath is lit up through Christ, not destroyed. For he did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfil it (Matt 5:17). It is lit up so that it may shine on Sunday, so that what was obscured in the Synagogue, as the Jews darkened it, may grow bright in the Church.

Mary Magdalene came, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. The women go before the apostles to the service, they who follow men in sex, the disciples in order: but they do not on that account make the apostles more sluggish, for they bring to the Lord's sepulchre not the shapes of women, but the type of the churches: Mary, and Mary, the other so as to be the same: the same as the other: the other the same Mary, Mary the mother of Christ: one name is doubled into two women, because here the Church coming from two peoples is figured as one from two peoples, that is, from the Gentiles and the Jews, because the first are last and the last first (Matt 20:16). Mary comes to the sepulchre, she comes to the womb of the resurrection, she comes to the birth of life, that Christ might be born again to faith from the sepulchre, he who had been begotten from the womb of the flesh; and that him whom closed virginity had brought forth to the present life, a closed sepulchre might give back to life everlasting. It is a mark of divinity to

have left the Virgin closed after the birth; to have come out from the closed sepulchre with a body is a mark of divinity. Mary and Mary came to see the sepulchre; you see that they came, not to behold the Lord, but the sepulchre; nor were they seeking among the dead one already living, they who believed that the Lord had already risen.

For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and coming up rolled back the stone (Matt 28:2). He rolled back the stone, not to offer a way out to the Lord as he came forth, but to show the world that the Lord had already risen; to give his fellow servants faith for believing, not to lend the Lord help for rising. He rolled back the stone. It is rolled back for faith, the stone that had been rolled up for unbelief. He rolled back the stone, so that the same stone which had received the office of keeping guard for death might be the title of life.

Pray, brothers, that now the angel may come down, and roll away the whole hardness of our heart, open the closed places of our senses, testify from our minds too that Christ has risen, because, as that heart is heaven in which Christ lives and reigns, so that breast is a sepulchre in which Christ is still held dead and buried. Let the death of Christ be believed to have passed away, as it is believed to have been: Christ the man suffered, died and was buried; he is, he lives, he reigns, he remains, he endures, God. Hear the Apostle saying: Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we no longer know him (2 Cor 5:16). And: In that he died to sin, he

died once; but in that he lives, he lives to God (Rom 6:10); that is, he lives, God.

And coming up he rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. He sat to teach the resurrection, not to relieve weariness. A heavenly nature does not know weariness, knows no toil: but the stone became the vessel of an angel's sitting, the chair of heavenly doctrine, the school of life, because it had been set up by the Jews as the door of death, for the service of the ashes, for a sad silence. His appearance, he says, was like lightning, but his clothing like snow (Matt 28:3). The brightness of the face is set apart from the whiteness of the clothes, and the face is compared to lightning, the angel's garment to snow, because lightning is from heaven, snow from the earth. Hear the Prophet saying: Praise the Lord from the earth, fire, hail, snow (Ps 148:7–8). In the angel's face, then, the brightness of the heavenly nature is kept; but in the garment the grace of human communion is figured, and the appearance of the angel who speaks with them is tempered, so that carnal eyes might both bear the gentle brightness of the clothes, and from the lightning of the face tremble at the messenger of their author, and revere him.

But for fear of him the guards were terrified (Matt 28:4). Why terrified? Because they were keeping guard with a zeal of cruelty, not with the homage of piety. He falls, he is destroyed, he cannot stand, whom conscience abandons and guilt drives on. Hence it is that the angel strikes down the ungodly, and speaks to the godly and

consoles them. As for you, do not be afraid. That is, let those men be afraid: those who seek, let them not be afraid; let those who persecute be afraid. As for you, do not be afraid, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified; he is not here (Matt 28:5–6). That is: "I have come to instruct you, not to bring him out, who is both the Maker of things and the one who raises himself."

He is not here, for he has risen as he said. You see that the angel came so that the servant might assert by deeds what the Lord had foretold in words; and might teach that the power of dying and of living lay with him who before his death had foretold his resurrection: for surely he who could know it could also have avoided it, but because he could conquer, he disdained to turn aside, because the glory of the one rising buried the wrong done to the one dying. Of what follows, brothers, we shall treat in the following sermon, because the weariness of the journey, still fresh, has kept us from drawing out and lengthening the sermon.

Sermon LXXVI.

On the same, and on the second manifestation of Christ, made to the women returning from the tomb

In the previous sermon we said that Mary and the other Mary bore the figure of the Church coming from two peoples: today we wish to prove this from what follows, if only your kind hearing is granted us. The angel answering, he says, said: Do not be afraid, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified: he is not here, for he has risen as he said (Matt 28:5–6). Come, see the place where the Lord had been laid. The angel proclaims the name, speaks of the cross, tells of the Passion, acknowledges the death, but at once the resurrection, at once he confesses the Lord. And if the angel, after such great torments, after the sepulchre, acknowledges the Lord, speaks of his own servitude, and perceives that the whole wrong of the Passion has passed into the glory of the resurrection; why does man either judge God lessened in the flesh, or think that his power failed in the Passion, or believe his lordship consumed by servitude? Fittingly, therefore, he says "crucified", and shows the place where the Lord had been laid, lest another, and not the very same, should be believed to have risen from the dead. And if the Lord returns in the same

flesh, brings back the wounds, takes up again the very holes of the nails, and makes testimonies of his body, tokens of his resurrection, of the very things that had been the outrage of his Passion; why does man think that he will return in another flesh, or not think he will return in his own, or does the servant perhaps disdain his own flesh, when the Lord did not change ours? Be content, man, that you yourself will be in your own flesh, lest you yourself should not be, if you rise in another's flesh.

The angel added, saying: And going quickly, tell the disciples that he has risen, and he will go before you into Galilee; there you will see him (Matt 28:7). Here the angel sends not women, but the Church in two women; he sends her as one, so that by sending her he may spread her far and wide. Here the angel sends the bride to the bridegroom; indeed, as they went, the Lord met them, and greeted them, saying: Hail (Matt 28:9). He meets them, and does not terrify them with power, but comes before them with the ardour of charity; he does not alarm them with authority, but greets them by the law of a bridegroom; he does not burden them by the right of one who rules, but honours them with the love of a sharer: he greets them: Hail. He himself had told his disciples: Greet no one on the way (Luke 10:4); and why is it that here on the way he comes running to meet them as so festive a greeter? He does not wait to be recognised, does not ask to be understood, does not allow himself to be questioned, but goes wholly into the greeting, goes fervent,

and himself undoes his own command by the greeting? He did it, he did it, because the force of love conquers and overcomes everything: and at the same time, because Christ greets himself in the Church, which he has made his own, and so has received her as his own inward parts, so into his own body, as the Apostle says: And he is the head of the body of the Church (Col 1:18).

But that the figure of the Church remains complete in these women the matter itself plainly shows, because Christ rebukes his disciples as they waver about the resurrection, strengthens them as they tremble, and by the showing of his side, by the hollows of the nails, by the taking of food, barely calls them back to faith. Hence too he rightly calls those who are little ones in faith lads, saying: Lads, have you anything to eat? (John 21:5) and elsewhere he calls Mary herself, weeping as though for a dead man, "woman", and denies her leave to touch him (John 20:15–17): but these he finds so perfect, so believing, so untroubled by their sex, so running in the mystery, so seeking the Lord with the whole ardour of faith, that he gives himself to them to be held with such a greeting, saying: Hail. The angel had said: For I know that you are seeking Jesus crucified; and to those who sought him Christ answered: Hail; elsewhere, however, Mary is not given even the leave to touch, here not only to touch, but also to hold, full freedom is granted. But they, he says, came up and held his feet (Matt 28:9). These hold the feet of Christ, because they hold in the Church the type of the preaching of the Gospel,

and merit it by their running: and so they touch by faith the footprints of their Saviour, that they may reach the glory of the whole Godhead, may come to honour.

But that other woman rightly hears: Do not touch me (John 20:17), she who on earth weeps for the Lord, and so seeks him dead in the sepulchre that she does not know that he reigns in heaven with the Father. Do not touch me, that is, do not do homage with the touch of the flesh to him whom you ought to reach with the touch of faith; and do not presume to touch on earth as only a man him whom you do not yet know how to adore as God in heaven; let a woman's care cease, let womanly solicitude desist, let a manly belief climb into your mind, let the breadth of your heart take in my ascension, so that in heaven you may enjoy the eternal blessedness of my touch. According to that word of the Prophet: Blessed is the man whose help is from you, O Lord; he has set ascents in his heart (Ps 84:6). He does not touch Christ on earth who does not climb up to Christ in heaven by faith. That the same Mary, then, now set on the summit of faith, now raised to the pinnacle of the Church, both touches Christ and holds him with the whole affection of holiness, now, cast down by the feebleness of the flesh and by womanly weakness, doubts and does not merit the touch of her author, raises no question: since the one is of the figure, the other of the sex; the one is of divine grace, the other of human nature. For when we, the very same people, know divine things, it is

God's gift; when we savour human things, we are blinded of ourselves. So blessed Peter, in confessing the Son of God, knows Christ by the Father's revealing; when he denies Christ, he feels and suffers the blindness of the flesh.

Meanwhile the Jews, as for crimes, either buy their own badly, or sell off others' worse, in putting a price on sins, in weighing and offsetting offences with money, in squandering on their own wickednesses what they gathered with every wickedness. So they buy Judas, the betrayer of his Lord, and weigh with a price the blood of the Redeemer of the world; so they shut up the faith of the opened sepulchre in a purse, that with the coins of crimes they might purchase the crime of denying the resurrection. Money, he says, in plenty they gave to the soldiers, saying: Say that his disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep; and if the governor hears of this, we will persuade him, and make you secure (Matt 28:12–14). And they took the money and did as they had been taught; and this word has been spread abroad among the Jews to this very day (Matt 28:15). Among the Jews: can it be among the Christians? Jew, what you darkened with gold in Judaea has shone out and blazed forth by faith in the whole world: the disciples received Christ, they did not steal him; you bought unbelief, but you did not steal the truth; Jew, Christ has risen, you have lost your money. His blood be upon us and upon our children (Matt 27:25). Jew, Christ lives; you have slain both yourself and your posterity.

Sermon LXXVII.

On the Resurrection of Christ

It is a very full token of perfect devotion, that in the time of the Passion the whole creation suffers with its Creator. What flesh did not tremble when the earth trembled, what mind did not grow numb, what understanding did not fail, when the sun set before its time, when the light fled back? Indeed, brothers, our inmost parts too sank down then, our sense died with him, our speech was buried with its author, that it might now be raised up to his whole glory. This was the cause of my silence, this was the devoted delay of my debt. Nor is it any wonder, brothers, if my speech, with foresight and with the whole homage of affection, followed its giver even into the underworld, because without him I had nothing to pay to you, creditors such and so great. But if some greedy and eager collector complains of the slowness of the payment, let him cease to bring against us a charge about the time, because my Lord, who is rich, increases and repays manifold the interest on the loan itself. Let the generous humanity of the Gospel reading, then, now release us, whom the necessity of our office has brought down and bound over to a debt so great as this.

On the evening, he says, of the sabbath, which dawns into the first day of the week (Matt 28:1). In the Lord's rising not only was the law of human nature turned about, but the very order of creation was also strikingly changed. The evening of the sabbath, which dawns. Behold, as the Lord rises, evening does not grow dark, but dawns; and what had been wont to be the beginning of night becomes the opening of light. The evening of the sabbath, which dawns into the first day of the week. As mortality into immortality, corruption into incorruption, flesh into God, so darkness is transferred into light; so that night itself may rejoice that it has not perished in this way, but has been changed, the night which thus failed by obscurity rather than by time, which more happily lost its intervals, lost the turn of its servitude, so as to flow forth and burst out into the freedom of perpetual light, as the Prophet says: And night is my illumination in my delights (Ps 139:11). Evening, which dawns into the first day of the week. The sabbath rejoices that it has been made second, the day that by the command of the Law lay numb in idleness; and through the primacy of Sunday it is wonderfully roused to the works of divine power, the sabbath that the inertia of Jewish observance made a stranger to saving power, as the Lord says: Is it not lawful on the sabbath to grant a cure to the sick, help to the afflicted, sight to the blind, life to the dead? (Luke 6:9) and by interpreting it so, that observance had wretchedly bound over to the servitude of

the belly alone the day of the sabbath, which God had assigned to the studies of the holy Law.

On the evening of the sabbath, which dawns into the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came, and the other Mary. One came by name, who is now read as another in a different person. Mary came, and another Mary. So that the unity of the name might figure one woman in two, and the diversity of persons might show the woman changed. For it is "she came", not "they came", and when he says "another", he designates the same woman in each by a mystical utterance, to show that one came before faith, another would return after faith. The woman comes, but Mary returns; she comes who brought in death, she returns who bore life; Adam comes, she who led down to the underworld, she returns who received Christ back from the underworld. Mary came, and another Mary. Why? To see the sepulchre, and not to seek Christ: only to see the sepulchre, the title of her guilt, the sad record of her misdeed, the deadly commerce of her presumption with the devil, of her gain, that she might recover faith from the place where she bore the perpetual reproach of her transgression.

And behold, there was a great earthquake (Matt 28:2). If the earth trembled so when the Lord of his own rises for pardon, how will it shake when the Lord of the guilty rises for punishment, as the Prophet says: The earth trembled, and was still, when God arose in judgement (Ps 76:9–10)? And the earth, which could not bear the presence of a fellow servant, that is, of an angel, how will

it bear God as judge? Behold, human salvation is restored along the same lines by which it had perished. The woman, first to unbelief, is first brought to faith; she runs first to the slayer of death, who had run first to the author of death; she first hears from an angel, who had first spoken with the devil.

An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and coming up rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. Not to bestow the resurrection by such an operation, but to make it known, as the Lord says: I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again (John 10:18). He opens closed things to us, he unbars hidden things to us, and does not bring out to the light his author, who was no longer in the sepulchre; but he leads his fellow servants, who were set in the darkness of doubt, to faith in the resurrection; he himself bears witness, when he says: He is not here, he has risen (Matt 28:6): He rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. Why did he not roll it, but roll it back? So that the stone which the unbelief of the Pharisees had rolled for stumbling and for offence, the angel might roll back for faith and salvation, as the prophet says: Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (Isa 8:14; 28:16; Rom 9:33). The stone, then, is rolled back, so that it might roll away death, the stone that, rolled up against him, had shut in life, as Scripture says: You will see your life hanging before your eyes, and you will not believe (Deut 28:66). And sat upon it. Not refreshing weariness, but showing thus that he was the guardian of a

sacred and life-giving sepulchre; and by such a sign of his sitting, as the minister of a heavenly office, he declared that death had been destroyed; and that he who suffered is God, God who was received within the narrow confines of our body, God to whom he, sitting thus in heavenly dress, bore witness as his upholder. And what more, brothers? He sits, because the angel never withdraws from that so venerable sepulchre.

But for fear of him the guards were terrified, and became like dead men (Matt 28:4). The terror that lays low the guilty at once runs back upon their accomplices. So, so, when the innocent rise, terror and death will possess the unjust and the ungodly. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing like snow (Matt 28:3). What does clothing do where there is no nakedness? what is a garment for where there is no necessity of covering? But the angel, brothers, prefigures thus our garb, our form, our likeness in the resurrection, where man is restored in the very brightness of his body, as the Lord says: Then the just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt 13:43).

And the angel answering said to the women: Do not be afraid, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified (Matt 28:5). They were still seeking him crucified and dead, they whose faith the savage storm of the Passion had troubled, and whom the weight of temptation had so bowed down that they were still seeking the Lord of heaven in a sepulchre.

He is not here (Matt 28:6). According to what stood in a place; but he is here, in that he is everywhere, and is not enclosed by the capacity of a place. Come, see the place where the Lord had been laid. The angel calls the women to see, so that the place of the sacred body might cleanse the eyes which the sight of the forbidden tree had stained, as the devil closed them. They enter the sepulchre, so that, buried with the Lord, they might rise to the whole salvation of faith. If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be together also in that of his resurrection (Rom 6:5).

Going, tell his disciples (Matt 28:7). Return to the man, woman, now healed, and persuade him to faith, you who persuaded him to unbelief; bring to man the token of the Lord's resurrection, you who once brought him the counsel of temptation and ruin.

Sermon LXXVIII.

On the seventh manifestation of Christ, made to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias

After that storm of the Lord's Passion, unknown to the earth, fearful to the heavens, unheard of in the ages, unbearable to the underworld, the Lord came to the sea, and found his disciples tossing in the darkness of night. For when the sun fled, what could remain from the splendour of the moon? what from the stars for the comfort of the night? For the earth was one confused gloom, which blinded not only the sight of the body, but the very gaze of the mind: nor did it allow those sailing to seek or regain the shore of faith, the harbour of salvation.

When it was already morning, says the Evangelist, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus (John 21:4). The whole creation had fled from the wrong done to the Creator: the world strove to escape the slaying of its Lord, knowing that vengeance reaches to the whole house in which the Ruler has been slain by the wickedness of servants. Hence it is that the earth trembled as its foundations deserted it, the sun fled so as not to see, the day withdrew so as not to be present, the rocks, because they could not depart by nature, were split

by a new wound, accusing so great a misdeed by a sound, since they could not by a voice; hell, when it saw the Judge himself penetrate to it, overcome and wailing, lost those it held: hence it is that souls given back to their bodies announced to the living that the dead, whom the world had thought perished, would rise. So, when the whole frame of the world was tossing thus in confused order, and believed that it had been rolled back by the death of its author into the primordial darkness and the ancient chaos, suddenly the Lord brings back the day by the light of his resurrection, and reshapes the whole world into its former body, so that the world which he had seen suffer with him so might be raised up with him to his glory, as the Evangelist says: When it was already morning; that is, when the night of the Lord's Passion had passed, Jesus stood on the shore. That he might call back all things to their ancient bound, make firm what wavered, calm what was tossed, set in order what was disturbed, and by his anchorage make stable the very foundations of the world, which had been so shaken, so that the world might at once run back to the homage of its author, the world that had fled away from the wrong done to its author.

But when it was morning, Jesus stood on the shore. That he might bring back above all the Church, in which the disciples were then being tossed by bitter waves, to the safe anchorage of his faith: indeed, because he had found them destitute of the virtue of faith, and had come upon them utterly cast down from manly vigour, he

rebukes them by calling them such lads, when he says: Lads, have you anything to eat? (John 21:5) For Peter was there, who had denied. Thomas, who had doubted; John, who had fled; so he addresses them not as the bravest soldiers, but as lads, as fearful; and those whom he does not yet find fit for battle, he invites to table as tender ones, saying: Lads, have you anything to eat? That humanity might call them back to grace, bread to confidence, the dish to faith; for they would not have believed that the body had risen unless they saw him eating in the whole manner of a man. Hence it is that the whole fullness of things asks for food: the bread himself eats, because he hungers not for food, but always for the charity of his own.

Lads, have you anything to eat? They answered him: No (John 21:5). And what did they have, who did not have Christ, already set with them, who did not yet see with their own eyes the Lord standing before them? For the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. He says to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you will find (John 21:6). He calls back to the right those whom the whirlwind of the Passion had driven and forced back to the left. They cast it, he says, and they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. They had cast it to the right, they had cast it on the manly side, but as lads they still could not draw it: yet they felt from the very weight, they felt that the fishes had come at the command of the one who ordered, not fallen into the catch of human skill.

But that disciple whom Jesus loved said: It is the Lord (John 21:7). The one who is loved sees first, because the eye of love always looks more keenly, and he who loves always perceives more vividly. Peter, when he heard. What had so slowed that mind of Peter, that he heard of the Lord from another, he who had been accustomed to announce him to the rest? Where is that singular word of his? You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:16): where is it? It had fled away in the house of Caiaphas, the chief of the Jews; he was slower to see his Lord, who had so easily heard the voice of a whispering maidservant (Matt 26:69–70).

When he heard, he says, that it was the Lord, he girded his tunic about him, for he was naked (John 21:7). A wonder, brothers! When the Lord was being seized, John threw off the linen cloth, and Peter was found naked: because flight covered John, denial so stripped Peter (Mark 14:51–52). A wonder, brothers, and truly a wonder, that he who was stripped in the ship plunges into the sea clothed: because innocence is never naked, and guilt always flees back to a covering. Indeed, as Adam, so now too Peter after his fault is eager to cover his nakedness, both of whom had surely been clothed before the fault with a holy nakedness. He girded his tunic about him, and cast himself into the sea. That the sea might wash away what denial had so soiled. He cast himself into the sea. That he might be first in returning, who had received the principate in order. And he girded his tunic about him. He who was to be

girded by the passion of martyrdom, as the Lord says: Another will gird you, and lead you where you do not wish (John 21:18).

But the other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits off, dragging the net of fishes (John 21:8). The others arrive by boat, and drag the catch of fishes, so that by faithful labour they may bring with them to the Lord the Church tossed by the storms of the world, and those whom they snatch up by the net of the Gospel to the light above and lift from the deep. They were not, he says, far from land. They were not far from the land of the living, those whom the end of things present had already made near to things to come. But about two hundred cubits. From the Jews and the Gentiles he doubles the number of a hundred, he who joins the life and salvation of two peoples. The remaining part of the reading we shall treat in the following sermon, with the Lord's help.

Sermon LXXIX.

On the Resurrection of Christ

Since we have already run through the readings of Matthew and of Mark on the Lord's Resurrection, let us now search out how the most blessed Luke has thundered on it. On the first day of the week, he says, very early in the morning, the women came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared (Luke 24:1). We have often said that the things done concerning the resurrection of Christ were done after the form of our resurrection: hence it is that the evangelists set forth the series of Christ's deeds in language more mystical than new. On the first, he says, day of the week. Rightly "one", because the day of the resurrection knows no second; the mother of eternal light, it does not know the time of night; a perpetual day dawns perpetually; the light of those who rise cannot die; the light that blots out night does not know how to be extinguished.

They came, he says, to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared: and they found the stone rolled back from the tomb, and going in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus (Luke 24:1–3). What does it mean, that those who had earlier fled from the tomb now return boldly to the sepulchre: fearless, they return to the fear-

ful corpse, confidently invade the gloom of the sepulchre; and not finding the Lord, they seek him steadfastly, they linger more steadfastly; nor do they take fright that the night added to the tomb, in breeding darkness, adds fear? Brothers, woman is the cause of evil, the author of sin, the way of death, the title of the sepulchre, the gate of hell, the whole necessity of lament: for this reason they are born to tears, are made over to sorrows, are bound over to groans, and they are as strong in laments as they are found weak in strength: and as unready as they are for labours, so ready are they for tears: hence it is that by tears they overcome arms, by weeping they bow kingdoms, by laments they break the whole fortitude of men. It is no wonder, then, if for tears, for the burial, for the sepulchre, for the homage of the Lord's body, women seem here more ardent than the apostles; where the woman runs first to tears who ran first to the fall; goes before to the sepulchre, who went before to death; becomes the messenger of the resurrection, who was the interpreter of death; and she who had held out to the man the message of so great a destruction herself holds out to men the hearing of a great salvation, that by the message of faith she may make up for what she took away by the hearing of unbelief.

Here the order is not inverted, but mystical; the apostles are not set behind the women, but are kept for greater things; the women take on the homage of Christ, the apostles take on the passions of Christ; they carry spices, these scourges;

they enter a sepulchre, these a prison; they hasten to homage, these fly to chains; they pour in oil, these pour out blood: they are aghast at death, these take on deaths. And why say more? They stay at home, these march to the battle lines, so that as devoted soldiers they may prove their faith in adversity, their virtue in labours, their patience in wrongs, their death in dangers, their endurance in wounds, their devotion in punishments, their constancy in the tearing of their inward parts. The women, then, bring tears for Christ; the apostles, the devil overcome and the enemies conquered, bring back to Christ both victory and triumph.

But that the apostles are reported either not to have believed the women when they announced that the Lord had risen, or to have judged it raving, let no one gravely reproach: he doubts deeply who believes more deeply; he cannot be deceived who is not easy of hearing; he is very slothful who after an example is found unwary; the raw soldier rushes to the battle line, who does not know the cause of the war and is ignorant of the warrior's force; it is skill, not sluggishness, when the veteran soldier advances slowly. So Adam, new as he was, fell quickly in believing quickly; and in readily giving his ears to the woman's report, he bound over himself and his posterity to the worst enemy: but the veteran Peter does not readily hear a woman, believes the women slowly when they announce, and deliberates like a veteran, lest he rush in like a boy. Indeed, when two of the disciples, who after the resurrection merited

to have Christ as the companion of their journey, returned and announced that they had seen the Lord, the apostles judge what they hear to be not raving, but manly: they lend their ears, they fix their faces, they open their eyes, they unfold their hearts, and they so commit to their senses what is said, that after the heat of hesitation they thirstily drink the hearing of faith from the river which the tongue of their colleagues poured out. As cold cups quench and cool the burning of thirst, so the hearing of the mind becomes gladder after grief.

Brothers, who can grasp the causes of the Lord's birth? Who merits to weigh the work of the Lord's resurrection? No one will be able to think these things, to grasp them, to weigh them, unless he has received it from God himself: that the Creator of things is created by a woman's child-bearing, that the Lord of the world is seen in human servitude, that the shepherd of all needs pasture; that he who acquits all is made over to the guilty; that the life of the world is punished, that the raiser of the dead dies, that he who encloses all things is enclosed in a sepulchre, that the Lord of those above is found in the underworld. Whoever, then, can grasp these things, judging deeply, does not wonder at the hesitations, the tremblings, the fears, the flights, the hiding-places of the apostles. So, brothers, that the apostles doubt, that they receive these things so slowly with so great a belief, let us not wonder, we who up to now do not believe, but let us pray that we may merit to perceive as much

about these things as he gives who grants man to perceive divine things. What remains of the course of the reading we shall examine in the next sermon, with God's help.

Sermon LXXX.

On the Resurrection of Christ and the second manifestation, made to the women returning from the tomb

Since in the last sermon we touched on the first part of the reading, today let us hear what is in what follows. The angel answering, he says, said to the women: As for you, do not be afraid, for I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified; he is not here; for he has risen as he said; come, see the place where the Lord had been laid (Matt 28:5–6). Do you think that the absence of Peter, of John, of all the disciples is being reproached, their sloth chastised, because the women, first, alone, watchful, run ardently to meet the rising Christ; and that the manly portion itself is so marked down that womanly weakness runs ahead to the glory of the resurrection? Far from it, brothers; this is a cause, not chance; a mystery, not a happening; order, not fault: for here the woman follows the man, she does not go before him, where the man rises in Christ. Understand, then, that Peter gave way not to the women, but to Christ; not to the maidservant, but to the lord; to a mystery, not to sleep; to order, not to fear: indeed, the man was already in Christ when the angel came to the women, so

that as far as the Lord excels the angel, so far the man might go before the woman in honour.

As for you, do not be afraid. Because love possesses the good, fright the wicked; and fear terrifies the ungodly, affection consoles the godly. As for you, do not be afraid. That is to say: Let the Jew be afraid who betrayed him, Pilate who sentenced him, the soldier who mocked him, the ungodliness that crucified him, the cruelty that offered him bitter cups, the savagery that besieged him in the tomb, the unbelief that bought a lie, that sold faith, the inhumanity that grieves that its Lord has risen, and does not grieve that it killed him: but it is fitting for you to rejoice, not to fear, because he whom you were seeking dead has risen, he lives whom you were mourning as slain.

For I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified. That is: Why do you seek the living among the dead? (Luke 24:5) why do you seek life in a sepulchre? Go rather to meet the one who lives: and no longer run together to the homage of one who is dying. I know that you are seeking Jesus who was crucified: he is not here. So the angel spoke, because he opened the sepulchre for this purpose, not that Christ might come out from there, who was no longer there, but to show that Christ was no longer there.

He has risen as he said. Twofold is the power: both to return from the dead, and to foreknow things to come. Come, see the place where the Lord had been laid. Come, women, come, see where you laid Adam: where you buried man,

where by your counsel you thrust down the man, by which you made the Lord lie so for the very servants; and understand that the greatness of the pardon towards you is as great as was the greatness of the wrong done to the Lord. Come, see the place where the Lord had been laid. Angelic power confesses that he who was crucified is the Lord: and does human weakness discuss whether he who rises is the Lord? Christ so took up human passions, that all that belongs to divinity he does not lose.

And going quickly, tell his disciples that he has risen, and behold, he will go before you into Galilee: there you will see him (Matt 28:7). Nor here are the apostles set behind the women, but the woman is acquitted of guilt in that she carries the report of life, carries the report of the resurrection, she who had carried the report of death and of ruin.

And going, he says, quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy (Matt 28:8). The women enter the sepulchre, that they might become partakers of the burial, companions of the Passion; they go out of the sepulchre, that they might rise by faith before they rose again in the flesh. Going out with fear and great joy. And where is Do not be afraid? Because fear was not taken away, but changed; fear had departed from guilt, but remained from service; bad is the fear of fault, good the fear of reverence: they had lost Adam when he was given, they were in great fear lest they should lose him when he was given back. With fear and great joy. It is written: Serve the

Lord with fear, and exult in him with trembling (Ps 2:11). With fear and great joy. Because the fear of the Lord is holy, it endures for ever and ever (Ps 19:10). He remains in holiness, then, who endures in the fear of God.

They were running to tell his disciples, and behold, Jesus met them, saying: Hail (Matt 28:8–9). Christ meets those who run faithfully, that what they had believed by faith they might recognise by sight: and that by his presence he might make firm those whom hearing still kept trembling. Jesus met them, saying: Hail. He meets them as Lord, he greets them as a parent; he enlivens by affection, he keeps by fear; he greets them, so that they may serve through love, not flee through fear. But they came up and held his feet. He who endured being seized willed to be held. They came up and held his feet. That they might know that the man is in the head of Christ, that they are in the feet of Christ: and that it is given them through Christ to follow the man, not to go before him.

He says to them: Do not be afraid (Matt 28:10). What the angel had said, the Lord says too, so that those whom the angel had made firm Christ might make firmer. But go, tell my brothers to go into Galilee; there they will see me. Rising from the dead, Christ took up again the man, he did not leave him: so he calls them brothers, whom he made kinsmen of his own body; he calls them brothers, whom he adopted as sons of his Father; he calls them brothers, whom as a kindly heir he made his co-heirs.

But hear how, as Christ rises, ungodliness rises: Behold, some of the guards came into the city, and told the chief priests all that had happened (Matt 28:11). And they, assembled with the elders and having taken counsel, gave money in plenty to the soldiers, saying: Say that his disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep (Matt 28:12–13). Those who give money buy things not to be lost, but to be kept; the Jews, as Judas sold, bought in order to lose Christ; now they poured out money in plenty in order to lose themselves, the Law, the temple, their country. Men of blood and of deceit, they fix the price of falsehood, they draw up the deed of unbelief, by a cruel commerce they traffic in the cheating of faith, the robbery of truth: they corrupt the soldiers, so that they call a theft what was the secret of the resurrection: His disciples came by night, and stole him. Not content with having killed the master, they contrive how they might destroy the disciples; they make the power of the master the crime of the disciples. His disciples came by night, and stole him. Plainly the soldiers let him go, the Jews lost him; but the disciples took up their master, not by theft, but by faith; by virtue, not by fraud; by holiness, not by crime; living, not dead: hence it is that they are sent into Galilee, that they may be able to see him, because God is not seen in the place of unbelief.

But as to his saying: All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18). He declares this: that he himself gave it to himself in himself, as the Apostle proves when he says: God

was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:19). The Son of God to the Virgin's son, God to man, divinity to the flesh, conferred what he always possessed with the Father, and the Spirit. And therefore he says: Go, baptise all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). That one and the same power might re-create for salvation all the nations which it had created for life. And behold, he says, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (Matt 28:20). He is always with us, who is always with the Father, and he will come to us through that which he assumed from us. And what more, brothers? That he is born, that he suffers, that he rises, that he receives, is not, is not of his own necessity: this is of our salvation.

Sermon LXXXI.

On the fifth manifestation of Christ, made to the disciples when Thomas was absent

While rebellious Judaea strives to war down its Creator, and raises impious hands to the slaying of its author, it took peace from the lands, loosed the concord of things, so broke the covenant of the elements as to call the whole world back to the ancient chaos: indeed, it puts the day to flight, invades the night, takes away light by darkness, heaven from things, makes the earth tremble, mingles the dead with the living, confounds the underworld and those above, and, the order scattered to the wrong of the Creator, left nothing at all peaceful, nothing at all friendly. Hence it is that Christ, returned from the underworld, to give peace back to things, cries out: Peace be with you (Luke 24:36).

While the disciples, he says, were speaking of these things, Jesus stood in their midst, and says to them: Peace be with you. Rightly he adds "with you", because the earth had already stood still, the day had returned, the sun had run back, and the frame of the world already held its order restored. But for the disciples war still remained, and the conflict of faith and unbelief dashed them fiercely together. The whirlwind of the Pas-

sion had not so shaken the earth as the heart of the disciples: and therefore the battle lines of belief and disbelief laid waste their spirits with stubborn fighting: troops of thoughts pressed upon their minds, and by the sallies of despair and of hope their breasts, sturdy though they were, were broken. Amid the countless miracles of Christ's signs, and the manifold kinds of his Passion, amid the marks of the Godhead and the feeblenesses of the flesh, amid the losses of death and the gifts of life, the senses and the minds of the disciples were carried to and fro: now their spirit was lifted to heaven, now their souls were dashed to the earth; and with such a storm raging in their inmost parts, they could find no harbour of rest, no anchorage of peace. Seeing this, Christ, the searcher of hearts, who commands the winds, gives orders to storms, and by a mere nod changes tempests into calm, at once strengthens them with his peace, saying: Peace be with you, it is I, do not be afraid.

"I am that crucified one, dead, buried. It is I. Through me God, through you man. It is I. Not a spirit in the figure of flesh, but truth itself in the flesh. It is I. I from the dead am the living one, from the underworld I am the one above. It is I, whom death fled, at whom the underworld trembled: Tartarus confessed God when it took fright. Do not be afraid, Peter, for having denied; you, John, for having fled; all of you, for having deserted; for having judged of me with thoughts wholly faithless; for still not believing, though you see me. Do not be afraid, it is I. I who called

you by grace, chose you by pardon, bore with you by loving-kindness, carried you by charity, and now welcome you by goodness alone, because a father does not know how to see faults when he receives his son, when affection takes up again its own."

Troubled, he says, and terrified, they thought they saw a spirit (Luke 24:37). Why? because the Lord had entered when the doors were shut. The disciples, then, stunned by the sleep of grief, attributed to Christ not what divine power can do, but what human nature admits. They thought they saw a spirit. For the spirit of a man passes through barriers in the womb, penetrates walls, so that, the body being closed, it enters the body enclosed: so the soul, when it brings life to an end, when it withdraws from the sweet companionship of the body, is not held by the bars of houses, by worldly obstacles: a heavenly substance does not know how to be shut in by earthly prisons, according to that word: The spirit: you do not know where it comes from, or where it goes (John 3:8). So the disciples did not believe that the Lord, having entered after the resurrection with the doors closed, had brought back the solidity of a body, suspecting that the soul alone had returned in the image of flesh, as bodily images are wont to appear to those asleep. They thought, he says, they saw a spirit. So, as we have said, in the disciples the wars of thoughts were not calmed, but the wars of thoughts grew more and more, and the tumult of minds was increased by the very visions; and from the source from

which faith in the resurrection was asserted, from there the scruple of all hesitation was born. That he had come was a fact; that he had entered with the doors shut was not faith: it was not faith, but power; it was not human, but he was man; so that there might be a true body in the might of the Godhead, not an empty appearance of flesh, to the wrong of the resurrection.

So, to suppress the conflicts of thoughts arising from this, Christ answered: Why are you troubled? and do thoughts ascend into your hearts? (Luke 24:38) Rightly they ascend, they do not descend: because human thoughts, weighed down by the weight of the flesh, try to ascend to the lofty mystery of God, and in their very efforts are broken, collapse, are set down to the earth, unless he helps who grants man to think divine things. Why are you troubled? and do thoughts ascend into your hearts?

See my hands and feet (Luke 24:39). See: that is to say, "Keep awake". Why? Because what you see is not a dream. See my hands and feet. "Because with heavy eyes you cannot yet look up to the head, see the wounds of the flesh, since you do not see the works of God; consider the titles of the enemies, since you have not yet considered the insignia of God; handle me, so that at least the hand may give faith, since the seeing eye is so blinded: the eye does not see, let touch see; let your fingers enter the prints of the nails, let your hands search out the depths of the wound, open the holes of the hands, furrow the side, renew the wounds, because I cannot deny to disciples for

faith what I did not deny to enemies raging for punishment; handle me, handle me, and come, as eager searchers, even to the bones, so that at least the bones may maintain the truth of the flesh, and the wounds kept may testify that I am the very one. I ask, why do you not believe that I have risen, I who raised countless dead before your eyes? Unless perhaps the power that was present for others failed me, according to that voice which insulted me as I hung on the cross, saying: He saved others, himself he cannot save: if he is the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him (Matt 27:42). And which is greater: to shake off the nails and come down from the cross, or to trample death and climb up from the underworld? Behold, I have both saved myself, and, the chains of hell broken, climbed up to the heights, and yet not even among you have I found faith in my Godhead. Or does a death of three days perhaps deny the faith of believing? Did not my voice call Lazarus from the underworld, four days dead and already stinking, before your eyes, did not my command call him back to life? And if a servant four days dead rises, why should the Lord three days dead not rise again?"

But while they still did not believe for joy, and were wondering (Luke 24:41). Joys we have prayed for, even when they have been given, are scarcely believed; things longed for, when they arrive, bring astonishment: hence it is that the apostles marvel at a resurrection of Christ swifter than they had hoped; and that they believe more

slowly is not of unbelief, but of love; for, searching faith in this way, they do not deny it, but seek it; and while they look more deeply, they long for what they behold to be true.

Brothers, it was not the fear of unbelief, but the greatness of the cause, that made the disciples slow to these things, dazed at things so great; not to see what is seen, not to know what is known, not to believe what is believed, is the work not of disbelief, but of a singular miracle. Brothers, for mighty works our nature is very much an infant: unless it has grown through God, it cannot grasp what is mature, it is not able to perceive what is perfect. May God himself, then, grant that what we cannot through ourselves we may grasp through him, and perceive.

Sermon LXXXII.

On the resurrection of Christ, and the fourth manifestation, made to the two going to the village

Since Saint Matthew has already told us, for our salvation, what he had learned of the Lord's resurrection, today let us hear what blessed Mark also relates. And when the sabbath was past, he says, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Jesus (Mark 16:1). The women in this place hurry about with womanly devotion, they who bring to the sepulchre not faith, as to one living, but ointments, as to one dead, and prepare for him, as for one buried, the homage of grief, not, as for one rising, the joys of divine triumphs. Christ accepted death, that death might die; Christ, in being slain, slew that which slew all; Christ entered the sepulchre to lay open hell. So, the law of Tartarus loosed, the prison of hell destroyed, and the very rule of death slain, Christ is no longer to be anointed as one dead, but to be adored as victor. The women spend the night, keep watch, stay sleepless, penetrate the darkness of the bursting dawn: whence they seem to bear a doubtful light no less of the heart than of the body.

And very early, he says, on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb, the sun having already risen (Mark 16:2). If very early, how the sun having already risen? Does the Evangelist, then, not know what he is saying? The Evangelist knows what he says, but what he hears, he who has not learned does not know; this account is not of error, it is of truth: it does not admit the slip of human speech, but lays open the truth of a thing done from heaven. He had said: From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness (Mark 15:33); so the sun, which out of its hour had withdrawn to suffer with the Lord, when the Lord was rising ran to meet him with its brightness before its time: and the sun which, to die with its author, had mortified its very noonday brightness, burst forth before dawn, the darkness overcome, to rise with its author. Very early. Because then the sun rose early to make the morning; and it, which earlier had fled ahead of the night, now itself forestalls the night to put it to flight, that the night may give back to the light the hours which the terror of the Lord's Passion had invaded.

They were saying, he says, to one another: Who will roll back the stone for us from the door of the tomb? (Mark 16:3) From the door of the tomb, or of the heart? from the sepulchre, or from the eyes? Women, the breast is bolted, the eyes are closed: and therefore you do not see the glory of the opened sepulchre; pour oil not on the Lord's body, but on the lamp of your heart, if you desire to see, so that by the light of faith what is

shut in by the darkness of disbelief may lie open. And looking up, he says, they saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great (Mark 16:4). Great indeed, and very great, and now great more in merit than in form, which sufficed both to enclose and to cover the body of the Creator of the world.

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe (Mark 16:5). They entered the sepulchre, so that, buried with Christ, they might rise with Christ from the sepulchre, and that word of the Apostle might be fulfilled: You were buried with him in baptism, in which you have also risen (Col 2:12). They see a young man, that they might discern the age of our resurrection; they see a young man, because resurrection knows no old age, nor does eternal perfection admit ages. Where man does not know how to be born, he does not know how to die; and where he does not know how to be born and to die, there he neither admits the loss of ages nor needs their increase. They see a young man sitting on the right side, because the resurrection admits nothing sinister. The ways, he says, that are on the right the Lord knows (Prov 4:27). And: Then he will set the just at his right hand (Matt 25:33). Pray, brothers, that we too may die to vices, be buried to temporal pomps, that we may rise to eternity in Christ, and, set at the right, may merit to hear: Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the origin of the world (Matt 25:34).

Clothed in a white robe. That robe is not from mortal fleece, but from living power; shining with heavenly light, not with earthly colour; and bright by the Creator's gift, not by the fuller's art, as the Prophet says: Clothed with light as with a garment (Ps 104:2), and of the just: Then the just will shine like the sun (Matt 13:43). Earthly beings are veiled in earthly garments; and therefore, as they shine with newness, so they grow dingy with oldness: but heavenly beings are wrapped in a mantle of heavenly light, and, raised above earthly squalor, they are neither ever fouled by oldness nor darkened by any stains; but the garments which resurrection has once given are clothed in perpetual light.

But they, going out of the tomb, fled; for trembling and fright had seized them (Mark 16:8). The angel sits in the tomb, the women flee from the tomb; because he is confident of his heavenly substance, they are troubled by their earthly condition. He who cannot die does not know how to fear a sepulchre; but the women both tremble at what has happened, and, as mortals still, mortally dread the sepulchre: hence it is that they say nothing to anyone. And they said nothing to anyone (Mark 16:8). Because to women it has been given to hear, not to speak; it has been given to learn, not to teach, as the Apostle says: Let women be silent in the church (1 Cor 14:34). Indeed, the same Mary afterwards both goes and announces, but now carrying not the woman, but the Church, so that there as a woman she may be

silent, here as the Church she may proclaim and speak.

After these things, he says, he was shown to two of them as they walked (Mark 16:12). Why not to three, why not to four, but to two? Because here faith in the resurrection is shown to be preached to two peoples, that is, to the Gentiles and the Jews: whence, as we have said, it is proved in the two women, as in the two disciples, that one Church is figured. He was shown in another aspect. Let no one think that Christ by his resurrection changed the aspect of his face, so that he who was himself in the wound was another in the face; but the aspect is changed in that from mortal he is made immortal, and from corruptible incorruptible, so that this is to have changed substance, not to have changed person, and to have acquired the glory of the face, not to have lost the recognition of the face. And lest a hurried sermon should either flee from the questions or fly past them, let us make known in the next sermon what follows, as the Lord reveals it.

Sermon LXXXIII.

On the ninth manifestation of Christ, made to the eleven disciples at table

Today the blessed Evangelist has so related the apostles, at the very time of the cross, as given to their tables, gaping after feasts, busy with banquets, forgetful of the Lord's Passion. As those eleven, he says, were reclining at table, the Lord appeared (Mark 16:14). Reclining at table: where? At the sepulchre of the Lord, and then at once at the table of the servant? Is this the faith of servants? this the charity of disciples? this the ardour of Peter? is this the love of John, taken from the very breast of Christ? is this the affection won over so long a time, by such gifts, by such mighty works, that at the very moment of the Passion, with death still warm, the burial still fresh, the enemies exulting, all Judaea insulting, the disciples should dine with all the finery of the couch and all the pleasure of those at table? When Moses died, angels stood by, God himself took care of his sepulchre: the camp of the Jews halts, the journey is put aside, the dreadful station in the desert is endured, a mourning of thirty days is proclaimed, and a servant's funeral is honoured with a long homage of lamentation (Deut 34:5–8); and does Christ, the true and only Lord,

the Creator of things, the redeemer of all, after that tragic Passion, after death, and the death of the cross, three days dead, not merit tears from his disciples? The earth trembles, Tartarus is troubled, the rocks are split, the tombs burst open, the sun flees, the day is buried, all becomes night, and the disciples alone, on a high couch, in one company, at full leisure, feast secure in their delights; and is this, brothers, how the master himself, returned from the underworld, found them: So, as those eleven were reclining at table, the Lord appeared and reproached their disbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen him risen? To this, faithful Peter, most devoted Peter, what shall we say? As they were reclining at table. Can it be, as they dined? Brothers, this was not reclining at table, but lying prostrate; nor was that the company of a banquet, that was a gathering of pain; there the bread was not of joy, but of mourning; there the cups were mixed with the gall of the cross, not with the sweetness of wine.

They were shut in, he says, for fear of the Jews (John 20:19). If fearing, if shut in, surely not dining; and if not dining, that was not a house, but a prison; that was not a couch, but a sepulchre: then the whole penalty of the Lord's Passion had passed over to the disciples; and not only in their sides, but in their hearts too the whole lance of pain was being fixed; then their hands, pierced with the nails of sorrow, and their feet were held fast; then Jewish bitterness offered them vinegar, then gall; then for them the sun set, the day fled;

then the deepest night possessed their minds and souls; then the most savage temptation of thoughts dashed them on the rocks of unbelief, into the shipwreck of faith; then despair, which among all evils is the worst, and in adversity always comes last, laid them low in funereal sepulchres. Hence, as we have said, the Lord found them not reclining at table, not feasting, but lying prostrate, but buried: and therefore he reproaches their disbelief, because they had so believed despair that they believed nothing of the resurrection foretold by the Lord, did not believe it when it was announced by servants; and left in themselves nothing of faith and salvation, but, dead to the age, buried to the world, all believed that one house to be already one sepulchre for them.

Hence it is that the Lord, seeing that they had taken themselves out of the world, calls them back to the world, sends them back into the world, saying: Go into the whole world, preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15). Come into the world, so that you who think that you all lie now in one abode may suddenly see the whole world lie beneath you. Come into the whole world, preach the Gospel to the whole creation. That is to say: be a hope for all, you who were a cause of despair to yourselves; and prove then how great your disbelief is, when you see the world believe what it hears from you, you who could not believe what you saw; and know then how great the hardness of your heart is, when you perceive that, without having seen me,

the fiercest nations in the whole world acknowledge me, whom, set before your eyes, you denied. You will see those divided on the earth, those shut in on islands, those hanging on cliffs, those removed in solitude, the smatterers of the magi, the wranglers of the Greeks, the learned of the Romans, seek by faith alone the faith which you sought with hand, with finger, with my wounds furrowed. But since I send you as witnesses of my Passion, of my death, of my resurrection, I grant that you have searched these things out more deeply, provided that your hesitation becomes a support for those who are going to believe you.

He who believes, he says, and is baptised, will be saved (Mark 16:16). Brothers, what the soul is to the body, faith is to baptism: hence it is that he who is begotten from the font lives by faith: The just man, he says, lives by faith (Rom 1:17). Everyone, then, dies, whoever has been without faith. He who believes. That the Trinity is one God; that in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit there is one majesty in entire equality; that the Godhead is distinct in Trinity, is not confused in unity, but is one in Godhead, is threefold in persons; that God is the name of the Trinity; that the Father and the Son are not to be reckoned by order, but to be valued by charity; that the Holy Spirit is not to be held inferior, more or less; not as outside is he to be held, more or less, because divinity knows nothing outside; that Christ was so made man that he remains what God is, so died as to raise from his own death the dead of all ages; that he rose not for himself, but for us; that

he brought us into heaven when he lifted himself up to heaven; that he sits for the authority of a Judge, not for the rest of one wearied; that he will come, not in place, as though to move, he who is everywhere, nor to take hold of his world, he who possesses the whole world, but that the world may now for ever merit the sight of its author. Let man believe also the remission of sins, because the heavenly realm, though it is most broad, does not hold the sinner; nor let man despair because of the greatness of his sins, because if there is anything that God cannot forgive, he is not almighty. Let him believe also the resurrection of the flesh, that the man himself may be the one who rises, that he himself who sins may receive the penalty, he himself who labours the reward. Let him believe eternal life, that the second death may have no place.

But that demons, that is, the ancient enemies, are driven out of human bodies; that from one mouth the varied speech of tongues is poured out; that serpents touched through Christ do not know their own venom; that poisoned cups cannot harm those who drink them, through Christ; that the diseases of bodies are put to flight at the touch of one who preaches Christ, is, brothers, the highest token of belief. These signs, he says, will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues, they will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will be well (Mark 16:17–18). Man, then, be a physician

to yourself through faith, lest you be forced to submit to strange physicians at your own loss, and to buy dearly what you possess freely. Pray, brothers, that even in the present we may always feel the medicine of faith, and, set in the expectation of Christ, may glory at his coming, secure in our conscience.

Sermon LXXXIV.

On the fifth manifestation of Christ, made to the disciples when Thomas was absent, and on the sixth, when he was present

In the forty days in which, after his resurrection, the Lord is related, and is believed, to have appeared to his disciples in various ways, not without reason does the sermon serve these very readings, these very mysteries, and rest upon them, so that by the manifold token of the resurrection it may turn the grief of the Lord's Passion into the perfect joy of your charity; and that he who before rose in our body by his power may now also rise in our hearts by faith. And when it was evening on that first day of the week, and the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, and stood in their midst (John 20:19). When it was evening: it was so more by grief than by time; it is evening when minds are darkened by the cloud of grief and sadness. It was evening. Because, although the twilight had given some token of the resurrection, the Lord had not yet shone upon them with the full brightness of his light.

And when the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered for fear of the Jews. The greatness of the terror and of the misdeed had

shut up by so great a whirlwind both the house and the hearts of the disciples together, and had so barred every entrance of light, that, as their senses were more and more taken up by grief, the blind outpouring of night was increased. No darkness of night can be compared with the gloom of grief and of terror, because they cannot be tempered by any light either of consolation or of counsel. Hear the Prophet: Fear and trembling came upon me, and darkness covered me (Ps 55:6). And when the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, and stood in their midst. I ask, why is it doubted that the absolute divinity could penetrate the secret of a closed body, and the virginal abode bolted in entire integrity, the divinity which, after the resurrection, made dense by the mystery of our body, goes in and goes out through closed doors, and by such a token shows itself the author of the whole creation, which does not resist it, which serves it in all things? But if virginity does not know how to refuse conception and childbirth to its Creator, if a closed door cannot deny entrance and exit to its Creator, how could the stone of the tomb, however great, however sealed by Jewish malice, resist the Saviour as he rose? But as virginity and the door by their bars give faith in the Godhead, so the stone rolled back affirms faith in the resurrection, the stone which, rolled back, prepared no exit for its Lord, but by night offers and admits an entrance to faith.

Jesus came, and stood in their midst: and says to them: Peace be with you. The hearts of the

disciples were enduring the battles of a continual conflict of faith and doubt, of despair and hope, of failing and greatness of soul; foreseeing, then, the wars of such thoughts, the inspector of secrets first gives peace back to those who see him, so that he who, taken away thus, had left matter for conflict, given back to their eyes, might cut off the whole cause of the struggle. The disciples, he says, were glad when they saw the Lord (John 20:20). They were glad: as light is more welcome after darkness, fair weather after the gloom of a storm, so joy is more acceptable after grief.

He says to them again: Peace be with you (John 20:21). What does this bounty of repeated peace show, except that the quiet which he had enjoined on the senses of each, he wishes also to be kept among them by the gift of repeated peace: for he knew that in the future they would have no small struggles about their hesitation, while one boasted that he had stood firm in faith, another grieved that he had doubted. So, to cut back the boasting and the swelling of the arrogant, and to heal and shut out the passions of him who had been weakened, the loving moderator, ascribing whatever had happened to the cause, not to the disciples, checked by the command of his peace the wars about to be born: lest one should reproach another with what he himself, to whom all was owed, had forgiven for the future. Peter denies, John flees, Thomas doubts, all forsake: if Christ had not given them his peace, Peter, who was first of all, would be thought inferior, and

the one following might perhaps undeservedly be raised up against the first.

As the Father has sent me, so I also send you. The word "sent" does not lessen the Son, but declares him, because here he wished to be understood not the power of the one who sends, but the charity of the one sent, when he says: As the Father has sent me. Not "the Lord", but "the Father". So I also send you. Not yet with the authority of one who commands, but with the whole affection of one who loves: I send you to the endurance of hunger, to the burdens of chains, to the squalor of prison, to bearing every kind of punishment, to lifting from all the accursed yoke of death; all of which, surely, charity commands of human minds, not power.

Whose sins you remit, they are remitted to them; and whose you retain, they are retained (John 20:23). He gave the power of remitting sins who by his breathing poured into their hearts, and bestowed on them, the Remitter himself. When he had said this, he breathed on them, saying: Receive the Holy Spirit: whose sins you remit, they are remitted to them (John 20:22–23). Where are those who lay it down that sins cannot be remitted to men through men; who crush those who have once fallen by the devil's impulse, lest they rise; who with cruel spirit withdraw cure from sicknesses and deny medicine to wounds; who impiously taunt sinners with despair of returning? Peter remits sins, and with all joy receives the penitent, and embraces this power, granted by God to all priests, he who

after his denial, had he not sought penance again, would have lost both the glory of the apostolate and his life alike. And if Peter returned through penance, who stands without penance?

But Thomas, when he had heard from his fellow disciples that they had seen the Lord, answered: Unless I see the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe (John 20:24–25). Why does Thomas so search for the traces of faith? why does he so harshly examine, as he rises, one who suffered so lovingly? why does a devoted right hand so furrow again the wounds which an impious hand drove in? why does the hand of one who does homage strive to dig open again the side which the lance of an impious soldier laid open? why does the unkind curiosity of one who serves renew the pains inflicted by the fury of persecutors? why does a disciple, about to test the Lord by torments, God by punishments, the heavenly physician by a wound, so search? The power of the devil fell, the prison of hell was laid open, the chains of the dead were burst, as the Lord died the tombs were torn open, and as the Lord rose the whole condition of death was changed. From the Lord's most holy sepulchre itself the stone was rolled back, the linen cloths were loosed, and as he rose to glory death fled, life returned, flesh that would know no further fall arose: and why, Thomas, you very cunning scout, do you demand that to you alone the wounds alone be presented as a token of faith? what if these had been abolished with the rest, what danger to your faith would that

curiosity have brought forth? Do you think that no monuments of loving-kindness, no proofs of the Lord's resurrection, could have been found, unless with your hands you furrowed the inward parts so ploughed by Jewish cruelty? This piety, brothers, sought, this devotion demanded, that not even ungodliness itself should doubt hereafter that the Lord had risen. But Thomas was concerned for the uncertainty not only of his own heart, but of all men: and, being about to preach these things among the nations, he searched out, as a vigorous executor, how he might maintain the mystery of so great a faith. Surely it was prophecy rather than hesitation. For why would he ask such things, unless he had known by a prophetic spirit that the wounds alone had been kept by the Lord as a token of his resurrection? Indeed, of his own accord he granted to the others what this man implores more slowly.

Jesus came, he says, and stood in their midst, and showed them his hands and side (John 20:19–20). For he who had entered with the doors shut, and was rightly thought by the disciples to be a spirit, could not prove himself to those so doubting otherwise than by the very passion of the body, by the very marks of the wounds. Indeed, he comes and says to Thomas: Bring your finger here, and see my hands, and bring your hand, and put it into my side, and do not be disbelieving, but faithful (John 20:26–27). So that, as you open them again, these wounds may pour out faith over the whole world, they

which have already poured out water for the washing, blood for the price of all.

Thomas answered and said: My Lord and my God! (John 20:28) Let the heretics come and hear: and, as the Lord said, let them not be disbelieving, but faithful. Behold, he shows not only a human body, but, through the passions of a body under penalty, that Christ is God and Lord, as Thomas cries aloud. And truly he is God, who lives out of death, rises out of a wound: because, though he took up such things and so great, he lives and reigns, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon LXXXV.

On Christ's entry into the temple, and the wonder of the Jews

Even if some things seem hidden by the depth of their mystery, yet no solemnity of the Church's worship is fruitless: a divine festival is not to be consecrated according to our wishes, but to be celebrated for its own virtues. A Christian mind does not know how to give over to despair the things that come from the tradition of the Fathers and have been strengthened by time itself, but desires to venerate them with the whole eloquence of devotion.

Now when the feast was half over, he says, the Lord went up into the temple (John 7:14). What temple? Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Cor 3:16) Today the Lord went up into the temple of our breast, he who so mercifully came down into the form of our body: and that the ascent of God takes place in the height of the human heart, the blessed Prophet affirms when he sings: Blessed is the man whose help is from you, O Lord; your ascents are in his heart (Ps 84:6). Now when the feast was half over, the Lord went up into the temple. Rightly, when the feast was half over, the Lord went up into the temple, because he was going to grant us the perfect feast day from heaven:

whatever was lofty, whatever in human hearts tended towards heaven, the weight of the Lord's Passion had bowed down even to hell. For this is why Christ for forty days stays and lingers on earth: and, if it is lawful to say so, defers meeting the Father, holds back the Father's embrace, until he reveals himself wholly, and reshapes himself into the glory of his ascension. He, then, in whose temple Christ has not gone up here, will not go up to heaven with Christ.

He went up into the temple, and was teaching, and the Jews marvelled, saying: How does this man know letters, when he has not learned? (John 7:14–15) Well do they marvel at Christ, that he knows without having learned, when they themselves are proved not to know the precepts of the Law which they have learned and teach, as the Lord says: You are a teacher in Israel, and you do not know these things? (John 3:10) The Jews, now rebellious, marvel, they will not believe: they know how to marvel, they refuse to understand, they are able not to know. The Jews marvelled, saying: How does this man know letters, when he has not learned? That a virgin gave birth you disparage, you do not marvel at it; that God feels and works in our body you discredit, you do not acknowledge it; that the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame run, the dead rise, and Christ speaks all the secrets of God, you do not marvel at it? this alone, that he knows when he has not learned, this you marvel at? This is he who did not learn letters, but gave them; this is he who founded understanding, through whom letters are shaped;

does the expert in the Law marvel why the author of all things has not learned letters? God, surely, is present, the origin of all things, who makes to be what was not; though he has not learned, he teaches.

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Sermon LXXXVI.

On the annunciation and conception of Saint John the Baptist

Worldly speech, since it is uttered from human sense, serves human wits and humours them; but divine speech is in the power of the giver, not of the speaker. You have heard how that Zechariah, the splendour of the high priesthood, fell dumb while he prayed; the father of the voice was silent (I, he says, am the voice of one crying in the desert (John 1:23)); the begetter of the cry fell dumb; and he who had gone in to bring back answers came out and brought back silence. You see, then, that my silence, which saddened you before, came from an ancient usage of pontiffs, not from the onset of anything new. When he felt that the fetters of his tongue had shut the door of his speech, he commanded by a nod that no one should ask the causes of his silence, because he who had learned to know the heavenly mystery had not learned to speak it: but this only for a time, because the priest's speech is put off, not taken away; laid by, not denied; held in suspense by a mystery, not driven out. Indeed, that Zechariah himself is silent is not a penalty but a sign; not an earthly infirmity but a heavenly secret; God, who gives speech, makes

silent, and he who puts in the word commands silence; divine speech rules, it does not serve, because the word is God; and therefore it speaks not when it is bidden but when it bids; not when it is demanded but when it bestows; not when it is forced but when it comes. So, brothers, when it comes, listen; when it does not come, be patient; when it gives itself, receive it; and when it withholds itself, pray: for the teacher receives what the hearer deserves.

So, for you as for me, the previous sermon was held in suspense, so that our modesty might hide the woman's flow, and the cause of her shameful wound, and her shame, in such a way that what she kept silent might be closed in our silence too (Matt 9:20): but let us return to the word we had begun. The fountain of Jerusalem overflows when the angel stirs it, not when the hearer is thirsty (John 5:4); so the priest's speech abounds when God gives it, not when the priest declaims. Hence it is that Zechariah himself, who used to speak prophecies to the peoples, is silent for himself, so that we may not be ungrateful to God if he willed us to be silent once, us to whom he has always granted an unhindered word. He does not disdain to receive back the word from his son, to whom he had given light: and you, children, pray for a voice for us, so that you may be able to hear the sermon. Restore my joy, so that you may possess your accustomed gladness and fulfil that saying of the Apostle: Who is it that gladdens me, but he who is saddened by me? (2 Cor 2:2) Let him come, then, let blessed Zechariah

come into our midst, who, silent, consoles us by a loving example, and by his silence does not let us be sad over our own silence. Let him come, let him come, the forerunner of the word, the mirror of the priesthood, the pattern of holiness, the first of the evangelists, the close of the prophets.

There was, he says, in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zechariah (Luke 1:5). When it is said under what king someone is priest, evils are tempered: there is always consolation at hand in grief, and a consoler is not lacking to the man over whom a persecutor hangs. There was in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zechariah. Down to Herod, the holiness of the priests, the gravity of the elders, the piety of the fathers presided over the Jewish nation: right was the divine Law; ambition counted for nothing there, nor rashness, nor presumption, because everything was done by divine ordering, not human; but Herod, coming from a foreign nation, invaded the kingdom, violated the priesthood, confounded the order, changed the customs, spurned the old, killed the young, mingled the tribes, blotted out the lineages, corrupted the race, and swept away utterly whatever there was of discipline both divine and human. But what has this to do with holy Zechariah? So, lest anything of the kind be believed to have been admitted in Zechariah himself too, the Evangelist is compelled to report it thus: There was in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah. Because down to him

the priestly race, handed down from forefathers, grandfathers and fathers, remained; the age of the Law, the whole discipline of sacrifice, was kept, in that the priest's merit and life held in check the king's impiety, the iniquity of the time, the rage of ambition, the fury of rashness.

But let us hear what follows. It came to pass that he should lay the incense, having entered into the temple of the Lord, and the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense (Luke 1:9–10). At the hour of incense, brothers, the sun was already setting in the Jewish temple, so that it might rise as the morning sun in the Church; and evening was coming on the Jewish teaching, because the dawn of the Gospel was at hand; the day of the Law was darkening, so that it might shine again wholly in grace. Hence it is that Zechariah, at the hour of incense, that is, in the last time of the ceremonies of the Law, brings in the incense by the prophetic Spirit: he offers prayers, presses his longings, commends his vows, recalls the time, repeats the promises, demands Christ. And the whole multitude was praying outside. So he prays that the people who stood outside may be brought in; for those whom the Law leads to the door, grace brings into the temple.

There appeared also, he says, an angel of the Lord, standing on the right of the altar of incense; and Zechariah, seeing him, was troubled, and fright fell upon him (Luke 1:11–12). So it is no wonder if the priest is troubled, if the teacher is astounded, if the prelate takes fright, if he is silent

on the least things when he sees the greatest, if he forsakes words when he beholds signs. And lest Zechariah alone seem to have feared, hear another prophet saying: Lord, I have heard your report and was afraid; I considered your works and was dismayed (Hab 3:2). He who speaks with God is dismayed; he does not know why the angel speaks; and why do we hold back?

Let us now say why the priest is silent. And the angel answering said to him: I am Gabriel, who stand before the sight of God, and I have been sent to you to speak these things and to bring you the good news of these things: and behold, you shall be silent and shall not be able to speak (Luke 1:19–20). What fault is there in the one who is silent, if the might of the one who commands imposes silence?

So we too, little as we are, who have been silent, take it that our silence was a matter not of forgetfulness but of the time; of a divine business, not of human reckoning. So let us not be sad, because, by God's gift, the silence of a moment will be made good by a continued sermon, and the little of our sadness will be turned into great joy. I give thanks to my God, who has turned for me the loss of speech into a gain of love: for how great your charity towards me is, the pallor betrayed, the outcry testified, the tears showed, the outpoured prayer made plain.

Sermon LXXXVII.

On the same

As, when the eyes have been darkened by excessive pain and long illness, light becomes hostile unless it is poured back gradually (although light was surely made for the eyes alone and is friendly to the eyes alone, through which indeed it is either given or denied to the rest of the body), so, when minds have been darkened by the long sickness of unbelief, unless the brightness of faith is restored little by little, the gloom of unbelief only thickens at the sudden splendour of faith itself: by long use nature is always either drawn out or dulled. Hence it is that the Lord, when hearts were already blinded by the black cloud of faithlessness, in order to make the mystery of the virgin birth shine out, first sent before it the conception of a hopeless and aged barrenness: so that whoever saw dry limbs come back to life after a long old age, and, the course of a life grown veteran being run, bloom again into first youth, and nature itself, in its setting age, roused to the insignia of a servant being born, might believe that the flower of purity, the title of modesty, the badge of chastity, the bars of virginity could remain after the birth, could be kept, when the author himself went forth from the womb.

And so that the very authority of which we speak may now be present to our preface and to the likeness we took from eyes worn out by an old sickness, and bear them out, and show the eyes of men, ill accustomed to the night, darkened, led forward gradually, called back to the light: in John the Lord kindled a lamp of his own light and sent it ahead, so that, having tasted the light in him, they might bear the very radiance of the divine Sun, might take in the very brightness of the Godhead. According to what was said of John: He was a lamp, burning and shining (John 5:35): so that the one might open the dense darkness of night with a gentle light, and the other himself give back to those who now longed for the light the day that knows no night, perpetual. Hence it is that a faintly twinkling star accustoms the Magi too, still dwellers in the night and dazzled in all their eyes, to the light, and draws them step by step to the very fountain of light and of days (Matt 2:9).

And in truth, brothers, it is fitting, because the four-horse chariot of the times runs through the bounds of the whole year, and brings back to us the feast of the birth of our Lord, and already leads its joys back again. Now let us speak of John's birth, of the barren woman's childbearing, so that by this short way of belief we may arrive, among winter lights made doubtful by clouds and mists, with a lamp going before and a star for guide, at that place where there is childbearing without childbearing, where the very author of

the one who procreates is created, where the very origin of the one who begets is born.

There was, says the Evangelist, a certain priest named Zechariah, and his wife Elizabeth: and they had no son, because Elizabeth was barren, and both had advanced in their days (Luke 1:5, 7). Barrenness is heaped up by extreme old age, and all there is of body and of nature is withdrawn from the hope of begetting; and, so that not even any thought of offspring might remain, it had come to such a point of time and age that, the warmth of life being spent, a deathly cold now possessed the barren woman's womb, so that the father himself recognised that a man could no longer be born through man from where human things had departed. Thus, thus, brothers, belief is planted in men's hard hearts and faith is grafted in; and then the whole is believed to be divine when nothing has been human.

It fell to Zechariah by lot to lay the incense, entering into the temple of the Lord (Luke 1:9). He rightly said "entering into the temple", not "entering the temple": because he himself was God's more familiar temple, carrying in the purity of his breast all the secrets of the Law, and setting forth an incense not so much of frankincense as of pure supplication. For God rests more gladly in his own work than in man's, and does not so willingly smell the drop of the Arabian tree as the holiness of a sincere heart and breast.

There appeared to him an angel of the Lord, he says, standing on the right of the altar of incense (Luke 1:11). It would have been enough

to say, "There appeared to him an angel"; why so much insistence on "on the right of the altar"? So that you, the hearer, may understand that in the holy angels there is nothing sinister, as Scripture says: The Lord knows the ways that are on the right (Prov 4:27). There appeared to him an angel. When the whole man had already failed, so that John might be born of a barren woman before Christ was born of the Virgin, it was said of John: Behold, I send my angel (Matt 11:10).

Happy the nature which, in order to grow into God, so failed in the old; happy, which exchanged the losses of barrenness for a virgin fruitfulness; happy, which conceived in one childbearing whatever, throughout the world, it lamented to bring to confusion; happy, which has become the mother who buds forth the living, she who before was the pitiable origin of mortals, bearing to pains with pain, bringing forth to groans with groaning, producing man to dangers with the danger of the one who begets, and at the very rising announcing the setting with laments and tears; ever devouring her offspring, knowing that with such griefs she was begetting those who would die. So nature fed rather on barrenness, lest she rage more grievously by fruitfulness itself, since she would bring forth tears rather than children: she who indeed, with tears, grief and groaning, for so long a time sought her author and appealed to him, understanding that this had befallen her through fault, and had not been established by her most loving author when she was created. Hence it is that the Lord, himself the

Maker of nature, passes along the way of a virgin conception, of a virgin childbearing, with an invisible footstep and by an unknown path, and walks the road of human birth with a divine step, not a human one, so that by being born he might first set nature itself free from the servitude of death, to which it had been so bound over, and, the fountain being cleansed, give back heavenly purity to the streams. Rightly does John leap in the womb, he who merited to know the freedom of his origin before he existed, merited to feel before he lived.

At the hour of incense barrenness is opened through an angel, conception is commanded, childbearing is promised, and among the sanctuaries a sacred birth is brought about: hence it is that, while still in the womb, the frame of his limbs scarcely conceived, there is prophecy in John: at God's nod he speaks before he reaches the office of the voice. But lest, while we desire to conclude in a shortened sermon the deep and wonderful things of so broad a reading, I pass over what most needs to be said, we shall discuss what follows next time, if it pleases God.

Sermon LXXXVIII.

On the same

Always to be in debt is a source of anxiety, brothers; always to be bound by the chains of a loan is sad; but as for me, whom my promise often makes your debtor, the very nature and obligation of such a debt flatter me greatly, because he who promises gives, he does not receive; and he who owes by giving makes the creditor rather bound to himself; and where he who has lent owes, and he who owes has lent, there the contract is proved to be one of close kinship, not of necessity; and in such a loan of the soul there runs an interest not of burden but of most sweet honour. After the Gospel's word had described how an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah the priest, it added, saying: And Zechariah was troubled, seeing him, and fear rushed upon him (Luke 1:12). If he who is concerned about a judge's power is always troubled and trembles at the coming of an officer, and reckons and measures the weight of the order by the person of the one who comes; and, though of a good conscience, takes fright until he learns the causes of the one coming and understands what they are: what will he do, with what fright will he tremble, when the weak nature of man has felt a power from

on high, when a man has looked upon an angel and seen a minister of the divine throne? The flesh is never secure about its own conscience: as Zechariah himself, of whom we are now speaking, proved, who gave offence at the very time of propitiation; who, while he believes, doubts, as the angel says: Because you did not believe my words (Luke 1:20); while he merits what he asked for, he incurs punishment; he is condemned when he has received the very gifts; he loses his voice at the very moment he receives the voice. Hence it is that the angel, before he sets out his commands, hands over his gifts, reports what has been obtained, dispels the dread, puts fear to flight, strengthens hearts troubled by wavering thought, so that the mind, which had gone out of itself through an excess of fright, might return to itself and feel and grasp so great a bounty of benefits, saying: Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John (Luke 1:13).

Do you think that so great a priest was so forgetful of the people, so forgetful of all, that he would pray about the conception of an aged wife, about the childbearing of a hopeless barren woman; that the envoy of all would then be present for himself alone; that the advocate of all would pray for himself apart; that he would narrow so great an office of the pontificate within household cares, shut it up and fill it with the straits of the family; that the aged prelate would make over the incense of the whole people to the

sole desire for a child of his own, and that, so advanced in years and already looking at the very time, he would be inflamed with such a desire for an untimely childbearing? Far from it, brothers, far from it, that a faithful soul should suspect this of holy Zechariah. And yet the angel reports that the effect of the whole supplication lay in this, saying: Your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. If the angel answered what was asked, the priest prayed for his child alone; if the priest's supplication was made for all, why did the angel report the child alone as obtained? Why do we hold back, why do we keep the minds of the hearers long in suspense? How this venerable prelate stood by not himself alone but all; how the angel answered all; how God provided in this one offspring of the priest, whom indeed he had chosen out for his parents and for nature itself for this purpose, that he might give him to the whole world, bestow him on the ages, grant him to the peoples, and that he might become the son of a mystery, brought among the sanctuaries, granted among the mysteries; that he might be a prelate begotten of a venerable prelate; that he might be an angel conceived in a holy womb at an angel's word; that he might be the voice of Christ: I am the voice of one crying in the desert (John 1:23); that he might be the voice of Christ, kept for Christ, for his times; that he might be the herald of the Judge, who would cry out his presence; that he might be the one who would call the peoples of Christ to pardon by penance!

How much, then, this priest, now unaware of himself, now dead to himself, a stranger to his wife, now denied offspring, did for all, obtained for all, let us learn straight away as the angel tells it. And many, he says, will rejoice at his birth (Luke 1:14). He is not an only son who has been created for the joy of all. For he will be great before the Lord (Luke 1:15). He who is great before God, who will prove how great he is among men? And he shall drink no wine or strong drink. He who was born of the holy body of a priest, and that in extreme old age, a body purged of all vices and exempt from the fires of youth, does not know wine, is ignorant of strong drink, which bring forth the excesses and vices of drunkenness and squander all the beauties of conduct, the ornaments of the virtues. And he shall drink no wine or strong drink, but he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even in his mother's womb. According to that saying of the Apostle: Brothers, do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). And he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even in his mother's womb. Blessed John, who merited to thunder by the Spirit of God before he wailed in the weeping of man; blessed, who merited to possess divine things before he received human things as his lot; blessed, who merited to know heaven before earth; blessed, who, before he saw the things present, merited to announce the things to come; blessed, who was able to contain God before he himself was contained by his own body; blessed, and singularly blessed, who won

merit before he knew how to seek; blessed, who did not come to grace through labour, but came down to labours by the condescension of grace itself.

And many, he says, of the sons he will turn (Luke 1:16). To whom? Let the angel say, so that the heretic, because he blasphemes, because he denies, may be struck dumb; let the angel say, so that the faithful may hear and rejoice; let the heretic believe, and hasten back. He will turn. To whom? To the Lord their God, he says. Who is this God? He of whom the prophet says: This is our God, and there is no other beside him, who found out every way of discipline, and gave it to Jacob his servant, and to Israel his beloved (Bar 3:36–37). When did he give it? Then, surely, when on the tablets of the Law he wrote out the rule of the whole of life, the whole norm of discipline.

Be attentive, hearer, so that you may know who this our God is, beside whom there is no other. Who is he? Afterwards he was seen on earth, and lived among men (Bar 3:38). Who else was seen on earth, if not Christ, who lived in our flesh? And who else lived among men, if not he who dwelt with men in a human body? And if this is our God, and there is no other beside him, heretic, when you have not had him, whom will you have? There is no other, he says, beside him; and now do you not say, "Where, then, is the Father?" The prophet says: There is no other beside him; and where is he? In the Son, surely, because outside the Son there is no Father. I am in the Father, he says, and the Father is in me

(John 14:10). Hence the prophet too did not say "There is no other", but "There is no other beside him": that is to say, there is; but he is in him. But you say: "And if he is in him, how is he another?" Heretic, he is another in person in such a way that he is the same in substance; he is the same in substance in such a way that there is no confusion of the Trinity; the unity of the Trinity is such that there is no distance in the Godhead; he is so in himself, and without him the whole Trinity is not, that there is in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit personhood defined, not divinity separated.

And he will go before him (Luke 1:17). Before whom? Before Christ, who is their God. Our God, the God of all, the God beside whom there is no other: In the power of Elijah. Let no one, on hearing this, bring in metempsychosis: here he means that spirit which he merited through divine grace, not the one which he received from the flesh for life; and he means that power which he had from on high, not the one which he obtained for the strength of the body. John, then, came in the spirit of Elijah, and walks in his power, he who in everything, in food, clothing, honour, chastity, abstinence and all the virtues, represents Elijah and Christ. Let him make ready for the Lord a perfect people. May our God and Lord deign to make it ready in you and to confirm it, to the glory of his name.

Sermon LXXXIX.

On the same

All things that were created by God are good for us, and very good, as Scripture says: And God saw all things whatever he had made, and behold, very good (Gen 1:31). So all things that were created by God are good, and very good: but between vices and virtues they are held to be in the middle, in such a way that from them both the skilled take matter for teaching and the unskilled find a cause of error. For the wise know the Creator by the contemplation of the creature; but the foolish, in reckoning the creatures themselves to be gods, cannot know the Creator. Hence it is that the Gentiles made gods for themselves of the sun, the moon, the stars, gold, stones, wood, things which Christians know to be bound over to their servitude. Nor is it a wonder that the creature is thus in the middle, when Christ himself, the Creator of all things, is for salvation to the faithful, for ruin to the faithless, as the Evangelist says: This one is set for the ruin and resurrection of many (Luke 2:34). The apostles too are taken by some for death, by others for life, as Paul proves when he says: To some we are an odour of death for death, but to others an odour of life for life (2 Cor 2:16). So the Gospel readings too become for

the good a matter of saving understanding, but for the wicked an occasion of error.

Before this, when the most blessed Evangelist related that John the Baptist was bound in Herod's chains, put to death through Herodias's adulteries, beheaded as the prize of a dancing girl, we perceived that some had been disturbed: why God should have given over the saint to a sacrilegious woman, the virgin to an adulteress, the angel to a dancing girl. Brothers, John's virtues and Herod's crimes we shall treat abundantly in another sermon: now let us tell what the cause of the chains, what the necessity of the prison, what the usefulness of the death was in John. John could not die by the common lot, he who was born by a singular privilege: when Christ, God, was being born in the flesh, John, an angel, was begotten on earth, so that earthly offices might mingle with heavenly ones just as divine things were mingling with human, and on earth an angel might not be lacking to God, nor the order of heavenly homage to the Lord.

But let us hear the order of John's birth, so that we may be able to find the causes of his death. There was, he says, in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth (Luke 1:5). And they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without complaint (Luke 1:6). Great orators, excellent in talent, whenever they set out to tell the virtues of illustrious men, recall

their grandfathers and forefathers, so that the dignity of the ancients may be added to the honour of the present, and the praise of the fathers may overflow into the glory of the sons. Glory inborn is greater than glory sought; what comes from one's origin goes before what follows from labour; it is more blessed to have glory than to seek it: hence it is that the Evangelist, in order to exalt John's glory, tells the lineage of Zechariah his father and of Elizabeth his mother, records their forebears, writes their merits, speaks their titles, sets out their ranks, unfolds their life, spreads out their insignia, proclaims their holiness.

There was, he says, in the days of Herod, king of Judaea. He records the time of an abominable king, who violated the sacred custom of the priesthood, confounded the order, undid what was established, took away what was instituted. And this adds to Zechariah's merit: that, although Herod stretched the daring of his rashness over almost everyone, he dared nothing against this man, he was overborne by his virtues, so that the priest's spotless succession might be kept for the glory of his offspring. And his wife was of the daughters of Aaron. Aaron, the first pontiff in the Law, was the origin of the priesthood: therefore, rightly passing over all the rest, she is called the daughter of him whose holiness she displayed in herself as a memorial, a holiness which she, the devout guardian of so great a lineage, poured most gloriously into her son.

But the Evangelist describes the praises of this mother: They were, he says, both just before God. It is a new happiness, it is a singular marriage, when one mind remains in two, one holiness in two: what stood apart in sex stood together in mind; and in conduct that was one which sight made two; and by the virtues it rendered equal those whom nature had made unequal. They were, he says, just, both of them, before God. To please human judgements, to be just in the sight of men, belongs to human virtue, and is of the greatest labour too: but to be just before God, who searches hearts, sifts thoughts, sees the movements of minds, is not of human labour; it is of divine gift. If he is great who does not sin in the flesh, how great is he who does not sin in heart? John, then, was born above the flesh, of these who before God sinned neither in heart nor in body.

The Evangelist added, saying: walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without complaint. Walking: he walks who does not stand in the crossroads of sinners, who feels himself a pilgrim in this world, who fearlessly enters the rough lodgings of the virtues, who as an untiring traveller climbs the mountains of the justifications, the hills of the commandments, so as to enjoy the presence of God his parent, the blessedness of the heavenly fatherland. Walking in all the commandments and justifications. These, in all: in which no one, or few. In all the commandments and justifications. Who passes through the fires of the cravings without know-

ing their smoke? who escapes the slipperiness of life without ever falling? who walks undefiled through the whirlpools of the vices? who carries on the business of the flesh, the affairs of life, the acts of the world, and will not be in complaint, when being born itself is full of tears and complaints? For the woman in labour complains from pain, and he who is born into tears complains from nature. But in Zechariah and Elizabeth guilt fell, complaint perished, every charge was cut away, because in them was being prepared that from which all holiness would be born: but let this now shine out from the reading itself.

And they had no son, he says, because Elizabeth was barren (Luke 1:7). This barrenness was not accursed but mystical, in which childbearing was not taken away but delayed; nor was it closed to offspring, but to time: it was tilled by time, sown by virtue, ripened by age, grew with old age, so that the whole of fruitfulness might be made good in a singular son, when in one was born a gathered multitude of virtues. Blessed barrenness, which was kept for one birth and waited for John, so that, because all first things were owed to him, the dignity of the firstborn might not perish. And both had advanced in their days. They had advanced, not departed: age lived on in the saints; it did not fail, but advanced. Or what is lacking to those to whom increases of virtues are always being added? So in Zechariah and Elizabeth sex is numbed, the flesh grows cold, the limbs fall asleep, time passes, age goes by, all that belongs to the human order and to the business

of marriage dies away, so that an angel might be born by divine gift, not by childbearing from human beings.

We had promised to set out, from John's birth, the causes of his death; but because today the sermon has drawn us on further, and what follows is very necessary to us for the proof of the matter, let what has just been said be set down to the glory of his birth; and let us not be ungrateful to you, we who defer the debt, we do not deny it: for with debtors, delay grows into the creditor's favour. Wait, then, for what the debtor promises, and wait free from care, because promises cannot be denied when things denied are so generously paid to a barren woman.

Sermon XC.

On the same

That we are raised up by the falls of the saints, grounded by the trembling of the saints, the hesitation of Zechariah the priest has taught us today: who, since he does not believe God's promises but examines them, and does not perceive the divine works by faith but searches them out by human reasoning, pays for the fault of faithlessness with a long sentence of silence. He had heard from the angel: Your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. And he then answered: How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife has advanced in her days (Luke 1:18). Had he not, as much as he had lost the hope of posterity through long old age, so much been taught by long experience of life that nothing would be impossible to God? The priest of so long a time had read, the veteran pontiff knew, that nature can be bound by law, not the author of nature; and that time can set bounds for man, cannot set them for its own Maker. He knew that from the bodies of Abraham and Sarah, dead with extreme old age and removed from the name of father and mother by a most famous barrenness, Isaac broke forth into the whole fruitfulness of the Israelite stock

(Gen 21:2); to whom it was not so much a hindrance that nature had failed as it was a help to be born by the author's kindness, not by nature's. He had learned that to Rebekah (Gen 25:21) and to Hannah (1 Sam 1:20), long exhausted, long deprived of nature's support, God gave what barrenness had refused.

Taught, then, by things so great, why is it that he says: How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife has advanced in her days? Brothers, man's nature is very fearful towards God, very weak towards the divine powers, and does not find itself in the trial such as it reckons itself before the trial; and it is quite ignorant of itself before it proves itself by deeds and tests itself by examples. It seeks heaven, seeks the heights, searches out the things above, moves heaven, knocks at heaven; but when it has moved heaven, it will not be able to bear heaven's weight. It aspires to climb the summit of faith, it burns to penetrate heaven by its own strength; but where it begins to walk with human steps into the ethereal ways, and when it looks down to its own nature, it does not so much trust in what is past as it trembles at the fall. So blessed Peter, when across the waters he imitates the divine gait, and as a new traveller treads the soft road with hard steps, prays about his fall before he rejoices in what he was given (Matt 14:30).

So now Zechariah, who had long wept that the devil had power, that death reigned through the fault of one man, that men were born to labours, to groans, to dangers; that it was allowed

to wish for children, full of hardship though they be and doomed to die, and yet not to be able to obtain them; to stand among the battle lines of crimes, to be besieged by troops of vices, to be shaken and shattered by the ceaseless assault of weaknesses; to see from afar the banners of the virtues, the hope of the Law, the freedom of grace, and yet that no one could reach there by his own strength; to will good things and not to do them; to hate crimes and not to overcome them; that God ought now to have mercy, ought now to help the captives in such a way: this pontiff, then, when he was knocking at God's ears with such continual complaint, such lamentation, God, to one who asked things so holy, so just, took from the very offspring of his answer and set up a wonderful proof, by which he might believe that God could give life to the dead and give back salvation to the hopeless, if he had given offspring to dead old age, a son to hopeless barrenness; as the Gospel's word discloses when it says: Your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son: the messenger of this redemption, the forerunner of this salvation; one who will hear God not, as you did, by a voice, nor bend him with groans. He will not, as you do, seek our intercessions in order to obtain; but, himself set in our rank and upheld by angelic honour, he will hold in his hand the God so greatly longed for by all, never known to anyone, unseen even by the angels themselves; he will embrace him in his lap, and, now visible to the world, hand him over with happy arms, point him out with most

blessed palms, to be looked upon by human eyes; he will make God known to all, lead the Lord to the fellowship of his little servants, mingle the Judge with the guilty, testify that the censor has taken up in himself the person of the offenders, as though proving that the sentence of human condemnation will cease, when he himself is put on trial, he himself runs his course through pardon, he who was to give the guilty over to punishment.

So that this mystery of immense loving-kindness may shine out, Zechariah, your son plunges his Lord into the baptism of penance, washes him for the remission of sins: because the fountain willed to be washed, the examining judge to receive pardon, the Judge himself to undergo his own sentence, so as not to condemn the guilty, not to bring vengeance on the offenders; he climbs the cross, tastes death, suffers burial, enters hell, he who willed to be punished so as not to punish, who willed to be loved rather than feared. When Zechariah, brothers, heard that he had merited by his prayers so great a mystery, terrified at the consideration of the thing itself, troubled at the estimation of the mystery itself, he did not believe that he merited so much, and he doubted that God would come down to things such and so great. Hence it is that he says: How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife has advanced in her days. That is to say: "As human reason does not allow me to have a son, so the eternal majesty does not permit God to be born and to die." To him, who disbelieved pardonably, the angel gave the penalty of a sign

only, not of unbelief: it is a mark of caution to be slow to believe lowly things of God, slower still to think insulting things of God.

The angel added, saying: I am Gabriel. So that from so great a name, and from the merit of so great a minister, the pontiff might weigh the trustworthiness of the promise, and believe its quality. I am Gabriel, who stand before God, and I have been sent to speak to you (Luke 1:19). While he says his name, he designates his merit; when he reports that he stands by, he reports that he is sent; he acknowledges servitude, lest the prerogative of his name hide the homage he owes. I am, he says, Gabriel, who stand before God, and I have been sent to speak to you, and to announce these things to you.

Truly, great is the Lord, and of his wisdom there is no number (Ps 147:5). He cures the sick man of his wound, he strengthens the wavering man by punishment, by the penalty he completes the proof of faith, saying: And behold, you shall be silent and shall not be able to speak (Luke 1:20). So that from yourself and in yourself you may attain the rule of believing, and by a home-born example believe that God can do what he promises: for when he wills, he shuts the organ of your voice; and when he wills, he can surely open the office of your mouth; and when he wills to make a fruitful woman out of a barren one, a barren one out of a fruitful, when he promises, he can; when he wills, he bestows the offices of childbearing; when he wills, he has power to deny the services of nature. So the angel acted in

such a way that the pontiff, instructed by such a proof, should no longer say: How shall I know this? He who could ascertain from the evidence of the whole creation that God can do all things, and who had read that heaven, earth, the sea and all that is in them came to be out of nothing, ought to have believed that he could make what he wills out of something, and give back to one without hope what he promises; and he who made the whole out of what was not does not labour to make whatever he wills out of what is.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered that he was delaying in the temple (Luke 1:21). But when Zechariah came out he could not speak to them, and they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple (Luke 1:22). And he kept making signs to them, and remained dumb. The pontiff comes out bearing in his mouth the sign of barrenness, carrying in his breast the figure of the conception, so that when the mother bore a son, the son might give back the voice, then the father of the word might utter the mystery, and the one born might give pardon to his father before he washed away the ancient crimes of the peoples. And because he who did not believe was silent, rightly does the Prophet, because he believed, glory, saying: I believed, therefore I have spoken (Ps 116:10).

Brothers, faith gives the word, faithlessness denies the word. If, then, brothers, as I said, the fall of the saints raises us up, the trembling of the blessed makes us firm, let us judge that nothing is ever impossible to God, and let us not inquire

how he will do what he promises, with whom to have willed is to have done, to have given is to have promised.

Sermon XCI.

On the same

Those who know how to gather gold from the earth, where they have sensed a rich vein, there spend whatever there is of skill, whatever of labour: and we too, because we know that a heavenly treasure lies hidden in holy Zechariah, let us occupy in him all that belongs to our sermon, all that belongs to your hearing, so that what has been sought by common labour may become common gain. There was, he says, in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). This we have already said. And his wife was of the daughters of Aaron. So the Evangelist began, so that in the priest's wife the nobility of the priestly lineage might be shown preserved.

They were, he says, both just before God (Luke 1:6). Both just, because in both there was one justice. Both just, because the marriage between them rested not on fondness but on holiness. Both just, because, unequal in sex, they were held equal in merits. Both just, because, as there was one flesh in the two, so there was one spirit in the two. Let married people imitate them, so that those whom affection joins, virtue may join too. They were, he says, just, both of them,

before God. Both just before God. And where is that saying: No one living will be justified in your sight (Ps 143:2)? Before men, perhaps, someone may be thought just, because men, as they know the faults of bodies, so are ignorant of the vices of the mind: but before God, to whom the bars of the breast lie open, from whom the secrets of the thoughts are not hidden, who is held innocent and just? Is there a man who does not sin in heart, does not do wrong in thought, does not stumble through doubt, does not incur the fall of trembling? Moses doubts (Num 20:12), Aaron goes astray (Exod 32:4), Peter denies (Matt 26:70), and who is just? And how are both just before God? Before God, but through God. Both just before God. Not by labour, but by grace. Hear the Apostle: Justified freely by his grace (Rom 3:24). And again: Not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not from works, lest anyone should boast (Eph 2:8–9). And again: What have you that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it? (1 Cor 4:7) So the Evangelist reports not what they did not have, but what they received; not what was sought, but what was given.

They were, he says, both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of God without complaint. He said "walking" to show that they ran in the virtues, did not stand still; that they walked in the way of justice, did not sit; that they did not remain on the road of the commandments, but reached the fullness of the commandments. Walking in all the com-

mandments and justifications of God without complaint. Blessed, brothers, are those whom fault does not strike, crime does not wound; but more blessed these, whom not even complaint has touched. Without complaint. If childhood, if adolescence, if youth was without complaint, where all is complaint, what must their old age have been? If such the beginning, what the end? To have climbed the summits of the justifications, the hills of the commandments, and not to have stumbled in anything, belongs to a singular grace; it is the mark of a unique happiness.

And they had no son, he says, because Elizabeth was barren (Luke 1:7). He did not say "They had no sons", but "They had no son", because he who was to be born of such parents was to be singular. Hear the Lord saying: There has not arisen a greater among those born of women than John the Baptist (Matt 11:11). Because Elizabeth was barren. Barren in body, but fruitful in virtues; slow to offspring, but not slow to God; not closed to progeny, but to time; not denied a child, but kept for a mystery.

And both, he says, had advanced in their days. Had advanced: so is described the mystery of an old age which has not yet fallen away in merits, does not fail in age, but advances; nor does that which takes on the increases of virtue feel the losses of the body. Brothers, holy Elizabeth's childbearing was not taken away but delayed, until there had passed the time of the flesh, the passion of the body, the necessity of marriage, the cause of pleasure, the feeling of desire, and

all that confounds, weighs down, burdens the human conscience. For a long time the house of sacrifice was being cleansed, the guest-house of holiness, the lodging of Christ's harbinger, the abode of an angel, the hall of the Holy Spirit, the temple of God. Do you not know, says the Apostle, that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Cor 3:16) Indeed, when all the complaint of the body had been quieted, and they had become wholly without complaint, at once barrenness flees, old age revives, faith conceives, chastity gives birth; there is born one greater than man, equal to the angels, the trumpet of heaven, the herald of Christ, the secret of the Father, the messenger of the Son, the standard-bearer of the King on high, the pardon of sins, the correction of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, and, to speak properly, the clasp of the Law and of grace, which fastened the double cloak of the high priest on the breast of his holy father. So the Evangelist describes the virtues of the father and the mother, so that the dignity of the offspring might be known from the great merits of those who begot him, and he might be proved greater than man, who in his birth went beyond the law of human birth.

But if he is to go forth, let John now be born, because the birth of Christ is at hand; let the new morning star rise, because the radiance of the true Sun is already breaking out; let the herald give voice, because the judge is present; let the trumpet sound, because the King is coming; and because God is to go forth, let the angel now

go before. But because what is above men, the virtues of the angel being born, man is not able to relate, let the angel now speak. The angel said to Zechariah: Do not be afraid, Zechariah: your prayer has been heard; behold, Elizabeth your wife will bear you a son; and you shall call his name John; and you shall have joy and gladness; and many will rejoice at his birth (Luke 1:13–14). For he will be great before the Lord; and he shall drink no wine or strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb; and he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God; and he will go before him in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the unbelieving to the prudence of the just, to make ready for the Lord a perfect people (Luke 1:15–17). Human speech is idle, the preaching of the preacher falls silent, when John's glory is brought forth by the angelic proclamation; his virtue resounds, his praise is praised together; nor is there anything man could add to him on whom God has conferred everything.

He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, he says, even from his mother's womb. You see how John reached heaven before he touched earth, received the divine Spirit before he had the human, took on divine gifts before the limbs of the body, began to live for God before for himself; or rather, he lived for God before God lived for him, according to that saying of the Apostle: But I live, now no longer I, but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20). In the sixth month he leaps in his mother's womb, and

announces that Christ has come into the Virgin's womb. An ardent messenger, who longed to announce before he lived; an impatient captain, who reached the King before he reached a body; he seized his arms before his limbs; he sought the battle line before the light; and, to conquer the world, he first conquered nature; without innards himself, he rouses his mother's innards; and because the body was slow, by the spirit alone he fulfils the office of one who brings the good news. What shall I say? John, before he went before Christ, went before himself. The hearts of father, mother and son one and the same Holy Spirit fills, so that the song of the Lord's birth may resound from one organ of holiness. Nor is it a wonder, brothers: festivity always honours royal births, sweet harmony graces them. And let us, brothers, glorify Christ's birth with songs, honour it with gifts: because the Christian is false to the faith if he does not do what the magus does (Matt 2:11).

Sermon XCII.

On the same

Little by little the Gospel's word moves us forward to higher things, lifts us up to the things above. Nor is it a wonder, brothers, if an ethereal chariot carried Elijah up to heaven (2 Kgs 2:11), since every day this four-horse chariot of the Gospels bears the race of men through and sends it on to the kingdom of heaven. See, brothers, it has now brought us near, from the childbearing of the barren woman to the Virgin's childbearing, and from John's birth to the birth of our Saviour. But let us hear more patiently what still remains about Zechariah the pontiff, so that we may come by a royal road to the cradle of our King: we who for this reason have mounted the trusty seat of the heavenly four-horse chariot, so as to avoid the troublesome and steep paths of short cuts.

But it has been read: And it came to pass, when the days of his office were fulfilled, that he went away to his house (Luke 1:23). Thus a whole tribe attended on the one temple: thousands of priests were in service, because the very observance of the pontifical office was divided among very many, apportioned by times, distributed by courses, lest either a confused multitude disturb the order of the priesthood, or one man, by read-

ing continually, deny another the office due to him.

But after this Elizabeth his wife conceived (Luke 1:24). They had the faculty of marriage, they had the licence of begetting granted, they in whom there was still the adolescence of the Law, on whom the infancy of religion still pressed. The Law, brothers, forbade what is unlawful; it did not deny what is lawful; it held within the gift, could confer nothing beyond the gift; it ruled nature, it did not raise man above nature. The Law, the door of faith, the messenger of grace, the forerunner of the Gospel, the tutor of the infancy of religion, allowed in the priesthood of the Law the chastity of marriage, so that it might announce the coming glory of perpetual virtue in the pontificate of grace. According to this indulgence, then, Elizabeth, already dead with age, comes back to life for a holy childbearing, and her dry limbs, furrowed with wrinkles, grow green with vital marrow into a fruitful womb: the very time too, the very time in which she had ceased, is called back to her body; and the house of the womb, fallen into ruin with excessive age, is suddenly repaired to a new face; order is astounded, custom fails, nature itself wonders, and from the furnishing of the dwelling the merit and dignity of the guest become known. But John wondered greatly to find himself a pilgrim in the common dwelling, he who learned that, shut out by time, disowned by nature, he had been received in it by the kindness of the author, not of the parent.

And she hid herself five months, saying: Thus has the Lord done to me (Luke 1:24–25). Rightly does she confess that the Lord did the whole, she who saw that nothing had been conferred on her through man. And she concealed herself five months, because what she had, though it was of divine gift, was not, however, of her own time. She hid herself five months. The pregnant old woman blushes, the little old woman of a first childbearing is ashamed, and extreme old age hides the woman in childbed, lest the laughter at a fruitful old age should increase the reproach of barrenness. That an aged and veteran conception lies open to laughter, Sarah, very like her in this barrenness and age, proves (Gen 18:12): she who, when she learned, by the Lord's promise, that childbearing was being given back to her, that a son was being granted to her whose life was now almost failing, herself laughed at her childbearing; and that a pregnant woman, and grey hair laden, could be a laughing-stock to all, she testifies from the very name of her offspring, as Scripture says: And he called the name of his son Isaac (Gen 21:3). Which name, she taught, means laughter, adding: The Lord has made laughter for me (Gen 21:6). Hence it is that Elizabeth wishes to hide the sacred mystery, saying: Thus has the Lord done to me. So now shame at the conception wearies her, for as long as the hardship of a childbearing denied afflicted her; the father is silent from punishment, from shame the mother hides. O how great a voice is born of silence! O how great a trumpet, to cry out to the ages, is begotten

in quietness! O what a secret of the divine Judge gives the herald!

Thus has the Lord done to me in the days in which he looked upon me to take away my reproach among men (Luke 1:25). The honour of wedlock, the dignity of matrimony, is the begetting of sweet children; for it is very grievous and very sad both to lack the reward of virginity and not to have the comforts of children; to bear the burdens of matrimony, and not to come to the fruit of matrimony. Hence it is that she rejoices that the reproach of barrenness has been taken away from her, saying: Thus has the Lord done to me in the days in which he looked upon me to take away my reproach among men. For this is reckoned wretched among men, but with God there is no guilt where there is no fault of the parent, but the judgement of the one who denies. Certainly, if some bodily weakness brings this about, necessity is the cause, not will.

But now let all sluggish understanding of the flesh be put away, let all the weakness of bodily sense be cast off; and let every effort of human wit, whatever it be, be shut out; let the eyes of faith be open, the ears of the heart unbarred; let the step of the mind run and run on, so that we may be able to arrive at the mystery of the virgin conception, to penetrate to the sacrament of the virgin childbearing, with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, begotten of her, now lives in the heavenly kingdoms with God the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon XCIII.

On the conversion of the Magdalene

The attentive hearer perhaps wonders that Christ came to a dinner, and to a Pharisee's dinner. Christ entered the Pharisee's house not to receive Jewish food but to bestow divine mercy; nor did he recline to take cups flavoured with honey, fragrant with flowers, but to drink the tears of the penitent from the very fountains of the eyes: God hungers for the groans of offenders, thirsts for the tears of sinners.

A certain Pharisee, he says, was asking the Lord to eat with him: and entering the Pharisee's house, he reclined at table (Luke 7:36). And behold, a woman who was a sinner in the city, when she learned that the Lord was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, began to water his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment (Luke 7:37–38). You see that Christ came to the Pharisee's table not to be filled with fleshly foods, but to show in the flesh a heavenly business; nor to try what was set before him in a human way, but to approve what was done behind him in a divine way. For we always recognise that Christ exercised divine

powers through human acts, in that all the things that were done by him, even bodily, are proved to be new and beyond the usage of mortals.

The Pharisee invites Christ to eat: what is the woman who was not invited looking for there? A stranger does not burst through the bars of a house, one not invited does not presume to enter the privacy of a banquet, a dissolute onlooker does not dare to disturb food prepared for relaxing minds after labour; and how is it that this woman, unknown, or rather ill known, laden with mourning, full of tears, loud with lamentation, without the doorkeeper knowing, with no one aware, without the host himself knowing, runs through all the entrances of the house, passes all the troops of servants, flies to the very privacy of the banquet, and makes the house of gladness a house of lamentation and mourning? Brothers, she did not come because she was asked, but because she was bidden; she entered presented, not presuming: he himself so caused her to be set before him who by a heavenly sentence ordered her to be absolved. Indeed, while the Pharisee, splendid in dress, first on the couch, swelling with pride before the very eyes of Christ, ready to please man, not God, with his feast, lounges at his festivity, the woman comes, and comes behind, because the guilty mind stands behind its back for pardon, because it knows that through its fault it has lost the confidence of the face; she comes to make satisfaction to God, not to please man when she comes; she comes to set out a banquet of piety, not of plea-

sure. Indeed, she sets also the table of penance, serves the dishes of compunction, brings in the bread of pain; she mixes the drink with tears in measure, and for all the delights of the Godhead she strikes up the whole symphony of her heart and her body, she gives the clamour of the organ of lamentation, plays the cithara with long sighs, fits her groans to the pipe; and in often beating her breast, accusing her very conscience, she makes cymbals sound that will please God; and while she thus brings food to the divine eyes, she carries back in this way the whole abundance of mercy.

Behold, a woman who was a sinner in the city. The Evangelist heaps up the woman's misdeed, so as to pile up the indulgence of the giver. A sinner in the city. She had sinned with the city, because her fame had touched the fame of the whole city; and so she had become not only a sinner, but herself the very sin of the city. She knew that the sin of the city could not be taken away except by him alone who alone had come to abolish the sin of the world. And when she learned that the Lord was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house. The sinful woman does not dare to come to him standing, nor to him sitting: God, when he stands, rebukes; when he sits, judges; when he reclines, lies down with the prostrate. When she learned that the Lord was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house. She learned that the majesty on high bends down to pity; and therefore she believed that he would be ready to pardon her who had come so readily to the Pharisee's table.

She brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She carried oil, because she was seeking from the heavenly physician a medicine for a deadly wound. Standing behind at his feet. He who seeks a swift pardon always makes for the feet. And rightly standing, because he can no longer fall who has merited to reach the feet of Christ. Standing behind at his feet. So that, leaning on Christ's footsteps, she who had run along the way of death might run through the way of life. With tears she watered his feet. See, the order of things is changed: heaven always gives rain to the earth; behold, now the earth waters heaven, or rather, above the heavens and even to the Lord himself the shower of human tears leaps up, so that, according to the Psalmist, that verse may be sung of the waters of weeping too: And let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord (Ps 148:4–5). With tears she watered his feet. O how great is the power in the tears of sinners! they water heaven, wash the earth, extinguish Gehenna, blot out the sentence passed by divine decree against every misdeed.

And she wiped them with the hair of her head. She washes the Lord's feet with tears, wipes them with her locks. Poverty is left without excuse; inhumanity will have no pardon, because nature is wholly sufficient to itself for homage to the Creator. And she wiped them with the hair of her head. Onto the sinful woman's head the wave flowed back for the cleansing of crimes, so that the woman, with her own font, might wash away the filth of her sins into a new baptism. And

she wiped them with the hair of her head. So that, according to the Psalmist, she might turn the crown of hair (Ps 68:22) with which she had walked in her offences to holiness by such a service. And she kissed his feet. The tears had gone before, interceding, so that devout kisses might follow, because tears are the proof of satisfaction, kisses are the signs of reconciliation. And she anointed them with ointment. We know, as another evangelist relates, that a woman poured oil on the Lord's head (Matt 26:7): so what this woman does is not of soft and carnal homage, but is a mystery of full humanity; because in the head of Christ is God, in the feet those who bring the good news of peace.

Pray, brothers, that we too may merit together to be counted in some measure in the anointing of the Lord, and may be anointed with the ointment that is poured on the Saviour's feet: because, as it is an offering when ointment is offered, so it is perfect chrism when it overflows from the Lord's footsteps. But whose type this woman displays, or how great a secret she prefigures, we shall tell, by God's gift, when the things that follow are expounded.

Sermon XCIV.

On the same, and on the Pharisee murmuring, and Christ answering

Since in the last sermon we ran through the first part of today's reading, we wondered together with what fervour, what faith, what daring, what novelty of homage the sinful woman touched the very footprints of the Saviour: now let us hear what the Pharisee said while silent, and what Christ, to whom silent things speak, answered. Seeing it, he says, the Pharisee who had invited him said within himself: If this man were a prophet, he would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who touches him (Luke 7:39). Pharisee, what you see is not ignorance but power; it belongs to divine judgement, not to human error. Pharisee, you are wrong: had he been a prophet, he could rather have not known, because prophecy is not of human choice, it is of divine gift: hence a prophet knows, not as much as he wishes, but as much as he who bestows prophecy has given. If this man were a prophet, he would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who touches him. The touch of a wicked woman burns the man of bad conscience, pollutes one like her, brands the suspect, defames a man of evil will: but the sinful

woman becomes good, becomes holy, becomes innocent, when she has touched the giver of pardon. Dung touches the sun, but does not defile it. When wounds touch the physician, the rot does not pollute him. Though the accused touch the judge, he cannot stain him when he supplicates. So the sinner, when he touches the Lord, does not dirty the Lord; but he himself is both rid of all sin and seizes holiness at once. The woman with the flow of blood proves this, who, when she touched the hem of the Lord, did not pollute the hem, but was herself at once rid of the defilement of her old affliction.

If this man were a prophet, he would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who touches him. The Pharisee would believe Christ a prophet if he saw things laid open to the eyes, known to the people. What do you think he will believe, as soon as he learns that he is the arbiter of his mind, the judge of his heart, the witness of his conscience, the examining judge of his thoughts? Do you think he will acknowledge even then that he is God, whom now, after such mighty works, he does not even judge a master? If this man were a prophet, he would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who touches him. The woman had a wound, she knew it, and therefore she sought out in such a way the physician of so great a wound; the Pharisee, wounded by the sickness of unbelief, feverish with the flame of pride, through frenzy did not know himself to be mad. Hence it is that Christ first turned his care to where an unknown illness

was raging, so that the heavenly physician might cure two sick people with one medicine.

The Pharisee who had invited him, seeing it, said within himself, saying. To him, because the Pharisee had thought within himself, Christ answered with a public voice; and in laying open the secret of the Pharisee's heart, he shows that he himself was the author of all prophecy. Jesus answering, he says, said: Simon, I have something to say to you (Luke 7:40). To you, who need medicine and do not know how to seek medicine; to you, who call God master and forsake the discipline of God: do you not know that he does great injury to the master who acknowledges himself the disciple of one whose teaching he does not follow? For as the uprightness of the disciple is the praise of the master, so a disciple who does not know discipline is the reproach of the master. Simon, I have something to say to you. He answered: Master, say it. Again "Master, say it", and not "God, say it". Already, already sensing God, whom he calls master.

There were two debtors, he says, to a certain lender: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty (Luke 7:41). As they had nothing with which to pay, he forgave them both; which of them, then, loves him more? (Luke 7:42) Simon answered and said: I reckon the one to whom he forgave more (Luke 7:43). And the Lord: You have judged rightly. You have heard how the heavenly creditor makes up the whole debt with charity, and for the increase of the whole loan exacts and requires the interest of love alone. That debtor

deserves to be punished who neglects to redeem his security by love alone.

Do you want to know, man, what you owe God? That you were made is God's credit; that you are capable of reason is God's loan; that you possess the discernment of evil and good, you received; and that you received the norm of living through the bond of the Law, you cannot deny that you pledged yourself to God when he stipulated. But in that through the vices of the flesh you plunge yourself into the mire like a pig, and, living in the manner of beasts, deprive yourself of the reason with which you are endowed, and in the whirlpool of crimes, the discernment of good and evil lost, you confound them, and you squander the substance of the divine Law, a captive of worldly pleasure, you have become the mournful debtor of a glorious loan, against whom, as the profits of the virtues fail, the interest of crimes is multiplied. But though you have fallen in this matter, though you have rolled down into it, see that you do not despair: man, there remains to you the means to make satisfaction to the most loving creditor. Do you want to be absolved? Love. Charity will cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet 4:8). What is worse than the crime of denial? and yet Peter was able to blot it out by love alone, as the Lord proves when he says: Peter, do you love me? (John 21:15–17) Among all God's precepts love holds the first place. You shall love, he says, the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength (Mark 12:30). Love God, then,

man, and love him with your whole self, so that you may be able to overcome and blot out all sins without labour.

It belongs to a tender service, a gentle combat, to carry off the victory over all crimes by love alone, as is made clear by what follows. Turning, he says, to the woman, he said to Simon (Luke 7:44). What does it mean, that Christ, turned towards the woman, speaks to Simon? That while he looks upon the penitent, he rebukes the one who barks against her. He said to Simon: Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave no water for my feet, but she has watered my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; you gave me no kiss, but she, from the time I entered, has not ceased to kiss my feet; you did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment (Luke 7:44–46). Therefore I say to you: her many sins are forgiven her, because she loved much; but he to whom less is forgiven, loves less (Luke 7:47). It is proved that love blots out and washes away all sins. But what is it that he said: He to whom less is forgiven, loves less? Is it, then, reason enough for sinning, that greater charity may be gained? Far from it. Charity comes to the help of things past, it does not set free from things to come; charity does not know how to sin while it loves; charity is not charity if it does wrong; the charity of God is the guardian of holiness.

Brothers, if we know that we are sinners, and do not wish to be sinners, let us give tears to the feet of Christ, spread out our hair, fix kisses,

pour out the oil of piety with all devotion, so that it may be said to us: Your many sins are forgiven you, because you have loved much (Luke 7:47). Let us imitate this woman, whom we see not only to have been rid of sins but to have reached the whole summit of holiness. But who this woman is, since today's sermon on charity has made us put it off, we shall disclose, as we have already promised, in what follows, with God as author.

Sermon XCV.

On the same, where it treats of the Magdalene's allegorical conversion

All the things that are related as done bodily by Christ are so upheld by historical truth that they are always proved to be full of heavenly mysteries. And because we have already touched upon what was on the surface of the reading in a repeated sermon, pray that, as we promised, we may disclose its inner things, the Holy Spirit revealing them. Without honour is the discourse that sets forth the deeds of God by a merely human exposition.

A certain Pharisee, he says, asked the Lord to eat with him (Luke 7:36). The Pharisee, brothers, is called the catholic of the Jews; for he both believes the resurrection, and dissents from the Sadducee, who denies the resurrection. Hence it is that he asks Christ, that is, the author of the resurrection, to eat with him: because he who lives with Christ does not know how to die; surely he lives always. He was asking the Lord to eat with him. You ask, Pharisee, to eat with him; believe, be a Christian, and you eat of him. I am, he says, the bread that came down from heaven (John 6:41). God always grants greater things than he is asked for; for he gave himself to be eaten, he who

was being asked to grant the confidence of eating with him; and yet he so gave this as not to deny what he was asked for. Does he not promise this also of his own accord to his disciples? You who have persevered with me shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom (Luke 22:28–30). Christian, he who has given himself to you here to be eaten, what of his can he refuse you in the future? And he who has prepared so great a provision for the journey for your sustenance, what has he not prepared for you in that perpetual dwelling? You shall eat at my table in my kingdom. You have heard of God's banquet; do not be concerned about the quality of the banquet. He who merits to come to a king's table will eat whatever the dominion and power of the kingdom possesses; so he who comes to the Creator's banquet will have among his delights whatever is contained in the creation.

But let us return to what we began. And entering the Pharisee's house. What house? Surely, he entered the synagogue and reclined. In the synagogue, brothers, Christ reclined then, when he lay down in death: but he sent his body over to the table of the Church, so that the heavenly flesh might be for salvation to the Gentiles who would eat it. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you (John 6:53). But how the flesh of Christ is eaten, how his blood too is drunk, those know who have been instructed in the heavenly sacraments.

Behold, he says, a woman who was a sinner in the city (Luke 7:37). What woman? The Church,

without doubt. A sinner in the city. In what city? That of which the prophet had said: How has the faithful city of Zion become a harlot? (Isa 1:21) And elsewhere: I have seen iniquity and contradiction in the city, and iniquity and toil in its midst and in justice; and usury and deceit have not departed from its streets (Ps 55:10–12). In the city, then, fenced with the walls of unbelief, fortified with the towers of pride, laid out with the streets of iniquities, barred with the gates of contradictions, painted with the dyes of deceit, hardened with the flints of usuries, weighed down with the pains of business, defamed by brothels, that is, by the temples of idols, this woman, that is, the Church, was dragging a most heavy guilt from so great a sewer of preceding sins.

But when she heard that Christ had come to the Pharisee's house, that is, to the synagogue; that there, that is, at the Jewish Pasch, he had handed on the mysteries of his Passion, opened the sacrament of his body and blood, made manifest the secret of our redemption, despising the scribes as the worst of doorkeepers. Woe to you lawyers, who have taken away the key of knowledge! (Luke 11:52) Bursting the doors of contradictions, despising the very headship of the Pharisaic choir, burning, panting, seething, she came to the innermost recess of the banquet of the Law: and there she found Christ, amid the feasts of love and the sweet cups, betrayed, fallen through Jewish fraud, according to that saying of the Prophet: For if an enemy had reproached me, I would surely have borne it; and if he who

hated me had spoken evil against me, I would surely have hidden myself from him: but you, a man of one mind with me, my guide and my familiar friend, who took sweet food with me, in the house of the lord we walked in agreement (Ps 55:13–15).

When she learned that the Lord had reclined in the Pharisee's house, that is, in the synagogue, had been given over to every guile, to all fraud, had suffered, been crucified and buried; yet she is not held back from the fervour of faith by so great an injury, but she brings ointment, she brings the oil of Christian chrism: and because she did not merit to see the bodily face of Christ, she stands behind, not in place but in time, she clings to his footsteps, so as to follow; and now she sheds tears more of longing than of conscience, so that him whom she did not merit to see departing she may merit to see returning. So she pours out tears at the Lord's feet with flowing love; while she holds with the hands of good works the feet of those who announce his kingdom, washes them with the tears of charity, kisses them with the lips of confession, and pours out the whole ointment of mercy, until, turned towards her (what is "turned"? that is, returned), he may say to Simon, say to the Pharisees, say to those who deny, say to the people of the Jews: I entered your house, you gave no water for my feet (Luke 7:44).

And when will he say this? When he comes in the majesty of his Father, and will separate the just from the unjust, as a shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats; and he will say: I was

hungry, and you did not give me food; I was thirsty, and you did not give me drink; I was a stranger, and you did not take me in (Matt 25:42–43). That is to say: "You gave no water for my feet; but she, in washing the feet of my own, anointing their feet, kissing their feet, has done for the servants what you did not do for the Lord, has done for the feet what you refused to the head, has spent on the least what you denied to your own author." Then he will say to the Church: Your many sins are forgiven you, because you have loved much (Luke 7:47). Because then there will be remission of sins, when the whole matter of sinning is taken away, when corruption puts on incorruption; when mortality attains immortality, when the flesh of sin becomes the flesh of all holiness, when earthly servitude is changed into heavenly dominion, when human service is promoted to the divine kingdom.

Pray, brothers, that we too, set in the Church's portion, may merit to come to the things we have enumerated, with Christ himself as author, to whom be honour and glory together with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon XCVI.

On the parable of the cockle

If the words or deeds of Christ were everywhere subject to the senses of the flesh, my mind would grow numb, would lie idle, my wit would sleep, my heart would waste away, whatever there is of human vigour and warmth would be put out. He put forth, he says, a parable to them (Matt 13:24). As fire is cold in the flint, as fire lies hidden in the iron, and yet fire itself bursts into flame when iron and flint strike together, so an obscure word shines out when word and sense are set together. Certainly, if there were nothing mystical, no distinction would remain between the faithless and the faithful, between the impious and the pious, and the devout would be as the stubborn, the idle as he who labours, the wakeful as he who sleeps: but now, when the soul asks, the mind knocks, the understanding seeks, piety hopes, faith demands, earnestness deserves, there appear together the fruit of the one who sweats, the penalty of the slothful and the justice of the giver, because things received have more savour than things possessed, and things found delight more than things laid before us. Hence it is that Christ veils his teaching in

parables, covers it with figures, hides it under sacraments, makes it dark with mysteries.

He put forth, he says, a parable to them. To them, that is, not to his own, but to strangers; to enemies, surely, not to friends; to men who watched for slander, not to men who listened for salvation. Therefore I speak to them in parables, he says, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand (Matt 13:13). Why? Because he who slanders things past does not deserve to see things present; nor is he worthy to recognise grace who hid the Law so that it might not be known. Woe to you lawyers, he says, for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering (Luke 11:52).

He put forth, he says, a parable to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man. And in what does Christ offend, if he was made in the likeness of men, to come to the help of the perishing human race? Is the Lord a cause of offence if, to set servants free, he is found in the condition of servitude? when whatever majesty there is of what is to come, whatever of the coming and of the kingdom, is, behold, compared to a man. The kingdom of heaven is like, he says, a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed cockle over it among the wheat, and went away (Matt 13:24–25). You have heard how the sower of the world sowed the beginnings of things good, and no evil came forth from the author of their origin; the

evil was sown over them by the enemy, the evil was not brought forth by the parent of things. And God saw, he says, all things whatever he had made, and behold, very good (Gen 1:31). Good, and very good: for what God in making it called the world (mundus), the enemy in staining it rendered unclean (immundus); and man, whom God set in the paradise of delights for life, the enemy dragged down to death in this life of toil; and the affection which God planted in the flesh by nature, the enemy by envy turned into parricide. Cain proves it, who was the first to stain the earth with a brother's blood, and stood forth as the fitting inaugurator of death in his brother's end. So death, born of discord, ever tears and sunders human charity.

And since it is long to go through each thing, we are compelled to show, if only in a few words, how the enemy has ever sown, to our ruin, evils over goods, vices over virtues, things of death over things of life. Did not God fill the whole earth from one man, and did not the loving sower, from one seed, multiply the whole race of men to so great a harvest? But the enemy soon brought all men down to one; and by sowing evils over what had been well sown, he blotted it out with the flood, he did not water it. So the Law, sown with divine and truthful precepts, he painted over with human and lying inventions: so that out of a priest came a persecutor, out of a teacher a perverter arose, out of a defender of the Law an enemy was made. So the creatures made for the knowledge of the Creator he lyingly declared to

be gods, that God might not be known. Hence he made the wise of this age fools, taught the observers of the world to see nothing, made the professors of knowledge have no knowledge, sent away the searchers into all things ignorant. So the enemy, by sowing heretical cockle over it, confounded the Gospel crop sown with heavenly seed, to make the sheaves of the faith bundles for Gehenna, so that it might not become the wheat of the heavenly granaries. And what more? After he himself had been turned from an angel into a demon, he strove by craft, by tricks, by engines, by fraud, that no creature might stand firm in its own state.

But now let us open the words of the present parable. The kingdom of heaven is like a man. To whom? To Christ, surely. Who sowed good seed. Because in the very seed of things the Creator's founding knows no evil. In his field. That is, in the world, as the Lord himself says: This field is the world (Matt 13:38). But when men had fallen asleep. That is, the holy Fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, sleeping for a time in the slumber of death, because the death of the saints is sleep; but for sinners it is death, because sinners live in hell for punishment and perish for life.

His enemy, coming. That is, the devil. Sowed cockle over it. He sowed over, he did not sow. The good things of the Creator go before, the evil things of the devil follow after; so that the evil which is from the devil is an accident, not nature. Sowed cockle over it among the wheat. Because

the devil is wont to sow, for nothing, heresies among the faithful, sin among the saints, quarrels among the peaceable, deceits among the simple, wickedness among the innocent: not to gain cockle, but to destroy the wheat; nor to catch the guilty, but to carry off the innocent. An enemy goes for the general more than for the soldier; and he does not besiege the dead, but attacks the living: so the devil does not seek to capture sinners, whom he holds subdued, but labours so as to capture the just.

Sowed cockle over it among the wheat, and went away. Because the devil drives men to ruin with all his force, but once he has laid them low, he abandons them; the devil does not seek man, but seeks man's destruction. Brothers, he rejoices in our evils, swells with our ruins, grows strong on our wounds, thirsts for our blood, is sated on our flesh, lives on our deaths. The devil does not want to have man, but to destroy him. Why? Because he does not want, does not bear, does not endure that man should reach the heaven from which he fell.

And since the sermon draws us on too far today, let us put off the rest, both to relieve our common labour and to carry out more fully what is to be said. May our God deign to grant me the grace of speaking and you the desire of hearing.

Sermon XCVII.

On the same

Since the earlier sermon, hurrying so as to temper our common labour, could not reach the whole secret of the parable it was running through, now, as the Lord reveals it, let us open the rest. He put forth, he says, a parable to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed cockle over it among the wheat, and went away (Matt 13:24–25). But while men were asleep. The lurker lies hidden by night, by day he flees the wakeful, he goes for the sleeping; the brave man seeks the fight, challenges openly with all looking on, and wants to have his victory before the peoples. To have fallen upon the sleeping is the mark of the greatest weakness.

But while men were asleep, his enemy came. The wicked man is never other than a fool. What did the enemy achieve here? Granted that the servants slept: can it be that the Lord too was asleep? Granted that sleep closed the servants' eyes after their labour: can it be that any weariness had overcome the eyes of the master? Enemy, fugitive from the light, you kept watch, you laboured, but you were not hidden: for while the servants sleep,

the Lord himself sees you; deserter of heaven, you came first, you did the deed, but you did not get on. What God himself guards cannot perish to him: author of fraud, it is not against the Lord that you offend, but against the servants, in that you make what is your fraud be laid to their negligence. He, he sees you, who is witness of the whole, both of the fraud and of the labour. So the fruits of his labour await the one who does well, and the penalties of his wickedness await the one who defrauds; they will carry the wheat to the heavenly granary, you will carry for yourself the bundles of your cockle to Gehenna.

But while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed cockle over it. To what end? That the Lord's harvest might perish; and what did this have to do with the enemy's gain, except that the spirit of envy reckons the loss of men its own gain, and thinks it has acquired whatever has perished for men? But the devil contrived this under cover of darkness, as we have said, for this reason, that the harm of the adulterated harvest might fall back on the servants, and they might receive punishment from the very thing from which they had hoped for the palm. Indeed the servants, kept awake by fear, take fright at why these things have happened: fearing this, that the shoots of the cockle might rebound to the disfavour of those whose conscience held nothing but the sowing of good seed. Hence it is that they went before their lord's hearing, lest, secure of their innocence, they should bear guilt from their silence: when an innocent man is summoned to

answer for guilt, while he burns to clear himself, he presses and urges on the examining judge.

But when the blade had grown and borne fruit, then, he says, the cockle also appeared (Matt 13:26). What lies hidden in the blade is shown in the ear; and what is concealed in the shoot is opened in the fruit: so those whom we think equal as believers we find unequal in faith, so the harvest of judgement brings out what the shoot of the Church conceals. According to that saying of the Lord: By their fruits you will know them (Matt 7:16). Many flowers promise a multitude of fruits, but, struck lifeless by the blasts of the winds, very few hold on to the fruit: so in the Church many believers in Christ are seen in time of peace; but when the storm of persecution has blown through, few are found in the fruit of martyrdom. But holy Euphemia paid out more in fruit than she promised in flower; for, the flower of her virginity remaining, she came to the abundant fruit of martyrdom.

There came up, he says, the servants of the householder, saying to him (Matt 13:27). They came up, brothers, in mind, not in body; not in place, but in faith; they spoke not with the shout of the voice, but with the silent pain of the heart: Lord, did you not sow good seed in your field? "You sowed, not we: in what we do perfectly we are always ascribed to you, our author, and you yourself, in the things you command us to do, stand by us as the worker. If, then, of your condescension you make us sharers in your work, do not ascribe to us alone that cockle springs up.

Lord, either innocence shields us together with you, or guilt touches you together with us; we could not have grudged our own work, we could not have bought disfavour with great sweat; you have what you will, whence you will, when you will; we have nothing apart from your grace, through which we stand, live, move and are (Acts 17:28), and without which we lie fallen, fail and perish. Did we, then, labour at these things for ourselves in such a way that they should perish? But who did this, you, who alone do not sleep, saw while we slept; and if you saw, just Judge (who knows what was done? he who keeps watch, not he who sleeps), then reveal him, so that you may make us, whom you see so anxious, as secure."

The master said: An enemy has done this (Matt 13:28). An enemy has done this; and you, Lord, why did you permit it when you saw it? Why? Because he cannot fear frauds to whom nothing can be lost; and because it is more to sort out what is mixed than to forbid the mixture, it is greater to restore what was lost than to keep things unharmed; and at the same time because there must be cockle, so that those who are approved may be made manifest (1 Cor 11:19).

But the servants said to him: Do you want us to go and gather up the cockle? So devoted servants promise unwearied labour, and cannot bear to see, even for a time, the foulness of the Lord's harvest; but the Lord, whom times do not weary, and who can abolish the wrong done to his harvest whenever he will, forbids it,

saying: No. And why he forbade it he reveals at once. Lest perhaps, in gathering the cockle, you root up the wheat together with it (Matt 13:29). Were the husbandmen so unskilled, so ignorant of their work, so lacking in the knowledge of discernment, that in pulling up the cockle they would root up the wheat as well? Where are the prophets who prophesied through the Spirit of God? Where is Peter, to whom the Father reveals (Matt 16:17)? Where is Paul, in whom Christ works (Gal 2:8) and speaks (2 Cor 13:3)? Where are all the saints, saints indeed, but servants, knowing only as much as the giver of all knowledge has granted to each?

But you say: "There was nothing hidden in this." Nothing hidden there, when one thing was seen in the appearance and another was held in the flower, and what today was cockle was tomorrow turned into wheat! So today a man is held a heretic who tomorrow becomes one of the faithful; and he who at present is seen a sinner stands in the future just. Hence it is too that the author referred both to the harvest, that is, to the judgement, the time of his divine patience and of our penance, so that he who has changed from evil to good may be counted among the Lord's wheat, to be gathered into the heavenly granaries; and he who has made himself from faithful faithless may be counted for the fire of Gehenna. And what more? If the patience of God did not come to the help of the cockle, the Church would possess neither Matthew, an evangelist out of a publican, nor Paul, an apostle out of a

persecutor. Indeed Ananias was seeking to root up the wheat when, sent to Saul, he made such complaint of Paul: Lord, how many evils he has done to your saints! (Acts 9:13) that is, root up the cockle; what has the sheep to do with the wolf? what the devout with the stubborn? what is such a preacher doing, sent to a persecutor? But while Ananias saw Saul, the Lord then saw Paul; while Ananias spoke of a persecutor, the Lord then knew a preacher; and while he judged him to be cockle of hell, Christ was already setting him as a vessel of election, as wheat in the heavenly granary. Go, he says, for he is a vessel of election to me (Acts 9:15).

Sermon XCVIII.

On the parable of the grain of mustard seed

You have heard today, brothers, how the whole greatness of the heavenly kingdom has been compared to a grain of mustard seed. And how is it that a likeness so small, so very slight, or rather the least of the least, encloses so great a power? For thus the Lord says: What is the kingdom of God like? and what shall I reckon it like? (Luke 13:18) When he says: What is it like, he shows and brings forth, as it were, the attitude of one who searches. And does he who alone is the Word, the fount of knowledge, the river of speech, who waters the hearts of all, opens the senses, enlarges the mind, now labour to find a likeness?

But let us hear what he found. The kingdom of heaven is like, he says, a grain of mustard seed (Matt 13:31). Searching in heaven and on earth, he finds nothing but a grain of mustard seed in which to enclose the whole power of the dominion above; and that kingdom, mighty in its singularity, happy in its eternity, shining with divinity, spread through all heaven, extended over all the earth, he narrows and shuts up in the straits of a grain of mustard seed? The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. Is this

the whole hope of believers? Is this the sum of the expectation of the faithful? Is this the happiness of virgins, purchased by the long labours of continence? Is this the glory of martyrs, won by the shedding of all their blood? Is this what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it gone up into the heart of man (1 Cor 2:9)? is this what the Apostle promises, by an ineffable mystery, to have been prepared for those who love God? Brothers, let us not be easily disturbed at the Lord's sayings; for if the weak thing of God is stronger than men, and the foolish thing of God is wiser than men (1 Cor 1:25), this least thing of God is found more magnificent than the whole greatness of the world; provided only that we so sow this grain of mustard seed in our minds that it grows for us into a great tree of understanding, and is raised to heaven with all the height of sense, and spreads out into all the branches of knowledge, and so kindles our burning mouths with the lively savour of its fruit, and so burns in us with the whole fire of its seed, and blazes in our breast, and by its taste takes from us all the loathing of our ignorance.

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and put into his garden, and it grew, and became a great tree, and the birds of the air rested in its branches (Luke 13:19). Like a grain of mustard seed, as he says, is the kingdom of God, which is brought from above by the word, received by hearing, sown by faith, rooted by belief, grows by hope, spreads by confession, stretches out by virtue, and widens

into branches, to which it calls the birds of the air, that is, the spiritual senses, and in them receives them in a quiet dwelling. Let the heretic come, let him come, for the entrance to the Church always stands open to those who return; let him come, let him hear, and let him at last cease to bark against the Lord's loving-kindness: if the whole majesty of the heavenly kingdom came to the likeness of a grain of mustard seed, why is it questioned that God came down to man, the Lord into the form of a servant? For he came thus, heretic, that everything might grow for you through faith, for whom everything had already failed through nature.

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. But let us return to the grain of mustard seed: thus the whole sum of the kingdom remains and stands firm in the kingdom of heaven. Christ is the kingdom of heaven, who, like a grain of mustard seed, put into the garden of the virginal body, grew throughout the whole world into the tree of the cross, and gave such savour of his fruit, when he was crushed in the Passion, that whatever is living he flavoured and seasoned by his touch. For as in the grain of mustard seed, while it is whole, its power is kept hidden, but its power appears most vehemently if it is crushed; so Christ willed to be crushed in body, who did not will his power to lie hidden. And let us too, brothers, crush this grain of mustard seed, so as to feel its strength in this likeness. Christ the king, because he himself is the whole origin of reigning; Christ the kingdom, because in him is

the whole majesty of his kingdom; Christ man, because the whole man is restored in Christ; Christ the grain of mustard seed, whence the whole greatness of God is lessened to the whole smallness of man. And what more? He himself became all things, that he might restore all men in himself; Christ the man received the grain of mustard seed, that is, the man Christ received the kingdom of God, which Christ, God, always had; he put it into his garden, that is, into the Church his bride.

Of this garden he often makes mention in the Song of Songs, saying: A garden enclosed (Song 4:12). The Church is a garden, spread through the whole world by the tilling of the Gospel's ploughshare, enclosed by the goads of discipline, cleansed of every evil weed by apostolic labour, lovely with the plantings of the faithful, the lilies of virgins, the roses of martyrs, the green of confessors, fragrant with everlasting flowers. This grain of mustard seed, then, Christ put into his garden, that is, by the promise of his kingdom, which was rooted in the patriarchs, born in the prophets, grew in the apostles, in the Church made a great tree, put forth manifold branches in its gifts, which the Apostle enumerates, saying: To one is given the utterance of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another the care of healings, to another the working of mighty works, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another kinds of tongues (1 Cor 12:8–10).

You have heard, brothers, into what a tree this grain of mustard seed has burst forth; you have heard what roots it has laid down; you have heard into what branches, of what kind and how great, it has already spread and divided itself, in which the birds of heaven, not of the air, on the wings of wisdom and prudence in their flight, rest in the security of faith. And you, hear: if you wish not to fear the beasts of the earth, if you wish to escape the birds of prey, the greedy vultures, that is, the birds of the air, which are all the spiritual wickednesses, rise from the earth, forsake earthly things: take the silvered wings of the prophetic dove (Ps 68:14), take feathers shining with the brightness of the divine Sun, fly away in the likeness of gold, so that in branches so great and such as these, tempted now by no snares, you may rest for ever, strong from such a flight and secure in so great a dwelling. Of the following likeness we shall speak in the following discourse, as the Lord teaches.

Sermon XCIX.

On the parable of the leaven

The course of today's reading has run well, so that the woman of the Gospel, our mother, should receive from the Lord the leaven through which this temple might today be raised up for us and rise into so great a lump of holiness. For thus the Lord began: To what shall I reckon the kingdom of God like? (Luke 13:20) It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until the whole was leavened (Luke 13:21). The good Lord, Christ, the lover of his own, repeats the likenesses of his kingdom, varies his comparisons, which he does not take from what is hidden, does not catch from heavenly things, but brings forth from daily use, sets before us from common life, so that what is to profit all may reach every kind of men, according to that saying of the Prophet: Hear this, all you nations; give ear, all you who dwell in the world, both earthborn and sons of men, rich and poor together (Ps 49:2–3). If he brought into the open anything of the hidden things of divinity, anything of the royal secret, anything of the inner chambers of the rich, the poor man would not know it, the lowly would not grasp it, simplicity would not hold it known: but now he speaks things known to the

rich, familiar to the poor, homely to all by the very necessity of life, because in God's calling it is man that is sought, and in his calling no distinction is made of person.

But let us unfold once more the likeness that was read. To what, he says, shall I reckon the kingdom of God like? By saying this he holds the hearts of his hearers in suspense, and leaves them astonished in utter amazement at what can be compared to the kingdom of God, to the divine empire: and while they wander in mind through many great things, the Lord of heaven finds and shapes the example of his kingdom in the guest-house of a poor man, in the hand of a baking-woman, saying: It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until the whole was leavened.

Before, he compared his kingdom to a grain of mustard seed; now he makes it like leaven. Before, he relates that a man took the grain of mustard seed; now he asserts that a woman took the leaven. Before, he says that a man sowed a tiny seed for the growth of a great tree; now he shows that a woman hid a little leaven for the rising of the whole lump. Truly, as the apostle Paul said: Neither is man without woman, nor woman without man, in the Lord (1 Cor 11:11). A varied likeness leads the different sexes to the one kingdom, and the Christian calling does not separate man from woman, whom God joins, nature associates, and, by a wonderful likeness, bearing makes alike and form composes; and God makes man to be one in two, two in one, the other

being the same man in the tie of marriage; so that there may be neither a forsaken singleness nor a confused joining.

But why does the Lord bring forth these likenesses of his kingdom through a man and a woman? Why does he shape so great a majesty in examples so mean, so unequal? Brothers, a precious mystery lies hidden in this meanness, as the Apostle says: This mystery is great, but I speak in Christ and in the Church (Eph 5:32). In these comparisons the chief business of the human race is carried on; through a man and a woman the cause of the world, handled through the ages, is brought to its end: Adam the first man, Eve the first woman, are led from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to the burning of the Gospel's mustard, so that the eyes which the enticing tree had closed by opening them, the mustard tree, with the eye-salve and the very sharpness of its grain, might open them in closing them; so that the mouths which the taste of the poisonous tree had infected, the saving tree might heal with the fiery savour of its taste; and that this tree, with its fiery food, might kindle with the whole ardour of its converse the conscience which that other had made cold with utter stiffness. Here nakedness no longer either stirs or is put to shame, where pardon covers the whole man, and the garment of faith makes him warm: but this is conferred on the woman through the grain of mustard seed which the man had received.

But what is conferred on the man through the leaven which the woman received, let us search out more carefully. The kingdom of God is like, he says, leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour. The thing is taken from common use: the man sows the mustard tree in the field, at home the woman sees to the leaven and prepares loaves for food, because labour awaits the man outside, the care of the house holds the woman within. Hence it is that Sarah, barren and old, from this preparing of leaven and from three measures offers three ash-baked loaves to the hospitality shown the Lord and sets them before him in mystical homage (Gen 18:6), so that the barrenness of the world, shut up in utter old age, might place the leaven of faith in three measures, that is, in the equality of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and might set three loaves before her Lord in the confession of the Trinity; and for this gift might be made fruitful for the whole offspring of the Christian seed.

But let us return to what we set out to treat. The woman received from God the leaven of faith, she who had received from the devil the leaven of unbelief; she hid it in three measures, that is, in the three times of men, which are from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, from Moses to Christ; so that the woman who in Adam had corrupted the whole lump of the human race with the leaven of death might restore the whole lump of our flesh in Christ with the leaven of the resurrection; so that the woman who had made the bread

of groaning and of sweat might bake the bread of life and of salvation; and that she who in Adam was the mother of all the dead might be through Christ the true mother of all the living. For this reason Christ willed to be born, that as death came to all through Eve, so life might return to all through Mary. And Mary fulfils the type of this leaven, bears its likeness, seals its figure, in that she receives from above the leaven of the Word, and the human flesh in the Virgin's womb, or rather in the Virgin's womb, she kneaded whole into a heavenly lump.

But what allegorical sense remains in this likeness, let us now bring out. The woman who received the leaven is the Church: the leaven which she received is the mystery of heavenly doctrine: the three measures in which she is said to have hidden the leaven are the Law, the Prophets, the Gospels, where the divine sense is hidden and concealed in a mystical word, so that it may not be hidden from the faithful, and may be hidden from the faithless. And as for his saying: Until the whole was leavened, that is what the Apostle says: We know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when what is perfect has come, the things that are in part will cease (1 Cor 13:9–10). Divine knowledge is now in the kneading: it sprinkles the senses, lifts up the hearts, increases the minds, and after the manner of teachings it widens, stirs up, spreads them to the growth of heavenly wisdom; the whole is leavened. When? At the coming of Christ.

Sermon C.

On the Syrophoenician, or Canaanite, woman

Today blessed Mark, while he commends the prudence of the Syrophoenician woman, relates her faith, extols the ardour of her belief, raises no small question for attentive hearers, saying: And rising from there the Lord went away into the region of Tyre and Sidon, and entering a house, he willed that no one should know it, and he could not be hidden (Mark 7:24). He willed and could not: to will and not to be able is not of the divine majesty, it is of human weakness; for it is written: Whatever the Lord willed he has done, in heaven and on earth, in the sea and in all the deeps (Ps 135:6). And the Apostle: Who resists his will? (Rom 9:19) The will that is not free and unbound gives way to necessity. The leper says to the Lord: If you will, you can make me clean (Matt 8:2); and the Evangelist says: He willed, and could not. What does blessed Mark say? Can it be that the woman's faith is to be so extolled that the Lord's ability and will are made to bow? Or is the shrewdness of faith so great that, against God's will, it can search out the divine secret? Such, it seems to me, is that other place too, when the Lord wills to bring out the faith of the woman with the flow of blood and to prove it by a proof of

his power, asking: Who touched me? (Mark 5:30) To whom the disciples say: The crowds press upon you, and do you say: Who touched me? (Mark 5:31) It seemed to the disciples that all who pressed upon the Lord with the body alone were touching him, and that by such fleshly jostling all alike were joined to him: he, likewise, who had perceived otherwise and was asking otherwise, knew that the woman had reached his majesty, had penetrated to his power, with the mind, not the body, not with common touch, but with faith. Hence it is not man but God, not flesh but spirit, who cries out: Who touched me? so that the power of the work might betray him whom his manhood then concealed.

But let us inquire more plainly what he willed means, and what he could not means. Christ, mindful of his promise, had come first for the salvation of the people of Israel, to render faithfully paid what he had promised to Abraham and to his seed David and to his posterity: but because they showed themselves unworthy by their unbelief, the faith of the Gentiles obtained, seized, carried off what the faithlessness of the Jews despised and lost. Hear him saying: I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 15:24). But the sheep, already rabid from the contagion of wolves, and in their own savagery fiercer than the beasts themselves, always wanted to tear and violate their shepherd: and so Christ could not fulfil his willing, not through any impossibility of his own, but through the wickedness of the lost; and what he had brought

to some, he was compelled to bestow on others, as he himself says: The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and those who do violence carry it off (Matt 11:12). The faith of the Gentiles did violence, so as to seize the inheritance of the Father, to carry off the whole inheritance itself of the sons, as is shown more plainly in the present reading.

For the woman, as soon as she heard of him, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, came in, and fell down at his feet (Mark 7:25). Now she was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by race (Mark 7:26). And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her: Let the children first be filled; for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs (Mark 7:27). He did not say: It is not good to throw it to the dogs; but: It is not good to take it from the children and throw it to the dogs: because to give bread to dogs, though it is not a matter of humanity, is yet a matter of human reason. The dog, while its masters sleep at night, both guard and wakeful, betrays the stranger, alarms the thief, meets the robber, so as to relieve the care and the solicitude of the servants.

But how did he take the bread from the children, to whom he so often and so greatly offered it, gave it, pressed it upon them? But they tried to trample what was offered, to their wickedness, not to take it, to their life: and yet the dog, with all her faith, with all her longing, hastened to lick it up, broken and trampled by the children. Hence it is that she answered thus: Yes, Lord, for even the little dogs under the table eat of the children's

crumbs (Mark 7:28). Rightly is she who confessed herself a dog changed into a human being, and justly are they turned into dogs who refused to be sons; rightly is she adopted as a daughter, lifted up, honoured at the table, who with praiseworthy and provident humility cast herself down under the table; justly does she now feast on the crumbs of the whole loaf, who understood and confessed that by her own merits she hardly deserved it. And what more? Hence it is that, for the sake of his justice, the Lord could neither give to the Jews nor refuse to the Gentiles.

Sermon CI.

On death to be despised by the faithful, and why God permitted it. On the passage of Luke: "Do not fear those who kill the body", etc.

You have heard, brothers, how Christ addresses his soldiers with a royal exhortation, that in contempt of death they should not dread the slayers of the body. Indeed, he enrols in the rights of friends those who, out of zeal for triumph, out of love of liberty, have shed their blood with joy and without trembling; for thus he says: But I say to you, my friends, Do not be terrified by those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do (Luke 12:4). But I will show you whom you should fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into Gehenna (Luke 12:5). But I say to you, my friends, Do not be terrified: because virtue proves liberty, dread betrays servitude; for the free man is born for glory, the servant for fear; rightly, then, is he raised to the friendship of God who for God's sake despises human deaths, knows no fears. If imitation of character makes friends, if likeness of character joins them, fittingly does Christ call those friends whom he sees and foresees will trample, in imitation of him, the darts of the world and the very terror of death.

But I say to you. That is, not to all, but to friends. But I say to you. Whom this death releases, not ends. I say to you. Whom the dissolving of the body promotes to something better, does not carry over to punishment. I say to you. For whom by death life is begun, not finished. I say to you: whose death becomes precious not by its own quality but by its cause, in that it finds the gains of life rather than loses the interest of life.

But let us hear what he says to his friends. Do not be terrified by those who kill the body. Let them hear, those who wore out the old volumes of the ancients on the good of death, and yet could draw from them nothing of virtue, nor find any consolation. For though with all the forces of eloquence they armed minds for the bearing of death, dried tears, took away sighs, forbade groans, shut in pains, yet they won nothing for their readers either of sure hope, or of perpetual life, or of true salvation. Who would say to a man, who to a wise man? "To die belongs to nature; it is necessary to perish. The ancients lived for us, we live for those to come, no one for himself; to will what cannot be taken away is the part of virtue: take on willingly that to which you are driven unwilling; death, before it comes, is not; and when it has come, it is not known to have come. Do not, then, feel pain at having lost what, once you have lost it, you will feel no pain for." But when they have said such things, they speak wholly of the sentence, not of life. For whence, and when, and how, and through whom death came to you, they did not know: but to us the author of life has

revealed the author of death; for God made life, the devil plotted against life, as the divine word declares: God did not make death, but by the envy of the devil death entered the world (Wis 1:13; 2:24).

But you say: "Why did God allow his own work to perish by the work of the devil?" O man, if you wanted to know what you ask, you would give yourself a little leisure, you would give your mind to it, you would open your ears, so that you yourself, so curious an arbiter, might come to know the chief business. But you, busy always with other things, never with yourself, idle and lazy, complain that you do not know the causes of things, the whole business of the ages, the depth of the judgements and the impenetrable secret. Did you not, to learn the strokes of the letters, the first elements, bound to a master, fixed to the schools, wholly enduring of toil and punishment, know neither home nor parents? How useful to you is the end for which a master is assigned to you, a school is pressed upon you, and the teacher, by your punishments and his own toil, pleads with you that you may be willing to know these things, that you may deign to hear things of such kind and so great! The apostles prove this, and above all Paul, who taught by being beaten, not by beating, so that, an outstanding master, he bore and took upon himself as many sufferings as there are ways in man. And let us learn in a moment of time those beginnings of things, the causes of the world, because we are commanded; and how are we commanded? and you do not

listen as you ought; and us this servitude, such necessity, excuses; you so great a liberty, such a will, beyond doubt accuses: what we say is of our office; what we say too little is of your distaste.

Do you ask, man, why God did not at once put out death together with its author, and did not then by his providence provide against the deadly poison, lest it should come to the ruin of the whole world, and above all of his own image? The heaven that you see, man, made firm by the whole air, carries many waters, and is itself carried by nothing, because command alone hangs it there, the force of a precept alone sustains it, as the divine word declares: Who stretches out the heaven like a skin, who covers its upper parts in the waters (Ps 104:2–3). The earth, which is trodden by so great a weight, and made solid by the burden of the mountains and by their mass, floats on a liquid foundation, as the Prophet says: Who founded the earth upon the waters (Ps 136:6), so that what stands may be of command, not of nature. He himself spoke, he says, and they were made; he himself commanded, and they were created (Ps 148:5), so that what stands may be of divine work, not of human reasoning. The sea, which is borne on so high a crest of its tossing and lifted up to the clouds, slender sands bridle, that we may see so great a power yield not to dust but to a precept. All things that are in them move and live, made by command alone; the Prophet confirms that they are to be dissolved again by command alone, when he says: In the beginning you, Lord, founded the earth, and the heavens are

the works of your hands; they will perish, but you will remain, and they will all grow old like a garment; and like a covering you will change them, and they will be changed (Ps 102:26–27). How? So that oldness may perish to time, not the creature to the Creator.

But now you, whoever you are who ask, say that we have wandered off: because when you ask why God permitted death to remain for the destruction of his handiwork, we have described at length heaven, earth, sea, made out of nothing and to be dissolved again out of nothing, and have gathered for you more and more matter for inquiry. You say: "I asked why man perishes; you have assured me that the very elements will perish, so as to provide for the weary senses of mortals a consolation from the universality of perishing, not rest from reason; as if it were no pain that heaven should perish, the earth be dissolved, and the whole face of things be abolished by the law of mortality." You say, I ask you: "What is more beautiful than heaven? what more splendid than the sun? what more pleasing than the moon? what more adorned than the stars? what more wholesome than the earth? what more useful than the sea? or what oldness is there in these? they continue as they were born or made; surely it would be more pleasing that these should stand than that they should be destroyed." Man, perhaps it would be more pleasant, but not more useful: for while these stood, you tottered; while these shone, you were blinded so as not to see; the brightness of heaven stunned your senses,

the sun blinded your eyes with its splendour: for, deceived by their beauty, you denied the artificer; these you confessed as rulers of the world, these as gods, which the true God had made subject to your service; it is necessary, then, that all things be dissolved, all things be made new, so that at least then you may believe them made, when you see them restored. Do not think that we have wandered off, when you see that we have run through the whole creation as a proof for your understanding.

Man, when your author made you from dust, you did not see it; for if you had seen yourself made, you would never have so lamented that you are to die. You saw yourself perfect, you saw yourself living, you saw yourself comely, you saw yourself already like your author: whence you came, what you were, since you had seen yourself neither being born nor dying, you did not know? Hence it is that you gave everything to nature, yourself to yourself, nothing to God: therefore God, through nature, brought you down, permitted you to be called back from nothing into dust; so that you may thus see what you were, and, being destined to rise again, may give thanks, you who, made, created, showed yourself most ungrateful.

Let us not fear, then, brothers, as the Lord said, those who kill the body, because they do not annihilate this life, but take it apart, in that from temporal they make it everlasting. What more, brothers? He permitted death then who could raise to life; he who is able to give life permitted

men to be slain; to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon CII.

On the centurion

That Christ, while he remained in our body, did not raise all the dead, did not heal all the sick, let us believe was wanting not to his power but to the time. Else he would have lit up the whole world with the whole brightness of his power, and would have taken away the time of faith, and would have reserved nothing for the glory of his second coming. But as it is, he so tempered the signs of his mighty works as both to show a token of his divinity, and to grant a most full proof for believing, and to take away the excuse of cunning faithlessness, as today the centurion whom the Evangelist Luke records has shown by his faith and his foresight.

The servant of a certain centurion, he says, being ill, was dying, who was precious to him (Luke 7:2). This centurion was a Roman; but this same man was more a Christian, with a hundredfold fruit. And he served as a soldier for God more than for the world; and brave in human war, braver in the divine, he remained in the keeping of peace. Whose servant, being ill, was dying, who was precious to him. He was a servant, who was valued at a price. Let us ask, then, who this servant is who was precious to him. If the soul is master,

the body serves; and to man nothing is more precious than the body. This precious servant of this centurion was sick to the point of death; so the centurion asked that Christ alone, by granting perpetual life to the mortal body, would come to its help.

When he had heard, he says, of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews (Luke 7:3). A Gentile sends Jews to Christ; and to those set under the Law he who was without the Law shows the author of the Law. Let no one then wonder if a Gentile, that is, a Christian, either calls, or leads, or brings through to Christ. He sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and save his servant. And when they had come to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying: He is worthy that you should grant him this, for he loves our nation, and he himself built us our synagogue (Luke 7:4–5). The Jews ask for a Gentile, who do not ask for themselves; and they do much for the safety of another man's servant, who do nothing for the safety of their own sons. They say: He is worthy that you should grant him this. If he is worthy who hears, believes, sends to Christ: how unworthy is he proved who comes to Christ, sees, and does not believe? For he loves our nation. He loves your nation, which he thus makes a suppliant to Christ; but you hate it, you who thus render it stubborn against Christ. Or how does the Christian not love your nation, who, in acknowledging Christ to be of your nation, lifts and exalts whatever is of your nation to heavenly glory? For he loves our nation, and he himself built us our

synagogue. You have heard that the synagogue is always in ruins, and lies continually in rubble, and does not rise into a heavenly building, unless the Christian builder has built it up into the summit of the Church.

Jesus, he says, went with them (Luke 7:6). But they were not going with Jesus, with whom they did not go in mind; nor were they with him who, separated in heart, seemed joined in body. And when he was now not far off. From whom? From the Gentile. However far the Jews separated themselves from Christ, Christ nevertheless was joining himself to the Gentiles. And when he was now not far off, the centurion sent friends to him. He who before had sent Jews now sends friends: so as to point out by this way of speaking that the Jews are enemies, as the Apostle proves when he says: Enemies for your sake (Rom 11:28). The Jews, in begrudging the Gentiles their believing, have lost whatever there was both of the Law and of grace. He sent friends to him. Hear the Lord saying to the apostles: No longer will I call you servants, but friends (John 15:15). As faith promotes servants to friends, so unbelief brings sons down into penal servitude.

He sent friends to him, saying: Lord, do not be troubled. Why? Because I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. You see that Christ was leading the Jews rather than being brought by the Jews, so that they might hear that with the centurion was reverence for the Divinity, with the Gentile the worship of the Law, with the soldier the pay of grace, with the Roman the teaching of

the faith, in pagan cold Christian warmth, in an earthly breast a heavenly secret, and the whole knowledge of the dominion above in the whole servitude of the world. Lord, do not trouble yourself. That is to say: God, why do you trouble yourself in a human body? why do you wear yourself out with earthly toil? and weary yourself with the length of the road? why do you travel from place to place, you who are everywhere whole? and hold and possess the whole creation within yourself? Lord, do not trouble yourself, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. Brothers, what is the roof that makes a man either worthy or unworthy, by which he invites or repels the approach of the divine? Brothers, this roof is the body, which covers the soul, which hides the sense of the spirit, which veils the abode of the heart, which shuts off the freedom of the mind from the heavenly vision. Under this roof, then, the centurion deems it unworthy that Christ should enter, that is, that the divine majesty should come into a human body. I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. But God, who, when he will, makes what is human to be divine, and, when he deigns, changes what is of our flesh into his own spirit, does not disdain either to dwell in flesh or to enter the roof of our body.

For which reason, he says, I did not think myself worthy either to come to you (Luke 7:7). This is the devout man's part in both ways: he both deems it unworthy that God should come to him, and knows that he is not worthy to approach

God. Who goes in to a judge uncalled? who enters before a king unbidden? how much more does no one come to God uncalled. Those whom he called, he says, he also justified (Rom 8:30). The centurion, then, does not flee the Lord's coming, does not refuse Christ's presence, but acts so that it may be the grace of the one who calls, not the rashness of one who presumes.

For what God can do he suggests and shapes by a human example, saying: For I too am a man set under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this one: Go, and he goes; and to another: Come, and he comes; and to my servant: Do this, and he does it (Luke 7:8). That is: if I, who am set under authority, by the command of a word alone make those subject to me obey me, how can you, who are subject to no one, and to whose authority all things are subject, not heal by a word that commands? not send health? not command mighty works? Or can you not restore by a word what you made by a word? He spoke, he says, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created (Ps 148:5). Or are you not able to restore something from something, you who prepared all things from nothing? Say the word, then, and my servant will be healed (Luke 7:7). He fulfilled what the Prophet sang of God: He sent his word, and healed them; and rescued them from their corruption (Ps 107:20).

Brothers, this centurion, in saying: I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, bears the figure of the Christian people, which judges that it does not merit the bodily presence

of Christ, but by the word alone, by the message, by the hearing of faith only, hears, believes, beholds in its own healing all the mighty works of the Lord. For when he says: I say to this one: Go, and he goes; and to another: Come, and he comes; and to my servant: Do this, and he does it; he shows in this way the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, the obedience of the Christian people. I say to this one, that is, to the Jew, who did not believe, Go, and he goes; and to another, that is, to the Gentile, because he believed, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, that is, to the Christian, Do this, and he does it. Let us pray, brothers, that we may merit to be Christians not in name only but in faith; and that what is commanded we may not only hear, but may do what we have heard. For as it is the part of a devoted servant to have done what was commanded, so it is the part of a stubborn one not to have done what was commanded.

Say the word, then, and my servant will be healed. When he heard this, he says, Jesus marvelled (Luke 7:9). The Creator of marvels marvels; the Maker of ears, as one who does not know what he has not heard, is thus astonished at what he has heard: but in marvelling that a Gentile has so believed, he rebukes the disbelief of the Jews. Indeed, he speaks to the crowds that followed him, thus reproving the Jews who remained in death: Amen I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. It is true, brothers: faith alone lives, and will live, among the Gentiles; signs and

mighty works grow weary and achieve nothing among the Jews.

Sermon CIII.

On the widow's son raised from the dead, and on the resurrection of bodies

Today the blessed Evangelist, since he has announced that the only son of a widowed mother, already bound in the ties of burial, already laid on the mournful bier, already going, with the crowds following, to the sepulchre of his prison, was restored to life through Christ (Luke 7:12–15), has shaken the hearts of all, moved their minds, stunned their hearing. But let the Gentiles marvel at this, the Jews be stupefied, the world tremble: but we, who believe that all the dead from the beginning of the ages are to be raised from their sepulchres at the one voice of Christ, why do we marvel? They shall arise, says Isaiah, the dead, and those who are in the tombs shall rise again (Isa 26:19). And the Lord: The hour will come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live (John 5:25). To this the Apostle: In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise again incorruptible (1 Cor 15:52).

What is this trumpet, which brings war upon the underworld, breaks open the mass of the sepulchre, thunders life to the dead, gives tri-

umph to those who rise into perpetual light? What is it? That of which the Lord spoke above: The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. A trumpet, not one which with pent breath through a hollow horn of wood or bronze gives a grim bellowing to men at war, but one which from the heart of the Father, by the mouth of the Son, gives a life-giving cry to the underworld and to those above alike. And at the last trumpet: the trumpet which in the beginning called the world out of nothing will itself at the last call the world back out of ruin; and that which in the beginning raised man from the slime will itself at the end raise man again from the dust.

Brothers, so we believe, because the trumpet of the divine voice divided chaos, gathered the globe, cleansed the elements, set the world apart, hung up the heaven, founded the earth, bound the sea, sank the underworld, gave the orders their turns, commanded the unbroken service of things; and that the world might not shudder in its emptiness, it fitted it with inhabitants and thus distinguished their dwellings: in heaven it set the angels, living by spirit alone; on earth it established the various lives of earthly creatures; in the air it gave winged souls to fly about; in the waters it made things small as well as great, so that a multitude of living creatures might live; and in a wonderful way it so joined the frame of the world out of separate parts, that neither did the distinct commingling confound, nor did the distinction of things split the unity. Hence it is that the pairing of day and night is so divided that

labour stands on rest, and rest on labour. Hence the sun and the moon go round the bounds of the world in turn, so that the sun with doubled light may enlarge the brightness of the day, and the moon with its nearly equal light may not leave the times of night wholly blind. Hence the stars by their course change their various risings, so as both to mark the times by night and to give guidance to travellers. Hence times come by going, they begin to be while they cease. Hence seeds are born, grow, grow up, grow young, grow old, fall, die, and again, buried in life-giving furrows, dissolved in decay, return from a saving death to their life, and are raised from corruption in perpetual form.

And if, brothers, the voice of God, the trumpet of Christ, through days, through months, through seasons, through years, calls, calls back, leads, leads back, commands to be, makes not to be, gives to death, gives back to life, why could he not do once in us what he always does in all things? Or does the divine power grow weary in us alone, for whose sake alone the majesty of God has wrought all that has been told? Man, if for you all things revive from their death, why should you not revive for God from death? Or does God's creature perish in you alone, for whose sake the whole creation subsists, is set in motion, is changed, is renewed every day?

Brothers, I say this not wishing to empty the power of Christ's signs, but I exhort that by the example of one who rose we may be roused to faith in the resurrection of all, and may believe

that the cross of our body is the plough; faith, the seed; the furrow, the sepulchre; dissolution, the sprouting; waiting, the season; so that when the spring of the Lord's coming has smiled, the greenness of our bodies, ripe at last, may rise again into a living harvest, never more to know an end, never to know grey hair, never to suffer the rods, nor to feel the scourges. For, the chaff of oldness laid aside in death, the new rises up into the fruit of a glorious body. If at the passing tears of one widow Christ was so moved as to meet her on the way, as to stanch the streams of grief dripping from her eyes, as to strike death back, bring back the man, raise the body, bring back life, turn lamentation into joy, and change the mournful funeral into a feast of birth, and give back alive from death to the mother the one given to the bier; what will he do now, when he blazes with his strength at the long tears of his Church, at the bloody sweat of his bride? For through the Church in supplication he sheds unceasing tears, through the martyrs he sweats sacred blood, until Christ, coming to meet his only son, that is, the Christian people, whom so many ages bear to death, restores him from the deadly bier to perpetual life, into the everlasting joy of the mother above.

But since the time of Christ's birth has come, and virginity about to give birth already shines as a heavenly wonder, and the rising of the divine king is announced to us now not by a star but by the very ascent of the sun, let us all go out to meet him, to adore, and with sacred gifts let

us acknowledge that God and king has come forth from the virginal temple: let us offer gifts, because for a king who is born a public offering is always prepared; let us offer gifts, because an empty-handed worshipper is very undevout. The magus proves it, who, laden with gold, kindled with frankincense, hallowed with myrrh, bows down before the cradle of Christ (Matt 2:11). What sort of thing is it, if the Christian does not do what the magus did? What sort of thing is it, if at the joy of Christ's birth the poor man weeps, the captive groans, the stranger laments, the pilgrim wails? The Jew always honoured the heavenly feasts with tithes: what does the Christian think of himself, if he does not honour them even with hundredths?

Brothers, let no one think that I say this from the zeal of a declaimer, and not from the feeling of one who grieves. I grieve, surely I grieve, when I read that the Magi watered the cradle of Christ with gold, and I see that Christians have left the altar of the body of Christ empty, and at this time above all, when the vast hunger of the poor, when the lamentable crowd of the captives pours itself out. Let no one say, I have nothing, when God asks from what you have, not from what you do not have; when he graciously credits the widow's two coins to her account. Let us be devoted to the Creator, that the creature may be devoted to us. Let us relieve the straits of our neighbours, that we may be delivered from our own straits. Let us fill the altar of God, that the fullness of fruits may fill our granaries. Surely, if we do not give, let us

not complain that we do not receive. May our God himself grant you good things both present and to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be all honour and perpetual glory, together with the Holy Spirit, now and always, and for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon CIV.

On the rich man whose field was fruitful

Whenever this rich man comes into our midst, whom for so many ages, throughout the world, every day, the cry of the divine voice accuses, so often is the deceitful enticement of riches put to flight, so often is the raging flame of covetous desires put out, so often is the mad fury of avarice soothed. For thus the Lord Jesus began today. The field of a certain rich man brought forth plentiful fruits; and he thought within himself, saying: What shall I do, since I have nowhere to gather my fruits? (Luke 12:16–17) And he said: This I will do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater ones, and there I will gather all my goods that have grown for me; and I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years: rest, eat, drink, feast (Luke 12:18–19). But God said to him: Fool, this night they demand your soul back from you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? (Luke 12:20) Wretched man, whom plenty made barren, abundance anxious, wealth inhuman, riches a beggar! A humane field bore an inhuman master; and what the earth poured out lavishly he shut in and gathered narrowly; so that he who would not be the dispenser of his own became the keeper of what belonged

to others, ungrateful to God, worthless to himself, enemy of the poor, a disgrace to the rich, a prison of nature.

The field of a certain rich man brought forth plentiful fruits, and he thought within himself. As if anyone could think outside himself; but this man was thinking within himself, who, having received into his heart the counsel of impiety, left himself nothing of piety, nothing of mercy. He thought within himself, saying. He used himself as a counsellor worthy of him, he who could have no comfort for an evil mind, could have no colleague. And he thought within himself, saying. An impious mind contended with piety, and he suffered a war within, who had lost the peace and the quiet of mercy. And he thought within himself, saying: What shall I do? It is the voice of one who asks; and whom, do you think, was this man asking? There was another in him, because the devil had already settled as owner in his inner chambers; and he who had entered into the heart of Judas held the secret of his mind. What shall I do, since I do not have? Have you heard how the rich man does not have? Behold, he cries: I do not have. It is true, because he who always seeks always does not have; and he does not have where to gather who seeks so as to gather.

But let us hear what the counsellor within answered him. I will pull down my barns. He who lay hidden has plainly appeared, because the enemy always begins with destruction. He works, he works, that you may pull down what you have and not rebuild what you have coveted.

Wretched rich man, ignorant of the present, you argue most foolishly about the future; how much better had you transferred your present goods where the seat of the soul is! But now the chains of your barns have strangled the throats of the poor, bound the necks of strangers, crushed the bowels of the hungry: hence the groans of the poor go before you and follow after, the pallid faces of strangers accuse you, the wailing crowd of those who beg assails you; so that, sentenced by the Judge above, you may take your fill of punishments, you who, by denying others, have shut the bolts of your barns upon yourself.

To the rich man thinking within himself he rightly answered thus who knows the thoughts of men, that they are vain (Ps 94:11): Fool, this night they demand your soul back from you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? Well is he called fool, because there everything had been of the flesh, nothing of the heart. Well is he called fool, because for a soul soon to depart he was preparing stores to last very long. This night they demand your soul back from you. Fittingly this night, because, fleeing the light of mercy, he had sold himself into the darkness of avarice, saying: Eat, drink, feast. That drinkers are sons of the night, not of the day, the Apostle declares thus. And those who are drunk are drunk at night (1 Thess 5:7); he is borne through darkness, taken away through the shadows, who entrusted the support of life to the locks of his barns and stored it there. They demand your soul back from you. Why did he not say: He who had given demands

it back, but: They demand it back? Because God demands back the souls of the saints and leads them home; the ministers of Tartarus demand back and drag away the souls of the wicked.

And he thought within himself, saying: What shall I do, since I have nowhere to gather my fruits? And he said: This I will do: I will pull down my barns and build greater ones, and there I will gather all my goods that have grown for me; and I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years: eat, drink, feast. But God said to him: Fool, this night they demand your soul back; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? Hence this rich man was so overtaken that he lost what he had thought rather than what he had prepared; and that saying of the Prophet was fulfilled: His spirit will go forth, and he will return to his earth; on that day all their thoughts will perish (Ps 146:4). This man thought of what he would leave behind him, not of what he would send ahead of him: hence, according to the Apostle: They became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened; thinking themselves to be wise, they became fools (Rom 1:21–22). He to whom "fool" is said, roused from the sleep of the present life, finds nothing in his hands in that perpetuity; as the Psalmist said: They have slept their sleep, and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands (Ps 76:6).

Keep watch, then, rich man, in good work; in evil, sleep; so that your hand may not be empty for the poor, so that it may always be full for you.

For as much as the rich man lavishly pours out, so much does he lavishly overflow in goods. Be rich, then, in mercy, if you want always to be rich: and then your barns will be greater, then full, if they are not empty of largesse, shut up by greed.

Sermon CV.

On the woman who had a spirit of infirmity

Today the cure of Christ both gave a wonderful proof of the divine power, and stripped bare the cunning of the devil's fraud, and set free a woman wounded by a long and hidden wound; as the Evangelist says: Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbaths, and there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and she was bent over, and could not look upward at all (Luke 13:10–11). When Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her: Woman, you are released from your infirmity (Luke 13:12). And he laid his hands on her, and at once she was made straight and glorified God (Luke 13:13).

She had a spirit of infirmity, and was bent over: the wound lay open, but the author of the wound did not lie open; all saw the sickness, but did not see the matter of the sickness. The punishment was in the open, but in the punishment itself the executioner lay hidden, shut within; the body was seen bent, but the weight on the bent body was not seen; in the midst of the citizens the woman carried her enemy, but the citizens did not see the enemy so as to drive him away. The craft of the most wicked spirit was believed to be a necessity of the body, so that the cunning

robber might hold captive by guile her whom he could not hold by force. The devil would be nothing, if men were more watchful and more cautious. Or in what has he ever prevailed over man by might, except by craft, lying, snares, fraud, deceit, wickedness, the ministry of vices, the fury of crimes? He always explores the wills of men, and good wills indeed he flees; but evil wills he humours, so as to be the minister of wickednesses, the pander of crimes, himself the parasite of vices. And because he cannot by power, he lords it over the basest minds by the basest servitude. So by a lie he deceived Eve, so by greed he snared Judas, so he blinded the Jews with envy, so he darkened the Gentiles with the error of idols, so he confounded the peoples with the pomp of things, so he took hold of the little ones with vanity, that they might not savour what is sound.

Indeed, let us hear what he contrived in the case of the present woman. And behold, he says, a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and she was bent over, and could not look upward at all. You see that this woman, pressed down, was sighing under the burden of the most wicked spirit, who always presses men down with the burdens of sins and bends them to the earth, that they may not see heaven, may not savour the things above, may not gaze on God, may not return to their liberty through their author; but, with head bowed, eyes fixed down, face to the ground, may be held captive always under the yoke of the ancient enemy. So was that publican weighed down, who could not lift his

eyes to heaven, but struck his breast conscious of sin; and since there was no room for denial, he sought the room of mercy, saying: God, be merciful to me a sinner (Luke 18:13). Bearing this, the most blessed Prophet sang thus: My iniquities have gone over my head, and like a heavy burden they have weighed heavy upon me (Ps 38:5). And to reveal the author of this work, elsewhere he speaks thus: The crown of the head of those who walk about in their offences (Ps 68:22). For those who do not resist offences but walk about in them, the devil both rides and runs over the crown of their head; so that those who go to evil by their own eagerness may be led to worse by the devil's impulse, as the Apostle says: As you went, you were led (1 Cor 12:2).

But let us search out what of spiritual understanding remains in this history. And behold, a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, and she was bent over, and could not look upward at all. Who is she, of whose illness even the times are described? Who is she, whom a burning sickness strove so hard, not to lift from the earth, but to bow down to it? Who is she? She who now is the holy Church, the bearer of holy sons, whom, as the Apostle says, the spirit of this air, the spirit of distrust, the spirit of error (Eph 2:2), vexed with a spiritual affliction, and so with diverse weights bowed her down and laid her low to the earth that she might never be lifted up in her gaze to heaven.

But what is it that she who bears the type of the Church is found thus bent in the Synagogue?

What is it? Because, in fleeing the sacrileges of the Gentiles and turning aside from the burdens of idols, she runs into heavier ones and bears the weights of the Synagogue, as the Lord proves when he says: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, who bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but you yourselves will not move them even with your least finger (Matt 23:4). Hence blessed Peter too: Now therefore why do you tempt God, he says, by putting a yoke on the necks of the disciples, which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? (Acts 15:10) Hence it is that Christ, desiring to relieve men of these burdens, cries: Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you: take my yoke upon you, for it is sweet (Matt 11:28–30). When he says all, he surely calls both Jews and Gentiles.

But why is this woman's illness drawn out through eighteen years? Because unless the Decalogue of the Law had come to the grace of the ogdoad, never would the holy Church, never would this woman have come to the fullness of time, to the day of salvation, to the acceptable time, to the presence of her Saviour. That this woman thus bore the figure of the Church is shown by the very manner of her cure. He called her to him, he says, and laid his hands on her. That the Church always cures thus he knows well who has merited to become a Christian, and sees Christians being made every day. For, that the Gentile bent by sins may be raised up to heaven, the wicked spirit is first put to flight from the

Gentile by the laying on of hands. For he who had put demons to flight by a word alone, and had healed all infirmities by a command alone, why does he lay his hands upon this woman? Why in her case does he change the order of healing, unless because even then in one woman he heals all; or rather, because he does not receive the Church before he purges her from the devil by the laying on of his hands and makes her Christian; and further, that by the sacrament of the present cure he might shape and institute the care of the Christians yet to be made?

But the ruler of the synagogue is indignant that Christ heals on the Sabbaths; and to this day the Jew is tormented with the fury of jealousy at the Church's cure, in that he turns over heavenly senses with an earthly understanding, and thinks the Sabbath consecrated for beasts, not for men, he who on the Sabbath hurries to help an ox or an ass in danger, and to a man dying on the Sabbath grants nothing of piety, nothing of tender mercy. And the senseless man does this, so as to violate the Sabbath in his breast, and in man to violate holiness itself: and so he lays down the law to God by God's Law; and by keeping the Sabbath he thus pays back to God the Sabbath which God mercifully granted to the Jew for his earthly labour and the work of the flesh. And they were turned into a crooked bow (Ps 78:57), who thus twist back against the Lord of the Law the most upright precepts of the Law. Jew, who you from human tasks, so that at least on one day, or on the Sabbath, you might cease, for your own welfare,

from the care … And you, Christian, keep the Lord's day for the Lord, if you wish to see that day of the Lord, if you wish to possess through the Lord whatever is the Lord's.

Sermon CVI.

On the fig tree that bore no fruit

As a skilled master, to make the untaught hear and the slow understand, knocks at, rouses, kindles the senses and the wit of his pupils by every kind of teaching, so the Lord, by various likenesses, by diverse comparisons, calls together and invites to the hearing of the Gospel the sluggish and slow minds of the peoples; for today he began thus: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none (Luke 13:6). And he said to the dresser of the vineyard: Behold, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none: cut it down; why does it even occupy the ground? (Luke 13:7) But he answered and said to him: Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on dung, and if indeed it bears fruit; but if not, in the future you shall cut it down (Luke 13:8–9).

A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. I ask, what is so plain, what so clear, what so common, what so homely to country folk, what so fitting for the learned, as the form of the likeness set before us? Coming from general use, it both instructs all by its word and converts them by its example. A fruitless tree chokes the

turf, kills the space around it, drains the strength of the soil, wears out the husbandman with loss, wearies its owner: and so to cut it down is gain, not to have it is an advantage. So surely is the man who, by barren and needy acts, overturns, smothers, sinks the gift of nature, the endowment of the soul, the benefit of reason, the excellence of sense, the judgement of the mind, the industry of skill, the good of cultivation, and denies fruit to his author, thanks to his cultivator; as the tree from the earth, so he deserves to be cut off from life. And as an unfruitful tree, if it is in a vineyard, in pouring a deadly shade on the strength beneath it, becomes an enemy not to itself alone but also to the fruitful branches: so a slothful, idle man, if he is set over peoples, becomes harmful not to himself alone but to many, in that he corrupts and destroys by his example those who follow him.

But let us hear why the Lord spoke this likeness. The fig tree, when the winter season is past, in bringing forth its early figs into flower, and feigning its fruit with its flowers, deceives the unwary, mocks the ignorant. For soon it casts off the early figs, slowly makes progress and bursts into shoot; and the tree that seemed to have gone before the rest becomes later than the rest in fruit. Rightly, then, is the Synagogue compared by the Lord to a fig tree, which, warmed in the time of the Law, flowered for a time in the figure of the Church's fruit. For, made firm in the root of the patriarchs, raised high in the priestly summit, spread out in the branches of the prophets, filled

with the early figs of Jewish observance, it was flowering, then to give fruit through Christ by hope alone, or rather, after the fruit, to give Christ himself, as the Psalmist says: Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon your throne (Ps 132:11).

Hence the saints, knowing these things, took hope of the fruit from the flower, and consoled things present with things to come: seeing now, even now, the eternal succeed to the mortal, the perpetual to the perishable, grace to the Law, the Church to the Synagogue, heavenly things to earthly, divine to human, Christ to all things; and because they awaited his coming with long patience, they rejoiced with faithful joy that he had come. Of these was that Simeon, to whom it had been promised that he would not see death until he saw the Christ of the Lord, and holding him in his arms, he broke out into such words. Now you dismiss your servant, Lord, according to your word, in peace (Luke 2:29). For my eyes have seen your salvation (Luke 2:30). But the ignorant, in placing their trust in the Law entire and not being solicitous for the expectation of Christ, merited neither to receive Christ nor to recognise him: and so they were deceived by the little flowers of the Law, as the fig tree deceives the unknowing with its early figs. Hence it is that the Lord sends those who desire to know the times of his coming to the fig tree, saying: Look at the fig tree and all the trees (Luke 21:29). When they now put forth their fruit, you know that summer is near; so you too, when you see these things happen, know that the kingdom of God is near (Luke 21:30–31).

You see that the fig tree does not mark things present, but thus points to things to come.

But now let us follow the example set before us, in its order. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. The Synagogue is the fig tree, the owner of the tree is Christ, the vineyard in which this tree is said to have been planted is the people of Israel, as the prophet Isaiah says: The vineyard of the Lord Sabaoth is the house of Israel (Isa 5:7). He came, he says, seeking fruit on it, and found none. Christ came, and in the Synagogue found no fruit of faith, because it was wholly overshadowed by the deceits of unbelief. Christ came to the fig tree, to which we read that Adam fled naked after his fault, as the book of Genesis says: And they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons (Gen 3:7). Christ came, then, to the fig tree, to find Adam, to cover the naked man with the loving garment of his body, him whose shame the fig tree did not veil but goaded; him whose bashful part of the body this fig tree, that is, the Synagogue, laid bare by its circumcisions and did not cover.

He came, he says, seeking fruit, and found none. And he said to the dresser of the vineyard: Behold, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none; cut it down. The dresser of the vineyard, who is ordered to cut down the fruitless fig tree, is the angel who presides over the Synagogue, who, because he cannot excuse its barrenness, obtains a truce by entreaty. But that must not be passed over which

he said: Behold, these three years. The three years are three times through which Christ came to the Synagogue to seek fruit, that is, through the Law, through the prophets, through his own bodily presence, so that the fruitless fig tree, which was already refusing to the divinity its fruits as though they were not needed, might not refuse needful food at least to Christ the man, hungry, about to eat.

But now let us hear what the dresser of the vineyard answered. Lord, let it alone this year also. The dresser of the vineyard prays that the year of the Gospel time may still be granted, of which Isaiah says: To preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of recompense (Isa 61:2). To what end? Until I dig around it. He wants to dig it through with the apostolic ploughshare, because it could not feel the tilling of the knife of the Law. And put on dung. Needful for so great a root, which, for all the richness of the holy soil, warmed by the rain of heaven, did not deserve to be fruitful. The barren fig tree, the miserable Synagogue, is manured with the tender mercy of the Gentiles, so that, helped by the meanest warmings, she may return to fruit who with so great and so precious a richness fell away from fruit: and if after this she remains in the same barrenness, no longer by the pruning-hook of the dresser, but by the axe of the master himself, despaired of and useless, she will be cut down. And therefore he did not say: In the future I will cut it down, but: You shall cut it down, according to that saying of John: Already the axe is laid to

the root of the trees: every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire (Matt 3:10). For after the cultivation of the Gospel time the axe of judgement will cut down the fruitless trees, and the last fire will receive them and burn them.

Sermon CVIII.

On man, that he be victim and priest to God. On the words of the Apostle: "I beseech you by the mercy of God", etc.

A wondrous loving-kindness, which pleads in order to beseech, in order to bestow. For today the blessed Apostle, not asking for human things but conferring divine ones, beseeches thus: I beseech you, by the mercy of God (Rom 12:1). A physician, when he persuades the sick to take harsh remedies, acts by entreaties and does not compel by command, knowing that it is of weakness, not of will, that the sick man spits out what is wholesome whenever he pushes away what will profit him. And a father draws his son to the rigour of discipline not by power, but by love, not unaware how harsh discipline is to unripe senses. And if the weakness of the body is thus moved to its cure by entreaties, and if a boy's heart is thus led, and barely, to good sense by coaxing, what wonder if the Apostle, who is ever both physician and father, beseeches thus, to raise to divine remedies human minds wounded by the diseases of the flesh: I beseech you, by the mercy of God?

He brings in a new kind of entreaty. Why not by power? why not by majesty, not by the glory of God, but by the mercy of God? For by that alone Paul both escaped the crime of a persecutor and

attained the dignity of so great an apostleship, as he himself acknowledges, saying: I who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and insolent; but I obtained the mercy of God (1 Tim 1:13). And again: A faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance: that Christ came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the first; but I obtained mercy, as an example to all who are to believe in him for eternal life (1 Tim 1:15–16). I beseech you, he says, by the mercy of God. Paul asks, or rather through Paul God asks, because he wishes to be loved more than feared. God asks, because he wishes to be not so much Lord as father. God asks by mercy, so as not to punish by rigour.

Hear the Lord asking: All the day long, he says, I have spread out my hands (Isa 65:2). Does not one who spreads out his hands ask by that very posture? I have spread out my hands. To whom? To the people. And to what people? To one not only not believing, but contradicting. I have spread out my hands. He stretches out his limbs, opens wide his inward parts, puts forth his breast, offers his bosom, spreads open his lap, to show himself a father by the affection of so great an entreaty.

Hear God asking in another way too: My people, what have I done to you, or how have I grieved you? (Mic 6:3) Does he not say: "If the divinity is unknown, at least let the flesh be known"? "See, see in me your body, your limbs, your inward parts, your bones, your blood. And if you fear what is God's, why do you not at least love what is yours? If you flee the Lord, why do

you not run back to your parent? But perhaps the greatness of my Passion, which you brought about, confounds you. Do not be afraid. This cross is not my sting, but death's. These nails do not drive pain into me, but drive your charity deeper into me. These wounds do not draw out my groans, but rather draw you into my inward parts. The stretching out of my body opens wide to take you into my lap; it does not swell into my punishment. My blood is not lost to me, but is laid out to be your price. Come then, return, and at least in this way put the father to the proof, whom you see repaying good for evil, love for insults, and for such great wounds such great charity."

But now let us hear what the Apostle beseeches: I beseech you, he says, to present your bodies. By asking thus, the Apostle has raised all men to the summit of the priesthood. To present your bodies as a living victim. O unheard-of office of the Christian pontificate, when man is to himself both victim and priest; when man does not look outside himself for what he is to immolate to God; when man brings with himself, and in himself, and what is for himself, what he is to sacrifice to God; when the same victim remains and the same priest continues; when the victim is slain and lives, and the priest who will offer it does not know how to kill! A wondrous sacrifice, where a body is offered without a body, blood without blood.

I beseech you, he says, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living victim. Broth-

ers, this sacrifice comes down from the pattern of Christ, who immolated his body for the life of the world in a life-giving way: and truly he made his body a living victim, because he lives though slain. In such a sacrificial victim, then, death is spent, the victim remains, the victim lives, death is punished. Hence martyrs are born by death, begin by their end, live by being slain, and shine in heaven, who on earth were thought extinguished.

I beseech you, he says, brothers, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living victim, holy. This is what the Prophet sang: Sacrifice and oblation you did not want, but a body you have perfected for me (Ps 40:7). Be, man, be God's sacrifice and priest; do not lose what divine authority has given and granted you; put on the robe of holiness, gird on the belt of chastity; let Christ be the covering of your head; let the cross stand fast as the defence of your forehead; set upon your breast the mystery of divine knowledge; kindle ever the incense of prayer for a fragrance; take up the sword of the Spirit; make your heart an altar; and so, without fear, bring your body to be God's victim. God seeks faith, not death; he thirsts for a vow, not for blood; he is appeased by will, not by slaughter. God proved this when he asked for the son of holy Abraham as a victim (Gen 22:2). For what else was Abraham immolating in his son but his own body? What else was God requiring in the father but faith, he who, as he commanded the son to be offered, so did not allow him to be killed?

Strengthened then by such an example, man, offer your body, and not only slay it, but also cut it up through all the members of the virtues. For as often do the arts of the vices die for you as the inward parts of the virtues have been immolated by you to God. Offer faith, that unbelief may be punished; immolate fasting, that gluttony may cease; sacrifice chastity, that lust may die; lay on piety, that impiety may be laid down; invite mercy, that avarice may be blotted out; and that folly may be consumed, it is fitting always to immolate holiness: so will your body be your victim, if it has been wounded by no dart of sin. Your body lives, man, it lives whenever it is immolated by you to God with the life of the virtues, with the deaths of the vices. He cannot die who merits to be slain by a life-giving sword. May our God himself, who is the way, the truth and the life, both free us from death and lead us to life.

Sermon CIX.

On the victim of body and soul to be offered to God in a reasonable way. On the same words of the Apostle

Since the preceding sermon touches only the beginnings of the reading from the Apostle, let us now hear, concerning what follows, what the Lord inspires; for thus he began: I beseech you, he says, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living victim. Can it be that the Apostle, by speaking thus, approves bodies alone as worthy of divine victims, and either keeps silent about souls as though they were reprobate, or passes them over, or leaves them aside? Is not the soul from heaven, the body from earth; this is ruled, that rules; that has dominion, this serves; this lives, that gives life; that remains, this fails; this undergoes the ages of life, that does not know them; and finally, does not death, which has dominion only over the body, fail to touch it while the soul is present? And why is it that the soul is passed over in silence, and the body alone is thus called to be God's victim?

Brothers, here the Apostle honours the body; he does not lessen the soul. For the body, which sins capture, offences bind, crimes press down, vices corrupt, passions cast down, this the Apostle desires to release, is eager to free, labours

to lift up, strives to expiate, that the body may climb up to the origin of the soul, not the soul come down to the nature of the body; and that the body may accompany the soul to heaven, not the soul follow the body to earth. Hear Scripture telling with what and how great torments of the body the soul is weighed down: The body, which is corrupted, weighs down the soul, and earthly thought presses down the sense that thinks many things (Wis 9:15). Therefore the Apostle wants not the soul to be laid down, but the body to be lifted up; and he wants both soul and body, that is, the whole man, to come to be a holy victim, a sacrifice pleasing to God. And that the soul too is God's sacrifice, the Psalmist declares, saying: A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit (Ps 51:19).

To present your bodies as a living victim, holy, pleasing to God. For man is pleasing not because he lives, but is pleasing because he lives well; nor does man become a victim if he offers himself to God, but if he offers himself to God in holiness. For as much as a spotless victim appeases God, so much does a victim, if it has been spotted, provoke God. Hear God saying: You shall not offer me the lame, nor the one-eyed, nor what is polluted by the contagion of death, but what is full-grown and without blemish (Lev 22). Hence it is that the Apostle asks for a living victim for God. Therefore, brothers, if we the incense of that very propitiation …

Cain proves this, who, an ungrateful pontiff, so divided small things with God, from whom he

had received the whole, that what was worst he burnt on the altar, and what was best he kept back for his own disfavour; in short, while he shares out his own wickedly with his author, he cut off himself and his posterity both from life and from the human race (Gen 4:3–5). Let us then follow Abel to the reward, and not accompany Cain to the penalty. Abel, bringing a lamb to God's sacrifice, is taken as a lamb; Cain, carrying stubble for himself, found for himself the fuel by which he would be burnt.

To present your bodies as a living victim, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service. As much as service that rests on reason appeases, so much does service that has no reason provoke. Reasonable service is that which is not disturbed by presumption, not confounded by rashness, not violated by what is unlawful, not painted over by pretence. The military guard trembles at the service of the king; human lordship demands careful servitude, the fear of the one who obeys keeps watch upon the choice of the one who commands; for both cautious devotion wins the reward of just recompense, and presumptuous servitude does not escape the penalty of rashness. Who, uncalled, rushes into the servitude of a royal court? who has dared to profess himself a soldier without a title? who seizes the name of a dignity without the insignia of the dignity? And if these things are careful and cautious among men, if they rest on reason, if they grow strong by order, if they are kept with trembling, how much more cautious is devotion with God, how much more

to be trembled at is servitude, how much more careful is worship, that one may render a divine service with reason?

Reasonable, he says, your service. Service glowing with reason is fervour; what is not bridled by reason is fury. Hence the Jewish people, in seeking God for itself beyond reason, lost the God whom it served with reason (Exod 32). Hence the sons of Aaron, in being unmindful of reason, in presuming to bring earthly fires to the divine fires, changed the flame of the saving sacrifice into a penal burning for themselves (Lev 10:1–2). Hence Saul, swelling on his royal height, in thinking that something of the priesthood too was lawful for him, lost, a profaner of the altar, the kingdom he had received (1 Sam 15). Hence the Jew, in cultivating the Law without the Law's reason, killed the author of the Law. Hence the Gentile, ignorant of reason, in rendering service to peoples of gods and to monsters of gods, did not merit to come to the servitude of God, who is one and true. Hence Arius thinks he renders service to the Father by blaspheming the Son; and in giving the Son a beginning, the wretch imposes an end on the Father. Hence Photinus, in denying that the Son is co-eternal with the Father, labours to make out that the Father as Father has not always been. Hence all heresies, in being carried on to the injury of the divinity, in belying the Trinity with names, render service to blasphemies.

But let us, brothers, fit our bodies too to be God's living victim, let us procure our reasonable service, that there may be true faith, a pure con-

science, a sober mind, firm hope, a clean heart, chaste flesh, a holy sense, a pious spirit, a safe reason, a chaste charity, a generous mercy, a holy life, a modest bearing, and that humility may ever accompany our step in every service of Christ.

Sermon CX.

On salvation laid up under faith, on justification from God through Christ, and on death to be undergone for Christ. On the words of the same: "Now it was not written for Abraham's sake only", etc.

The blessed Apostle always raises for the first and the last, that is, for Jews and Greeks, the only and singular standard of faith for salvation: whoever has not merited to have it and hold it will not be able to possess the glory of the heavenly triumphs. It alone, brothers, draws up the battle line for those who fight against unbelief, shows the king, binds the comrades together, and terrifies the impious enemy by the mere sight of it.

For thus he began today: Now it was not written for Abraham's sake only, that it was reckoned to him for justice; but also for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (Rom 4:23–24). You see, brothers, that while those before believe things to come and those after believe things past, so both reach salvation by one road of faith, while they profess Christ as one to come, we as one who has already come; they marvel and believe that he would go down even to death in the manner of a man, we glory that he died and rose again. And what more, brothers? This salvation was denied to the eyes both of

those who went before and of those who follow for this reason, that it might be wholly in faith.

As for what he said: Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Lest anyone believe that it was by another, he himself is the Maker and the raiser up again of his own body, he who said: I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again (John 10:18); for neither could the resurrection be raised up by another, nor life be given life by another, nor could it deny to itself what it was to confer on all. For neither does a spring thirst, nor bread hunger, nor the sun need light, nor rest itself grow weary.

Who was delivered up, he says, for our offences, and rose again for our justification (Rom 4:25). Delivered up for offences, not so that the life which could not die should be punished, but so that the offences alone, which had exiled us from life, should be blotted out. And rose again for our justification. While the condemnation remains, the condemned cannot be justified; us therefore, whom the fault of the first parent had so bound over that death held us by right as liable to itself, Christ, the heavenly and true parent, having loosed the condemnation of death, justifies through his own death, through resurrection, so that it is not the accused who perishes, but the guilt; and that the penalty itself, that is, death, which had been ordered to strike the accused, may rightly fail and lose the insignia of its power.

Why did it dare, cruel and impious, to touch the innocent one, to touch the judge himself? And therefore he added: Being justified therefore by

faith, let us have peace with God (Rom 5:1). That is to say: let it cease, let it cease, contention, the mother of dissensions, the enemy of quiet, the foe of peace; let the Jew not be lifted up by the Law, let the Gentile not be proud by nature, let the philosopher come down from the swelling of his frothy and empty opinions, let no one glory in merits, no one in works; because the life which the first transgression had taken away, and which furious contention had put far from us, divine peace has restored and given back. Let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let earth not rebel against the heavens, let flesh not rise up against spirit; but let it be joined, humble, to the everlasting glory of the peace above.

Through whom we have access (Rom 5:2). That is why he himself became for us the way, by faith into this grace. The leader of this life is faith, brothers. In which we stand and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God. We stand, surely, by faith, not by the body; and we glory in hope, not in a thing already received.

And not only so, but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience proof, and proof hope, and hope does not confound (Rom 5:3–5). See by what ages the just man is strengthened into a perfect man: in tribulation, patience, proof, hope. Tribulation, brothers, shakes and disturbs, as it were, the first infancy of the just man; but when it has found him patient, it then trains him, a youth now of good disposition, for greater things.

Tribulation works patience. It is patience, brothers, that proves the young man of Christ fit for the virtues. And hope does not confound. It is hope that makes the man perfect, and leads him, unwearied, to the measure of the fullness of Christ. It belongs to perfect virtue to possess by the strength of hope what you do not hold in fact.

Because the charity of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom 5:5). And to show the quality of the divine charity poured out upon us, he added: For why did Christ, when we were still weak, according to the time, die for the impious? (Rom 5:6) For scarcely does anyone die for a just man: for perhaps for a good man someone might dare to die? (Rom 5:7) But God commends his charity in us, because when we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8). If Christ so loved the human race as to give his death for the impious and for sinners, what else do we believe he will bestow on the just than his life, his kingdom, his glory? From you he took up death, to spend it for the impious upon earth: he keeps for you what in himself and through himself he always possesses, and possesses in heaven.

Let us say then with the Prophet: What shall I render to the Lord for all that he has rendered to me? (Ps 116:12) I will take the chalice of salvation (Ps 116:13). That is: I too will die for him. And what likeness is there? He, willingly, for the impious and the sinner; I, scarcely, for the just and the good: I scarcely, because not so much will as necessity leads me to death. Hear him saying

to Peter: But when you are old, another will gird you, and lead you where you do not wish (John 21:18).

In adversity, brothers, necessity cannot be compared with will; to acquiesce is of necessity, to will is of virtue. To the willing, death itself is subject, because death has always had dominion over the unwilling. And yet, brothers, since man can render back nothing like the divine charity, let him give what he can, because he is accepted according to what he has. Let him fail for glory, die for life, perish for salvation. Let us glory, brothers, in the new exchange of this commerce; for death, which among men was the whole repayment of piety, has through Christ been made the commendation of divine charity.

Sermon CXI.

On original sin. On the words of the same: "Therefore as through one man sin entered into this world"

The present reading from the Apostle, brothers, when it says that through one man the whole world received sentence, drives us not to speak at length but to weep, with renewed and inmost pain. For if the eminent prophets of a single people, and of one city, and sometimes of one man alone, long lamented the peril, what mind would not be darkened by utter darkness, what senses would not utter dullness confound, what eyes would it not turn into springs and streams of tears, when the fall of one became the ruin of all, and the fault of one flowed down into the penalty of all, and the vice of the parent prepared a deadly destruction for the whole race, as the Apostle says: Therefore, as through one man sin entered into this world, and through sin death (Rom 5:12)? Wretched me! He who was the cause of all good things became here the door of evils.

Sin entered into this world. Into this world: do you wonder that he harmed his posterity, who by his misdeed condemned the world? But you say: "How did it enter? Through whom did it enter?" How? Through fault. Through whom? Through man. And what then? Is sin nature, or substance?

It is neither nature nor substance, but accident: and this is a hostile power, which is seen in the deed and felt in the penalty; it assails the soul, wounds the mind, violates and confounds nature itself. And what more, brothers? This is what sin is to nature: what smoke is to the eyes, fever to the body, bitter saltness to the sweetest springs. Surely the eye is pure and clear by nature, but it is disturbed and darkened by the injury of smoke. And the body flourishes in the parts of its members and in its senses, because it was made by God; but when the force of fevers has begun, and their storm to rule, the whole becomes feeble: then the bitterness of the mouth, then the dimness of the eyes, then the tottering steps, then the air is hostile, then dear ones are burdensome, then the very attentions seem hateful. And springs, as much as they are pleasing by their sweetness and their nature, become so much unpleasing when they have received some vice by an addition.

But let us return to what we began. As through one man sin entered into this world, and through sin death. See, brothers, the door: through man sin, and through sin we are seen to have entered into death. Sin, O cruel beast, not content to rage against the human race with one head! whom we have seen devouring with a threefold mouth all the so precious offspring of the human stock: with a threefold mouth, brothers, sin seizes, death devours, hell swallows. And with what spring of tears, as we have said, must such a parent be wept for by us, who left us heirs of

such great miseries, who not only lost the goods bestowed on him, but left all his posterity thus liable to such savage creditors? O hard and cruel inheritance! O wretched that we are, heirs who neither chose to acquire it nor were allowed to renounce it!

Hear what follows: And so death passed to all men. But lest it should perhaps seem unjust that it passed through one to all: it is because all are through one; you detest having been condemned through him through whom you glory in having been brought forth into the light. But you say: "If I owe it to my stock that I was born, do I owe it also to a crime, so that nature makes me guilty before fault does?" To this question of yours the Apostle's word that follows replies at once, saying: In whom all have sinned. If all sinned in him, rightly through him have all undergone the punishment. As through one man sin entered into this world, and through sin death: and so it passed through to all men, in whom all have sinned. Whether in the man or in the sin: through him and in him all sinned. Sin, then, was not turned into nature; but in bringing in death, sin exacts through nature the penalty due to it.

God had made nature so as to create men for life: yet nature, in begetting for death against its will, acknowledges itself liable to sin, whose penalty it serves in life. For who would think this, brothers, that nature wishes its offspring to be extinguished, and its so dear shoots to be killed? But while it groans and grieves with them, it sighs for the freedom it lost and longs to look

up to it. But through whom it received it, John first showed expressly, who, on seeing Christ, proclaims and cries aloud, saying: Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The sin of the world, brothers, is that which the Apostle testifies entered through one man. Rejoice, then, brothers, because the sin which pressed us down with heavy weight to Tartarus has been taken away by Christ, now sunk in Tartarus; and us, whom the fault of the first parent had bound over to death, the grace of the second and divine parent has called back from the penalty to life.

Man therefore could not be saved without Christ, because the sin of the whole world remained until his coming. But you embrace the fact that you are justified through Christ; and that you were condemned through Adam, you reject; and you complain that another's penalty has harmed you, you who see that another's justice has come to your help. Is not the whole tree in the seed? The vice of the seed, then, is the vice of the whole tree. If nature could have helped itself by itself, the author himself would never have taken it up into himself to restore it. Do you believe it was created for life, you who still doubt that it has been restored through its author?

For until the Law, he says, sin was in the world (Rom 5:13). When you hear "until the Law", take it as "until the end of the Law", that is, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For sin was not imputed, he says, when there was no law. And when was there no law, since

it began with man himself? If there had been no law, Adam would surely not have been a transgressor, as the same Apostle discloses when he says: But death reigned from Adam to Moses (Rom 5:14). Both had received a law: but Adam transgressed as soon as he received it; Moses promulgated to transgressors the law he had received, as the Apostle says: The Law was set down because of transgressions (Gal 3:19). Death therefore reigned through the law, because, savage, it devoured transgressors more grievously than sinners, and those who had fallen not only by the parent's vice, but now by their own misdeed.

But death reigned, he says, from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the likeness of Adam's transgression. For it devoured not only the great, but the little ones too; and it laid waste not only the guilty, but the innocent too: innocent, I say, of their own fault, not of their parent's. And hence the condition was the more grievously to be lamented, because the little infant was discharging the penalty of that parent whose life he had scarcely tasted; and he was paying for the sin of the world who had not known the world. Let us acquiesce, then, brothers, that through one and by the offence of one death reigned, if we desire all to be absolved through one, and to be through Christ: because he who lives owes it to Christ, not to himself; and that he dies, he will owe to Adam.

Sermon CXII.

On death through man, on life and grace had through Christ, and on the abounding of the offence because of the Law. On the words of the same: "For if by the offence of one death reigned through one"

If someone holds out a cup of cold water to a thirsty traveller, he does indeed somewhat refresh the mind of the man burning with heat, and plainly comes to the help of humanity, yet he does not wholly quench the thirst: so too, for those who desire to know the great secret of divine knowledge, our sermon does not suffice, which for the present is servant to haste and to time. For if the whole life of man is short for learning human things thoroughly, what time do we believe suffices for being able to understand the divine? Grant me pardon, then, brothers, if within a point of time, scarcely the moment of a single hour, I cannot light up the obscure, unlock the closed, make firm the doubtful, touch the deep, open in every way the ineffable mystery of so many ages, and speak it, if we are not able to speak cautiously to rivals, securely to sons, confidently to believers, steadfastly to unbelievers. But since today the Apostle's word has poured itself wholly with clear light into the senses of the hearers, and has left nothing ambiguous to

catholic minds, when it says: For if by the offence of one death reigned through one (Rom 5:17), we, setting aside the zeal for declaiming, shall lean in all simplicity on the Apostle's own words, so that no obscurity may be produced by our sermon for those who desire to know the truth.

For if by the offence of one, as he says, death reigned through one, why does the authority of the Gospel labour to suggest and to prove that death was acquired for posterity from the one and first man? And although that sentence suffices which says: God did not make death (Wis 1:13), why some would have it that death, so savage, so cruel, so merciless, was made by God, I cannot know. No one without sacrilege thinks that God, so loving, so good, could have created death, whose author the whole world, with continual pain, with groaning, with tears, accuses and detests. If even among men death is the penalty of crimes, with what daring is it believed that death was created together with man, and implanted by God, as a penalty, in an innocent being before life was?

But let us hear the Apostle: For if by the offence of one death reigned through one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, reign in life through the one Christ our Lord. See: one and one, Adam and Christ. Through that one sin reigned into death, through this one grace reigned into life. Indeed, these two principles of life and of death, of absolution and of penalty, of longed-for freedom

and of final damnation, the word of the Apostle that follows opens and declares.

Therefore, as through the offence of one to all men for condemnation, so also through the justice of one to all men for justification of life (Rom 5:18). Through one and one, either death reigns or life is granted. What then could the word of an interpreter add here? If you join silence to these words, every effort of the rivals collapses. Through the offence of one to all men for condemnation, so also through the justice of one to all men for justification of life. As the river serves its spring, as fruit its seed, so posterity, whether bound over or rescued, serves its origin, as is more fully proved from what the Apostle added.

For as through the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one many will be made just (Rom 5:19). Let man be a sinner, that God may be just; for the guilt rebounds upon the judge, if the penalty strikes the innocent. And therefore he said: As through the disobedience of one man many were made sinners. So that they might know that they had been sharers in the fault of him whose companions in the penalty they feel themselves to be.

But now let the lovers of the Law hear, with the Apostle as witness, what the Law profited. But the Law, he says, came in, that the offence might abound (Rom 5:20). See, as the Apostle says, the Law brought about not a diminishing of offences, but an abundance; not of itself, brothers, but through him who through feebleness could not bear the Law. It is not the greatness of

the light that dulls the eyes, a light which God created for the eyes alone, but the weakness of the eyes cannot sustain the whole of the light and bear its brightness: so too the Law, brothers, which in itself was very just and very holy, in demanding strict discipline from frail man, burdened and exposed the offender more and more. And why this, brothers? That through the grace and pardon of the Maker he might return to life who, through swelling pride and ignorance, while he wrongly gloried in his innocence, was being led down into the debt and the penalty of the parent.

The disease, then, lay hidden, through which the secret places of all the marrows and the passages of the veins were tending to the destruction of the vital parts themselves, and it was producing a certain synkrisis in all the inward parts. The Law came, to reveal the wound, and at last to announce that the heavenly physician was coming to the long-standing sickness. The Law came, to bring out to the skin, by the poultices of the commandments, what was raging deadly in the depths. The Law came, to open with the blade of the precepts, as it were, an abscess of long standing, so that a healing outflow might then dry up the pus long gathered. Yet of itself, brothers, it was not able either to close the wound or to add perfect health to the sick man. When the sick man saw this, and, wretched, at last recognised his state, he began to hasten to the physician, so that what had been exposed through the Law, and had long been enlarged through it, might be

cured by the skill and the grace of so great a physician. We say the wound was enlarged, brothers, because after the incision, putrefaction, stench, horror and distress are produced in the wound itself by the cutting, and through the cure the very face of the pitiable sickness becomes worse than the danger had been to the man who did not know it while it lay hidden. Then the physician came; and to one now worn out with cures and utterly exhausted by the distresses of treatments, he brought help by the authority of his word alone. As that centurion confesses, when he says: Say the word, and my servant will be healed (Matt 8:8). And that saying of the Prophet was to be fulfilled: He sent his Word, and healed them (Ps 107:20).

And therefore there follows: Where sin abounded, grace also abounded the more. As if he said: Where the wound was widened, health was poured out the more. Let no one then be ungrateful to the Law, because the one whom it had found sick and lying down, it lifted up, tended, and, to hand him over to health, brought with healthful exultation all the way to the physician, so that, as the Apostle said: As sin reigned into death, so grace might reign into eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5:21). Grace into life; sin reigns into death. Right faith ascribes to God the author not death, not the destruction of man, but salvation. Let death be man's, let it be sin's, so that life, created and restored, may be believed to be through Christ alone.

Sermon CXIII.

On not remaining in sin that grace may abound, and on serving the virtues. On the words of the same: "What then shall we say? Shall we remain in sin, that grace may abound?", etc.

The blessed Apostle, when he asks about things known, when he inquires into things manifest, is in fact rebuking and reproving those who corrupt the divine words by their own interpretation, and draw from them the support of crimes, whence they ought to have taken the lessons of the virtues. For thus he began today: What then shall we say? Shall we remain in sin, that grace may abound? (Rom 6:1) He had said above, brothers: Where sin abounded, grace also abounded the more (Rom 5:20); and therefore he began thus, and, in that divine and singular teaching of his, makes himself a sharer with the unskilled, as it were, by a question, so that he may answer with full learning what belongs to heavenly prudence.

For if where sin abounded, grace also abounded the more. What then shall we say? Shall we remain in sin, that grace may abound? "If loving-kindness is inclined towards offenders, if grace is abundant towards sinners, if the divine bounty is a friend to the unjust, surely, if future goods are acquired by present evils, why should

we have the steep road of the virtues, why the hard labour of obtaining justice, why the continual torment of keeping innocence among the wicked? Let human misdeeds increase, that heavenly goodness may overflow; let us do evil, as he said, that good may come (Rom 3:8); let us remain in sin, that grace may abound."

To these things, brothers, the same Apostle who asks has himself answered: Far from it (Rom 6:2). For we who are dead to sin, how shall we still live in it? When he says Far from it, he has thus execrated the understanding and the sense of the foolish: for indeed the physician serves not the wound but the cure and health; nor does he rejoice in putrefaction or in diseases, but in health alone. So too God, who applied a greatness and vigour of medicine proportionate to the greatness of the wound, bestowed grace not on sin but on man; and poured out the rain of his loving-kindness not to multiply offences but to blot them out. Let no one, no one, so congratulate himself on his illness as to wish to remain in his wound. Ungrateful to the physician, an enemy to the cure, is he who is ever burning to be treated and never desires to be healed here; and he so wishes the grace of God to overflow by his sins that he wishes sins to be heaped up for himself. Wretched the man who with such a wish strives to stand accused by means of pardon. This madness, brothers, must be fled, must be fled, which even after the cure is held captive by the love of diseases; for a relapse is very often a deadly illness.

As for what he said: For we who are dead to sin, he speaks here in the figure of the present time: for he said that we are dead to sin, he did not say that sin is already wholly dead to us; for although sin itself is dead, as to the act of the deed, to the saints and the faithful, it still lives, and still rages for our death. But then sin itself will die in us, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, and the word that is written has come to pass: Where, O death, is your sting? Where, O hell, is your victory? (1 Cor 15:54–55) Now the sting of death is sin (1 Cor 15:56). But he lives to sin who, as he says in what follows, serves its concupiscences; and the wretch is slave to its goads who humours vices, who succumbs to crimes in an unhappy and continual captivity, who asserts that what belongs to the offence belongs to nature, and uses a disease, which is an accident, as if it were the work and the benefit of the Maker.

And therefore, to refute the ignorance of such men, he added, saying: Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised in Christ Jesus have been baptised in his death? (Rom 6:3) For we have been buried together with him through baptism into death (Rom 6:4). Let the faithful hear and understand how the three days' burial of the Lord is figured in baptism by the triple immersion; so that they may rejoice to have risen with Christ, if not yet in body, yet already in newness of life; and that the whole man may be an abode of the virtues, who before had been a receptacle of vices. So that, as he said, as Christ rose from the

dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. Christ refers whatever belongs to his powers to the glory of the Father; and man, who has nothing of his own, labours to claim for himself that he rose again through Christ. As for what he said: Let us walk in newness of life, it confirms what we said above: that, if not yet in this body, yet in life he may go forward wholly changed; let him understand himself, and have dominion over the elements, who till now through ignorance served the elements; let him bestow his own goods for glory, who before shamefully stole what belonged to others; and let him who practised the unlawful things of the flesh despise even bodily licences; and let him who till now impiously strove to extinguish innocence himself die more gloriously for innocence. And what more? If from the old man he has now been made new, let him himself change the whirlpool of vices into a spring of virtues.

To the end of the reading the blessed Apostle presses this, shows this: that he can live with Christ, that he can reign with Christ, who follows the innocence of the risen Christ, imitates his life, strives to fulfil his holiness. As for his saying: That the body of sin may be destroyed (Rom 6:6), let it be destroyed, brothers, in act, not in substance; in work, not in figure; because he wishes man to perish to sin, not to God, he who says: Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God (Rom 6:11). And he strives with all piety, brothers, to restore man to the freedom above, he who

says: Let not sin reign in your mortal body (Rom 6:12). And again: Let sin not have dominion over you (Rom 6:14). He did not say: "Let it not come to you"; he did not say: "Let it not provoke, let it not tickle"; but: Let it not reign, let it not have dominion; let it fight, to the glory of the one who conquers; let it battle and fall, to the triumph of the victor; and let the impious dominion of sin at last grieve to be trampled in all security by those who were once its servants; and let the cruel tyrant groan that he is made subject to the feet of his own captives; and let the veteran enemy lament that he has come to the triumph of those over whom he long triumphed.

Sermon CXIV.

On the servants of the Law and of grace. On the words of the same: "Have we sinned, because we are not under the Law, but under grace?", etc.

As to a traveller the return to his own is always sweet and dear, and the porches of the house where he was born are pleasing after a time, so to me, after intervals in preaching, the return to the series of the readings from the Apostle is the sweeter. For a religious necessity often compels us to depart from the proposed order of speaking and from the continuous path of discourse; for the order of teaching must be so governed that one thing is not now hindered by another. So let us hear what the blessed Apostle has said today.

What then does he say? Have we sinned, because we are not under the Law, but under grace? (Rom 6:15) Far from it. This question, brothers, convicts the unskilfulness of those who, held captive by the custom of the Law, do not know how to perceive by its benefit the powers of grace; and those whom the series of the precepts of the Law exposed as stubborn, the mere advantages of gifts and the pomp of festivals made and rendered obstinate in vain observances. And since time has shut out the Law, what will the worshipper of the Law do, cut off from the Law?

Jew, what have you that you have not lost? And if you have lost it, why do you glory as if you had not lost it? Where is the temple, where is the priest, where the sacrifice, where the incense, where your purifications, where the devotion of your solemnities, which might not be omitted? But that you may be a Jew, rightly are you circumcised, because you have been cut off from all the goods mentioned above. For it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not remain in all the things that are written in the book of the Law (Gal 3:10). If he is cursed who has offended in one thing, how often will he be cursed who will be proved to have done nothing of them all?

Have we sinned, he says, because we are not under the Law, but under grace? As if he said, brothers: Have we sinned because, already healed, we did not stay under treatment? Have we sinned because, already cured, we have left the fire, the knife, the medicines? Unhappy the sick man who after the cure does not wish to cure the torment. And what more, brothers? Never does he cure who asks for and waits upon the choice of the sick man? For since from a cold humour fire is always kindled in the body, and excessive chill, while it torments and shakes the limbs, itself more sharply produces and begets the burning; so the sick man, to increase the flame which always burns and pants in his veins, impatiently waits for cold water to be given him, not knowing that then heat is quenched by heat, and the burning is fed by cold. The Law, then, while it always waits for and bears with the will

of man, and yet man, hindered by the burden of sin, is not strong enough to obey the commands of the Law, does not release its worshipper from the tie of sin, but binds him by the crime of transgression.

And therefore he added, saying: Do you not know that to whom you presented yourselves as servants to obey, you are the servants of him whom you obeyed, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to life? (Rom 6:16) What is it, brothers, that, when we were speaking of the Law, he disclosed that man had been the servant of sin? Whether of sin, he says, to death, or of obedience to life. Because he had said above: Let sin not have dominion over you; for you are not under the Law, but under grace (Rom 6:14). Those, then, who are under the Law are pressed down and bent by the command of sin, and the wretches will not be able to be freed from the most shameful servitude of sin unless grace sets them free.

But I give thanks to God, he said, that you were servants of sin (Rom 6:17). Does he give thanks, then, as one who rejoices that man was the servant of sin? Far from it. He gives thanks not because we were once servants of so cruel a master, but because we are no longer subjugated, as he shows the very same more expressly from what follows, saying: But you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which you were delivered; and being freed from sin, you have become servants of justice (Rom 6:17–18).

We obeyed, brothers, by the kindness of the one who called, not by our own, because we were

held so captive in our choice. But you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine. Into which? Into that of the Gospel, surely, where by a new kind of freedom servitude has not been dropped but changed, because devoted service is better than wandering and presumptuous freedom. You have become servants of justice. This servitude, brothers, does not bind but releases; does not burden but honours; it wipes away the stain of servitude, it does not brand it in. What here, I ask, is not divine, where servitude is driven out by servitude, where condition is put to flight by condition, where death dies by death, where perdition is healed by perdition, and, to speak properly and briefly, where the whole of adversity is laid low by the blade of adversity itself?

As for what he said: I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh: for as you presented your members to serve uncleanness, and iniquity for iniquity; so present your members to serve justice for sanctification (Rom 6:19). He shows the greatness of his piety when he brings down the teaching of the Gospel to such lowly and almost shameful examples; so that he may lay upon servitude, and command it, as much for holiness as for uncleanness, as much for justice as for iniquity. Absurd, brothers, and unseemly seems the comparison, which wishes man to be subject as much to glory as to shamefulness; but would that it were even as much! And when does human frailty serve God as much as the world, heaven as much as earth, virtue as much as vices? The whole wretched man is so

given over to the flesh, so taken up with present things, that he leaves nothing in himself to serve the life to come, to serve the divine goods.

The force of temporal allurement the blessed Apostle fittingly applied to human consciences in one sentence, fittingly expressed, so that human members may serve justice, chastity and cleanness with as great a will as the vehemence and madness with which they gave themselves to shamefulness and vices. He asks little, or perhaps nothing, who desires to make his grant while the ownership is held back; and he takes away every excuse who commands that with things possible to you and customary you must repay him for the greatest. Give then, man, to God as much as you have given to the flesh and to the vices. And why is it that you should owe yourself first to the vices and not to God, the self that God asks of you, surely, only for love of you?

There follows: For when you were servants of sin, you were free from justice; but now, being freed from sin, you have become servants of justice (Rom 6:20, 18). Before, servants of sin; now, servants of justice. See, through the Apostle servitude succeeds servitude: you, stubborn one, show now the time of your freedom; sin before lied that you were free, while it held you wretchedly captive; now grace calls you a servant, you whom, to make you truly free, it has adopted as a son of God himself. Fulfilled, then, is Christ's saying, in which he says: He who wishes to be lord, let him be servant (Matt 20:27). Blessed is this servitude, which begets an ever-

lasting lordship. For that freedom brought us the fruit of punishment and an unbearable confusion, as he says: For what fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of them is death (Rom 6:21). See how the devil sets free, see with what reward he honours that servitude: that death at once ends life and begins punishment. But those who serve Christ, brothers, death being mocked together with its wages, are carried over to the perpetual life of holiness; for Christ's end admits no end, because this end does not kill man but perfects him.

Sermon CXV.

On the Law abrogated through grace. On the words of the same: "Do you not know, brothers, for I speak to those who know the Law", etc.

After we had soothed your minds and hearts, touching David's harp with the plectrum and the melody of spiritual understanding, and had also set before you the fearsome beginnings of the thundering Gospel to rouse your senses, we thought we should soon return to the teaching of the Apostle, so that the threefold order of the sermon may hold and offer the saving discipline of the Church's doctrine. For the chant relaxes hearts from continual labour, and the authority of the Gospel restores the mind and rouses it to labour, and the vigour of the Apostle does not allow our senses to be moved from the straight path and to wander. This reading of the blessed Apostle we find today follows in its order.

Do you not know, brothers, he says, for I speak to those who know the Law, that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? (Rom 7:1) And he sets out a comparison. For the woman who is under a husband is bound to the law while her husband lives; but if her husband has died, she is loosed from the law of the husband: therefore, while her husband lives, she will be

called an adulteress if she has been with another man; but if her husband has died, she is loosed from the law of the husband (Rom 7:2–3). You see, brothers, the great lesson of the heavenly teaching of the blessed Apostle: how he asserts by testimonies of the Law that the times of the Law have passed, and has emptied its whole prerogative by the wonderful example of marriage. And rightly is the Law compared to a carnal marriage, since it did not obtain a spiritual fellowship with the Synagogue.

For when it had received her for the observance of discipline, for the fruitfulness of a holy offspring, for the increase of modesty, for the keeping of chastity, for the sacred and reverend secret of the bridal chamber above, for the mystical unity of the heavenly couch, it found in her the filth of all harlotry. For she came to meet so great a husband, that is, the Law, not adorned with good conduct, not decked with the necklaces of the virtues, not grave in her gait, not covered indeed with that bridal veil of virginal modesty; but wanton in her eyes, loose in her steps, overtaken by allurements, and wholly painted over with deceits and pretences. And when so great a husband, having seen her, despised her with just indignation, and drove her far from his society, and execrated her with the whole judgement of his gravity, she neither blushed when despised, nor corrected herself when scorned, nor came to her senses, but, repulsed, flew all headlong to the brothels of idols, and preferred to undergo the infamy of fornication and to incur the crime

of adultery rather than not to shudder at the shamefulness of a guise that pleased amiss. Hence too the blessed prophet rightly laments her, saying: How has the faithful city of Zion become a harlot? (Isa 1:21) Whose adulteries holy Ezekiel too sets down in almost his whole volume. Hence it is, brothers, that when in the Gospel this adulteress was accused before the Lord by the scribes and the doctors of the Law, the Lord turned away his face and bent down to the ground, lest he should see the crime that he would have to punish; and he preferred, brothers, to write pardon in the dust rather than to pronounce sentence on the flesh (John 8:3–8).

This adulteress the Apostle strives to call back to the fellowship of Christ, nor does he allow her to be held back by fear of her former fall, she who, while her husband lived, rightly stood an adulteress because she was with another man, but now does not desert the Law, since she runs back to the author of the Law; but she dies to the Law, bound over by the sentences of the Law, that she may live to grace and rise again through pardon, she who had been slain and put to death through the Law. Indeed, while he asserts that she is released from the husband's right by the husband's death, he testifies in what follows that it is rather she, not the husband, who has died: because the Law does not die to man, but man dies to the Law; nor does the commandment pass away, but he fails the commandment who slips from the commandment.

Hear what follows. Therefore, my brothers, you too have been made dead to the Law (Rom 7:4). Does he say: "The Law has died to you"? You too have been made dead to the Law. And well he added: Through the body of Christ. Because the Law binds the accused, confines the one liable to it, punishes and kills the criminal. He then who through the body of Christ has been exempted and rescued from every crime happily dies to the Law, that he may live to innocence and to grace.

That you may belong, he says, to another, who rose from the dead. To another. He himself became other, when he changed our corruption into incorruption, and carried mortality across to the glory of immortality. That we may bear fruit, he says, to God. Sharers of the heavenly nature through Christ, not to earth but to God, not to death but to life; and he asserts that fruit is borne to God, not to the flesh.

For when we were in the flesh, he says, the passions of sins, which were through the Law, were at work in our members, so that we bore fruit to death (Rom 7:5). When he says When we were, he indicates past time, when, placed in the flesh alone, or rather exposed, we were compelled to savour, to do, to will only the things that are of the flesh, according to that other saying of the Apostle: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom 8:8). For when we were, he says, in the flesh, the passions of sins, which were through the Law. I will say as it was said by the Lord: If the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness itself? (Matt 6:23) If

through the Law the passions of sins have dominion over human members, what will the passions do by themselves, which humour man unhappily and penally as soon as he is born? Since one is begotten in such a way, anguish presses down the one so born, dangers urge him on, penalties afflict him: they are passions, brothers, through which infancy is weakened, childhood is dragged along, adolescence goes mad, youth and old age are heaped with many mournings; it is they which accompany the whole life of man to its fall, the enemy stirring it up; which the Law, in forbidding them, called to mind; in examining them, enlarged; in accusing them, made dearer; and what lay hidden through ignorance, it made better known through knowledge. And as thorns grow the more when they are cut down by the sickle, so the passions sprout while they are pruned back by the Law, because inwardly, fixed as in the root of the flesh, they are made firm. The Law has inwardly a very just cultivation of faith, and yet it does not profit: hence by its own stirring it brings the very turf of human flesh to a harvest of death.

The passions, he says, of sins, which were through the Law, were at work in our members, so that we bore fruit to death. The instrument that was for life, the passions claim for themselves in us for a harvest of death. Wounded thus, then, through the grace of Christ, we are released from the law of death, and receive within us the Holy Spirit as the vanquisher and conqueror of vices; so that the passions, shut out, may knock

from outside, tempt, provoke, but fall to the glory of our triumphs. For us, for us he desires to conquer, who, though he was lord over us, deigned to serve as a soldier, as I have said. Let us therefore serve in the newness of the Spirit (Rom 7:6), now free from the servitude of the flesh, because true lordship is the service of the Lord's holiness; for both the old man and the old letter corrupted and ruined the whole discipline.

Sermon CXVI.

On the knowledge of sin through the Law. On the words of the same: "What then shall we say? Is the Law sin? Far from it", etc.

As often as a mystical chant resounds in different kinds but with harmonious voice, it feeds and delights the hearing with mild sweetness; so when the divine and heavenly doctrine is drawn forth in various ways, but by one Spirit and in one and the same sense, it spreads out and opens the mystery of the knowledge of the Gospel more willingly and with the greatest sweetness. And therefore, after the prophetic melody and the astonishing miracles of Christ's powers, let us return to the order of the readings from the Apostle. Such, then, was the content of today's reading.

What then shall we say? Is the Law sin? (Rom 7:7) Far from it. But I did not know sin except through the Law: for I did not know concupiscence, except that the Law said: You shall not covet. But taking occasion, sin through the commandment worked in me all concupiscence (Rom 7:8). You have heard, brothers, with what disease the human condition laboured without Christ, how captive human frailty was without grace, which by the Law, by the commandments, was not restrained, but armed for crimes: which

heard for this, knew for this, not to conquer sins but to commit them.

I did not know sin except through the Law. Not to know vices belongs to happiness, to know them to danger, to have conquered them to virtue. A noble and brave king goes out far to meet his enemies, and so forestalls the wiles of those advancing that the loyalty of the soldiers cannot be cast down, nor the constancy of the citizens be disturbed: so now a generous mind, through the grace of Christ, passes beyond the pitiable straits of its body, and so wholly forestalls offences, tramples on vices, and lays crimes wholly low in destruction, that they cannot deceive the senses with false colours, corrupt the wit with wiles, dissolve wretched, feeble hearts with tumults, kindle smoking occasions with heat and with blood, harass with various kinds of passions the members, which are weak by nature. What fire is to a dry crop, that vices are to the human body; they are conquered more safely by separation alone, they are killed by ignorance, and, unknown, they happily vanish. For if they have reached the mind and the senses, if they have touched spirits, if once they have penetrated the members, an unquenchable burning is begotten and rises high: and unless the heavenly wave has watered the hearts, flooded the minds, soaked the members, the whole of human strength is subdued and reduced to ashes.

Is the Law, he says, sin? Far from it. But I did not know sin except through the Law. As if he said: Gold is not avarice, but I did not know

avarice except through gold. Wine is not drunkenness, but I did not know drunkenness except through wine. The beauty of the body is not concupiscence, but the grace of form carried me away to concupiscence and led me to a fall. So, then, the things themselves are not evil in themselves, which were created by God for usefulness, for health, for delight, but through them occasion is given for offending. So the miser accuses gold, the drunkard wine, the lascivious or the elegant would have it be beauty's doing that he came to ruin.

So too the Law, which had been given by God for salvation, which was in itself heavenly and holy, was made through man the ruin of wretched man, as the Apostle proves from what follows, saying: So the Law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good (Rom 7:12). What then was good did not bring death, but sin, which had brought death in the first place, which had made human nature frail, feeble, prone to falls and vices. What lay hidden and raged as an enemy in the human body, the Law rebuked, the Law exposed, in admonishing man of innocence, of holiness, of justice, of virtue, of faith; in reproving him of vices, of offences, of crimes.

But man began indeed to hear of the virtues, began to will, but did not reach it; began to detest vices, but to follow them; to hate offences, but to commit them; to shudder at crimes, but to fulfil them: whence late he felt himself a captive servant, felt himself wretchedly bound over to

rage, and began to cry out: Unhappy man that I am, who will free me from the body of this death? (Rom 7:24) To whom the answer is given: The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 7:25). Having heard this, he began to seek freedom through the author, salvation through pardon, to hope for life through grace alone. For long he had not known why innocence was difficult, why justice laborious, holiness full of care, virtue steep, faith wholly full of dangers, why offences had such great forces, why crimes grow while they are cut down, and virtues fail while they are cultivated. The Law opened, the Law taught, the Law showed in full light, that crimes through sin, virtues through God, hold dominion in the human senses, in the human mind; and that offences cannot be overcome before the author of offences has been extinguished, which is sin, which Christ took away, as John testifies when he says: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

For without the Law, he says, sin was dead (Rom 7:8). But I once lived without the Law (Rom 7:9). But when the commandment came, sin revived. And I died, and the commandment which was for life was found to be for me for death (Rom 7:10). For sin, taking occasion through the commandment, seduced me, and through it killed me (Rom 7:11). Sin was dead not because it did not exist, but because it was not known; and it was properly said: Sin revived. For it was buried in our ignorance: not the commandment through sin,

but sin through the commandment revived, in making him transgress who before was a sinner; in making the accused stubborn as well, rousing up a deserter and a rebel. Hence rightly man already then cries out that he is dead, when he recognised whence, and why, and through whom he was dying.

What a cruel tyrant sin is, brothers, we now see. Through the commandment it seduced me, and through it killed me. Because it stretched the proof of salvation into a snare, because it made the cure to be sickness, because it changed the instrument of health into a deadly wound, because it turned life itself into a lethal sword: Through the commandment it seduced me, and through it killed me. But how should one already dead provide for himself, since he had been killed? For who could help the slain, but Christ, who, slain, restored life? who paid death back in kind through death, slew death, and exposed it as stubborn, death which, ordered to brood over the punishments of the accused, dared to attempt the judge himself, presumed to assail the very author of innocence: hence rightly death has died, and in me it is not I who live, but Christ lives, acts, reigns, commands.

Sermon CXVII.

On the first and the last Adam. On the words of the same: "The first man Adam was made into a living soul", etc.

The blessed Apostle has today related that two men gave the human race its beginning, namely Adam and Christ: two men equal in body but unequal in merit; in the framework of their members very like in all truth, but in their very beginning unlike in all truth. The first man Adam, he says, was made into a living soul: the last Adam into a life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45). That first one was made by this last one, from whom he also received a soul, that he might live; this one was fashioned with himself as author, who would not wait for life from another, but would himself alone bestow life on all; that one is moulded from the vilest slime, this one comes forth from the precious womb of the Virgin; in that one earth is changed into flesh, in this one flesh is advanced into God. And what more? This is the Adam who, when he was then fashioning that one, placed his own image in him. Hence it is that he both takes up his person and received his name, lest what he had made to his own image should be lost to him. First Adam, last Adam; that first one has a beginning, this last one has no end. For this last one is truly himself the first, as he

himself says: I the first, and I the last (Isa 48:12). I am the first, that is, without beginning. I the last, surely without end.

But not first, he says, what is spiritual, but what is animal, then what is spiritual (1 Cor 15:46). Earth surely comes before the fruit; but the earth is not so precious as the fruit; that one demands groans and labours, this one bestows substance and life. Rightly the Prophet glories in such fruit, saying: Our earth has yielded its fruit (Ps 85:13). What fruit? That, surely, of which he says elsewhere: Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon your throne (Ps 132:11).

The first man, he says, from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven, heavenly (1 Cor 15:47). Where are those who think that the conception of the Virgin, the Virgin's child-bearing, is to be put on a level with the child-bearings of women, since that is from earth, this from heaven; this is of divine power, that of human weakness; that is in a body of passion, this is wholly in the tranquillity of the divine Spirit, in the quiet of the human body? The blood was silent, the flesh was astonished, the members were put to sleep, and the whole palace of the Virgin was held suspended in a heavenly sojourn, until the author of flesh should take the garment of flesh, and become a heavenly man, who would not only give back earth to man, but would give man heaven too. The Virgin conceives, the Virgin gives birth, the Virgin remains. Therefore the flesh is aware of power, not of pain; it rather receives, by bringing forth, increases of integrity,

and knows nothing of losses of modesty; it stands rather as witness of its own child-bearing, having borne none of the passions of child-bearing; and the new mother marvels that she has been present at heavenly mysteries, understanding that the order of the one being born had nothing of human custom. If the magus acknowledges by his gift that God was thus born, acknowledges it while he adores, consider what the Christian ought to think, what he ought to believe.

But let us hear what follows. As was the earthly, such also are the earthly; and as is the heavenly, such also are the heavenly (1 Cor 15:48). How will those not born in such a way be able to be found such, not by remaining what they were born, but by persevering in what they were reborn? Hence it is, brothers, that the heavenly spirit makes fruitful the womb of the virginal font by the hidden admixture of its light; so that those whom the origin of a slimy stock had poured out earthly under a wretched condition, it may bring forth heavenly, and lead them to the likeness of their author.

Therefore, now reborn, now re-formed to the image of our Creator, let us fulfil what the Apostle commands. Therefore as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor 15:49). Let it have been necessity that, formed of earth, we could not breathe heavenly things; that, born of concupiscence, we were not able to avoid concupiscence; that, acquired by ruling allurements, we were forced to endure the baseness of allurements; that, received into

the dwelling of this world, we were captive to evils: now reborn after the likeness of our Lord, as we have said, we whom indeed a virgin conceived, the spirit gave life, modesty carried, integrity begot, innocence nourished, holiness taught, virtue trained, God adopted as sons, let us bear the whole image of our author with whole likeness: not in the majesty in which he alone is, but in the innocence, simplicity, meekness, patience, humility, mercy, concord, in which he deigned to become and to be one in common with us. Let the pestilent itch of vices cease, let the deadly blandishments of offences be overcome; let the execrable fury, the origin of crimes, be repressed; let the whole darkness of worldly pomp be shaken from the senses; let the illusion of worldly desire be cast from minds; let the poverty of Christ be sought, which possesses everlasting riches in heaven; let the whole holiness of soul and body be guarded, so that the image of our Creator may be borne and shine in us not in greatness but in act.

The Apostle affirms what we have said, when he says: Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). See how the resurrection of the flesh is preached: because there the flesh will be possessed by the spirit, the flesh will not possess the spirit, as shines out from what follows. Nor will corruption possess incorruption. You see that it is not the flesh that perishes, but corruption; not the man, but the fault; not the person, but the crime; so that man, living in God and before God,

may rejoice that he has at last reached the end of offences. A sermon of its own must be given on the resurrection, brothers, because it is not fitting to speak in passing, and at the very end of a discourse, of what carries us across to the eternal ages and to perpetual life.

Sermon CXVIII.

On death and the resurrection of the flesh

Since the whole hope of the Christian faith is set in the resurrection of the dead, lest anyone should dare to doubt of it, we have had read to you today the very full reading of blessed Paul, who asserts it by authority, by facts, by examples, to which our sermon has not been able to find anything it could add. But since your charity always demands the servitude of our office, we long, in the very ardour of the resurrection, to repeat these same things, to press these very things more vehemently. Brothers, it is always pleasant to speak of the resurrection, it is a constant delight to hear of the resurrection, because it never pleases to die, it always delights to live. Let the resurrection then always resound in our mouth, let the resurrection always be passed on to the hearing of our mind, so that death, which always besieges our senses, with its terror, with its laments, may be put to flight from our senses.

For so the farmer sings of abundant crops and of feasts that satisfy, so as not to feel the monstrous labour of the ploughshare and the sweat. So the sailor sings of harbours and gains, lest he should dread the crash of the waves, the perils of the sea. So the soldier, so as not to fear wounds,

not to dread swords, sings aloud of spoils and triumphs. Hence with mind, mouth, eyes let the Christian behold, sing, ponder the resurrection, so that he may despise and trample on the whole terror of death.

Death, brothers, is the lady of despair, the mother of disbelief, the sister of corruption, the parent of hell, the wife of the devil, the queen of all evils, who assails the whole human race in such insatiable order that she first sends ahead her whisperer, despair, urging such things: "Man, why do you waste your time? Behold, your lady death is coming, reducing your soul to nothing, consuming your flesh with rot, your bones with age, so as to make you, who did not exist before you were born, not exist after death. Pay your debts, then, before death, you who will soon die: to yourself, to your ages: give infancy to games, give adolescence to delights, give youth to pleasures, give old age to me, lest in despair you think of hope for nothing."

After her she sends her daughter disbelief, threatening thus: "As if you were not going to die, as if you were going to escape death, is it thus that you dispose of your life? Man, faith deceives you, you believe faith, which, to take away present things, promises future ones, and, to remove what is before death, promises who knows what invisible things after death. Who has come from there, or what wise man believes things promised for so many ages, and not delivered? O, if you would eat and drink! Eat and drink, for tomorrow you will die (Isa 22:13)."

Her third sister in wickedness, corruption, she directs with such fury that she invades, draws, occupies the gaze of men, showing them through the sepulchres the last prisons, demonstrates that her own lie there immovably fettered; and, to disturb men, the senses of man, with all horror, with all fright, she pours out rot, belches out pus, scatters stenches, and proclaims that she has given from herself innumerable executioners, the worms, to the one body of a man. Why should Christians not believe despair, why not believe disbelief? These are the wars of death; with these leaders, with these counsels, with such conflict she takes captive, lays waste, kills all whom nature brings forth to present life; she leads kings, drags peoples, drives nations; she could never be ransomed by riches, bent by prayers, softened by tears, overcome by strength.

They erred, brothers, who tried to write on the good of death. And what wonder? The wise men of the world then think themselves great and illustrious, if they have persuaded the simple that what is the highest evil is the highest good: rightly Scripture says of these: Woe to those who call good evil, and evil good. Woe to those who make darkness light, and light darkness! (Isa 5:20) And in truth whom would these men not deceive, whom could they not blind, who brought the unwary to believe that to live is evil, to die is good? But these things, brothers, truth removes, light puts to flight, faith assails, the Apostle brands, Christ blots out, who, in giving

back the good of life, exposes, condemns, shuts out the evil of death.

For thus the Apostle began: Now I make known to you, brothers, the Gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, through which you are also saved: in what terms I preached it to you, you must hold fast, unless you have believed in vain (1 Cor 15:1–2). For I delivered to you first of all what I also received: that Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3–4). God's bounty enriches one who will live, not one who will die. Or what good does he receive, if he himself who receives will not exist? In which you also stand. He stands, surely, who always lives, because the dead man always lies. In which you are also saved. If anyone dies, he perishes; but he is saved who always lives. In what terms I preached it to you, you must hold fast, unless you have believed in vain. Not only, brothers, has he believed in vain, but he has also lived in vain, who believed that he was born only for this, to perish.

Man, what rises for you that does not set? what that has set for you does not rise again? The day rises in the morning, and rises again in the morning; at evening it is buried in the night, and rises again in the morning. The sun is born every day, dies every day, itself rises again every day; the seasons, while they pass, perish; while they return, revive. Hence, man, if you do not believe God, if you do not acquiesce in the law, if you do not assent to what you hear, at least believe

your eyes, or acquiesce in the elements that continually preach your resurrection to you. Surely, if these things are far inferior, which are in your hands and are raised from death by your own work, let them teach you that you can be raised by the work of God.

Go to the seed, the Apostle teaching you (1 Cor 15:36–37); take dry wheat, without sense, without motion; draw a furrow, dig the earth, make a sepulchre, bury the wheat, see how it perishes in death, swells with moisture, is corrupted with rot; and when it has come to the whole of whatever despair, whatever disbelief, whatever decay suggested to you above, then suddenly it revives in the shoot, grows its down in the blade, grows young in the stalk, ripens in the ear, and rises again to that whole very appearance and form which you wept for as lost; so that the wheat, man, may teach you not so much to eat as to be wise, may compel you not so much to labour as to believe. Let us be silent about the rest, because whence, and when, and how, and through whom death came, the blessed Apostle declares in plain, very clear and divine speech. Man, receive faith, because it is given freely; believe the resurrection, because he who promises it asks no price.

Sermon CXIX.

On the true race for the crown of glory. On the words of the same: "Do you not know that those who run in the stadium", etc.

The blessed apostle Paul exhorts us to the crown of heavenly glory not only through the teaching of the Law, but by the example of this world. For thus, among other things, he says, as your love has heard. Do you not know that those who run in the stadium all run indeed, but one receives the prize? (1 Cor 9:24); and he added: So run that you may obtain it.

According to the earthly example, many indeed, as the Apostle says, run in the stadium, but one receives the crown, that is, he who runs better; so too in the stadium of the present life many indeed run, but one receives the crown. The Jews run through the Law, the philosophers run through empty wisdom, the heretics too run through a false proclamation, the catholics run through the true preaching of the faith: but of all these one receives the crown, that is, the catholic people, which, having taken up the course of faith, makes for Christ, that it may reach the palm and the crown of immortality. Therefore the Jews, and the philosophers, and the heretics run in vain, since they do not walk on the straight

path of faith. For what does it profit the Jews to run through the observance of the Law, when they do not know Christ, the lord of the Law? The philosophers too run through the empty wisdom of the world, but their course is superfluous and empty, since they do not know the true wisdom of Christ. For the true wisdom of God is Christ, which is not adorned with words nor with brilliant speech, but is known by the faith of the heart.

The heretics too run through the poisoned assertion of their faith, they run through fasts, they run through almsgiving, but they cannot reach the crown, because they do not run; for their false faith does not merit to receive the grace of the true faith. The Apostle shows this in another place, when he says: And if I distribute all my substance to the poor, and if I deliver my body to the fire to burn, but do not have charity, it profits me nothing (1 Cor 13:3). For he does not have the charity of Christ who does not faithfully believe in Christ. And therefore the Apostle well added, saying: So run that you may obtain it. We ought therefore to run with a faithful course, in the faith of Christ, in the commandments of God, in the works of justice, that we may be able to reach the crown of eternal life.

Indeed, how we must run, the same Apostle shows next, saying: Everyone, he says, who strives in the contest abstains from all things; and they indeed to receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible (1 Cor 9:25). See with what examples the Apostle invites us to the crown of

the promised immortality. In this earthly contest those who wish to win abstain from certain foods, from excessive drink, they abstain from all uncleanness, with such chastity that they do not seek even their own marriages; nor do they hope to be able to win otherwise than by keeping their body chaste and modest. And after so great a labour what else do they receive but a small, and corruptible, and indeed cheap crown? If then for a corruptible crown so great a labour is undertaken by some, how much more ought we to endure every labour, to whom a heavenly reward and the crown of eternal glory are promised?

We must therefore contend in no light combat: for we fight against the spiritual forces of wickedness, against the devil and his angels; we fight against injustice, against impiety, against malice, against unchastity, against the various allurements of sins. And if, fighting, we conquer, we receive as many crowns as we have been victors over vices. Great therefore is this contest, in which we offer a spectacle to the Lord: for we are watched as we fight by the Lord, we are watched by his angels; we conquer on earth, but we receive the reward of virtue in heaven. Indeed, the holy martyrs, set in the contest of combat, conquered not only the vices of sins but death itself, and received the rewards of immortality. In this contest our Lord and Saviour first both fought and conquered, to show us an example of combat and of victory.

In treating these things with you, then, we cast the seed of good combat into your hearts,

finding your breasts as it were furrowed by the plough of justice. Cultivate, then, the word which we have sown in you, that what has been sown may be able to sprout. May God, by his visitation, pour into you the dew of his loving-kindness; and may he give increase to our seeds, so that, with the sheaves of merits gathered in, you may be able to come to the hundredfold fruit.

Sermon CXX.

On shunning the fashion of the world, and taking on the form of the Saviour. On the words of the same: "Do not be conformed to this world", etc.

Christ today made it plain that the apostles are salt, saying: You are the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13). Let no one, then, take it impatiently if we grind the words of blessed Paul like grains of divine salt, so that, lulled more deeply, we may season the understanding of the sense. For whole grains of salt leap, so that, worn finer, they themselves may go down into the marrows: so the word of the Apostle, read in common, offers a simple sense, provides deep knowledge, and is repeated in diligent reading to reach the things that we have examined before.

Today the blessed Apostle says: Do not be conformed to this world (Rom 12:2). Do you think that blessed Paul the apostle, by saying this, is opposing our being conformed to the figures of the elements? or our being like the kings of the Persians, who, now with a sphere set beneath their feet so as to be believed to tread the sky, counterfeit the place of God; now, with radiate head, lest they be men, sit in the figure of the sun; now, with horns set upon them, as if they grieved to be men, are made effeminate into the moon;

now take on, as it were, the various forms of the stars, so as to lose the figure of man and acquire nothing of the brightness above? But although these things come down from the vanity of the world, and are as much to be shunned as laughed at by the wise, yet the Apostle, when he says: Do not be conformed to this world, corrects the life of the world, reproves its morals, judges its way of living, chastises its wills, condemns its dissoluteness, and drives away, puts to flight, shuts out from Christian minds the whole pomp of worldly vanities.

But here he only briefly reminds us of what he set out more fully at the beginning of this Epistle, where he figures the figure of the world in its vices thus: Filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness; full of envy, murders, contention, deceit, malignity; whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, proud, inventors of evils, disobedient to parents, foolish, disorderly, without affection, without mercy; who, though they had known the justice of God, did not understand that those who do such things are worthy of death: not only those who do them, but those who consent to those who do them (Rom 1:29–32). Brothers, you have heard the form of the world, you have learnt its appearance, you have seen its figure: if indeed it is a form and not a formless monster, where by the confusion of crimes the whole face of things has been blotted out, where by the wedlock of sins the whole figure of the world has been dissolved, where by the diseases of offences the very image

of the Maker has been taken away, where man is buried in vices, where the wickednesses of a corrupted body swarm, where man is the sepulchre of man, where in man not man is seen, but a corpse.

The Apostle therefore forbids us to be conformed to this form, and prohibits our being configured to this figure; he does not allow us to be like this likeness, but re-forms us to the form of God, calls us back to the likeness of Christ, and brings the whole back to the image of the Maker, saying: But be re-formed in the newness of your sense (Rom 12:2). That is, be renewed in your senses through Christ, the figure of this world cast away; and, the whole deformity of the aged image thrown off, bring your form back to the form of your Saviour: so that the newness of your senses may shine forth in your actions, and the heavenly man may walk now on earth in heavenly bearing. And how he composes the form of the new man, let it now be made plain.

For as in one body we have many members, but all the members do not have the same action; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another (Rom 12:4–5). And having gifts differing according to the grace that has been given to us (Rom 12:6). He works, he works that the body which he sets in heavenly action, in the life above, in the ways of holiness, may stand firm by the agreement and the coupling of the members: that neither the foot confound the ministry of the eye, nor the eye the office of the foot, by perverse swelling; but that the members

of holiness may be content with the gifts of the giver, and believe that what one member has done belongs to all the members, because one member cannot be lessened, which is honoured whole in the body.

Hence it is that the Apostle thus depicts actions for members, members for actions: Whether he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who presides, in solicitude; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness (Rom 12:7–8). Charity without pretence; hating evil, cleaving to good; outdoing one another in honour; kind to one another; not slothful in solicitude; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; instant in prayer; sharing in the memorials of the saints; pursuing hospitality: bless, and do not curse; rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep; providing good things not only before God, but also before men (Rom 12:9–17). Do not be wise in your own eyes, rendering to no one evil for evil; if it is possible, as far as it depends on you, having peace with all men; not avenging yourselves, but give place to wrath (Rom 12:16–19). If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink; do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil in good (Rom 12:20–21).

Above, brothers, the Apostle laid open the members of the vices; now he has revealed to us the members of the virtues; so that the heavenly body, made solid by such members, strengthened by such sinews, may easily lay low the wars of

the world and overcome the conflicts of the devil. And does not one who lives so, as the Apostle taught, lay low the world? does he not crush the flesh? does he not conquer the devil? is he not made equal to the angels? is he not greater than heaven? Plainly greater than heaven, because heaven is not moved of its own accord, does not act by will, does nothing by judgement, but serves always by necessity alone, because it was once ordered to serve; it keeps itself unpolluted not by strength, not by labour: hence, though it is not liable to punishment, so neither does it stand for a reward. But man, compacted of earthly vileness, in conquering the earthly stain, in breaking the goads of blood, in rising above the passions of the flesh, transcends heaven, flies to the very seat of the Godhead: and so he becomes greater than heaven, surpasses the angels by merits, not by nature.

The apostle Paul proves this, who, in fully conquering the earth, both entered heaven, and passed through another, and merited to reach even the third (2 Cor 12:2). And justly, for he ought to be the first to climb the heavens who thus by word and by example taught men to penetrate the heavens. He will be, he will be greater than heaven, who has lived as Paul taught; he will be brighter than the sun, who so shines with the rays of the virtues throughout the world that he allows himself to be darkened by no night of vices. He will be, he will be brighter than the moon, who tempers this darkness not with a thinned light, but drives away the whole night

of the world with the full splendour of merits: nor does he, like the moon, feel the daily losses of light, but by the constant lamp of deeds he persists in the brightness of the light above; nor is he, like her, interrupted by a monthly darkening, but he will remain in the continual brightness of God. And if she is great because she softens the night, how much greater is he whose life receives nothing of the night? Of the stars I say nothing, because as many stars as heaven has, so many are the virtues with which the saints shine, as the Lord says: You are the light of the world (Matt 5:14), shine as lights in the world (Phil 2:15). In short, heaven, sun, moon, stars (God saying so) will pass away (Matt 24:35), but the just man will remain in the continual brightness of God.

I would wish, brothers, to deliver a discourse of its own on each single word of the Apostle; but since a reading much repeated breeds weariness in the hearer, and we cannot any longer keep silent the mighty works of the Gospel, may it be pleasing to your charity that we have closed the present reading with a short sermon. May our God himself deign to instil into your holy senses both what we have said and what we have left unsaid.

Sermon CXXI.

On the rich man and Lazarus

You have heard today, brothers, the end of poverty, and you have learned what the outcome of riches is, as the Lord says: A certain man was rich, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted splendidly every day (Luke 16:19). And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who lay at his gate, longing to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one gave to him; but the dogs too came and licked his sores (Luke 16:20–21). And it came to pass that the poor man died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). But the rich man died and was buried in hell. See, brothers, what a lamentable reversal of things: angels carry the poor man, hell swallows the rich man. See, brothers, the death of the poor man has overcome the whole life of the rich man, and the lifting up of the poor man alone has gone beyond all the rich man's pomp and glory. Why does burial so deceive the eyes? why does the pomp of funerals so lie? Here the whole city moves out to do homage to the rich man when his body is carried out; the poor man goes alone, the pity of two porters carries the poor man, and not four, as for a dead man, but

two under one pole, as if carriers were bound against their will to a load to be thrown away. Rightly, then, are angelic offices at once assigned to him, rightly divine homage, to whom even the last offices of humanity were so cruelly denied. A mourning crowd of servants goes before the rich man's funeral; a multitude of angels singing psalms goes before the poor man's bier. In a marble grave and in carefully tended garments lies the rich man's body, shut in; the poor man's flesh rests in its natural slime, and in that material bed it does not know the bite of worms: it has gone before corruption and stench.

But let us ask, brothers, what fault of the rich man, what crime, what wickedness consigned him to the torments of hell, and, before the judgement, caused the record of his condemnation to be sung through so many ages, the judge himself reporting it, as the Lord says: A certain man was rich, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted splendidly every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate, and longed to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Are riches criminal merely in themselves? or are garments alone, and in themselves, to be condemned before God? and are feasts in themselves so much to be punished that they not only lack the reward of the good, but bear and deserve the destruction of all the wicked? Or is beggary in itself so approved and sanctified, are sores so hallowed, that they are snatched by the hands of angels to the lap of holy Abraham? And it is

a wonder, brothers, that Abraham, once a rich man, spurns this rich man, as the Scripture says: Now Abraham was very rich (Gen 13:2); and him whom he had as his equal in present goods he now rejects and allows to be under punishment, especially since the divine word has disclosed neither the good deeds of this poor man nor the evil deeds of that rich man. Why then does Abraham now court the poor man, and shun and rebuff the rich man? Or how did riches keep this Abraham innocent, and riches make this man criminal; advance the one to the rest of all the blessed, and assign the other to the pit of all evils?

But so that the sermon before us may not long weary your mind and hold your hearing in suspense, we must hasten the solution of this question. Abraham, brothers, was rich not for himself but for the poor man, and he was eager not to have riches but to pay them out: more and more he was zealous to store his means in the bosom of the poor man rather than in barns, as the whole course of his life fully teaches. For he himself toiled continually as a stranger, and so, that a stranger might not feel himself a stranger: dwelling himself under a tent, he did not allow the newcomer to remain without a roof; and, a guest himself, he always took in the guest; an exile from his country, knowing no home, he himself was both master of all and their country; knowing that he had been set not as a hoarder but as the steward of God's bounty, to avenge the oppressed, to set the captives free, to snatch those already on the point of death, he gives

himself over to death, a new kind of warrior, he in whom piety towards another was dearer than his own life. Abraham, when he had received the guest, stood by him, did not sit down; and he was not his guest's companion at table, but his servant. Abraham, at the sight of the stranger, did not know himself to be master; he himself brought in the meal, and in his solicitude set his wife, delicate as she was, to the kitchen: and he who entrusts and commits himself and all he has to his household servants hardly dares to commit the guest to a wife, however proven.

And what more, brothers? Indeed, his humanity, so holy, was always made ready by holy hands, so that it invited God himself to his house and compelled him to be his guest. He came to Abraham, he came to the rest of the poor, he came to the shelter of guests, he who in the future will acknowledge that he was received in the guest and in the poor man, when he says: I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a guest, and you took me in (Matt 25:35).

And it came to pass that the poor man died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Not undeservedly, brothers, did he then take all the saints into his rest, and in heavenly blessedness itself he performs the office of a steward: because, as here he always took in strangers and the poor, he merited to receive God himself with the angels, to see as a guest under his tent him whom he had always had as his giver. And truly, brothers, he thought himself

too little blessed if in the glory on high itself he ceased from the pious office of hospitality, and enjoyed the divine gifts alone, he who here thought himself cruel if he denied human goods to anyone. Abraham, brothers, always runs out a long way to meet those who come, calls with entreaty even those who pass by, compels the unwilling with great supplication to his table, always sets before his guests the first and the fattened of his flocks, always offers warm loaves made by his own hands and his wife's, which his unceasing humanity would certainly not allow to be cold and of yesterday.

But this other rich man, or rather the captive of riches, the servant of his wealth and fettered by his very fortune, a mere ignoble sepulchre of pomp, in whom all the sight and all the hearing of piety had utterly failed, despises no longer a person, no longer a poor man, but mercy itself, while Lazarus lay thus at his gate. With purple, with fine linen, with delicate garments, with flattering feasts the cruel soul fed its iron bowels: and God, the eager seeker of man's salvation, desiring to soften him, cast at his gate not so much Lazarus as the very forge of piety; I said forge, because of the iron bowels. So the beggar Lazarus is thrust before those impious eyes, brought close to them, and that the rich man may be able to give, the rich man's wealth is heaped up more and more; but the rich man, harder than adamant, whatever God added to the rich man's wealth for the poor man's nourishment, either squandered shamefully or stored away cruelly.

Again God: that he might not be silent, that he might cry out, that he might warn the rich man, that the poor man, fasting, might show that he sought bread alone, that he might drive the mind of the man of plenty to bestow at least the least things, the poor man's hunger is increased. He longed, he says, to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. But the rich man, gorged with dishes of every kind, belched his indigestion up to heaven, so as not to hear the voice of the poor man lying on the ground in such a state. And again God, since to hardened ears the voice of one mouth crying out was nothing, to open the rich man's heart opens the poor man's whole body with wounds, so that in warning the rich man the poor man might have as many mouths as wounds. His inward parts are loosened, sores break out, the gaping of the wounds is widened, the pus pours out, and the poor man's whole flesh is set out as a stage of piety: so that him whom the voice of the hungry man had not moved, the sighs at least, or the pains, the groans and the whole heap of miseries might stir; but the rich man, with proud eye and insatiable heart, disdains to hear and see and feel all this.

God still seeks how the rich man may be loosed from his obstinacy. He loosens the poor man's hands from their joints, so that he could not even drive away the rich man's dogs, which he was to feed with his wounds to the rich man's wounding: and in a new way, brothers, the order of humanity is changed; beggary becomes humane, so that greed may be exposed as inhu-

man. The rich man does not feed the poor man even with the crumbs falling from his table, and Lazarus the poor man, because he had nothing else, proved humane to the dogs even with his own flesh. Wretched rich man, if you did not give bread, why did you not at least want to drive away the dogs? But your dogs are gentler than you, or rather you are more savage than your dogs: for while you rage, they spare, putting out not their teeth to bite, but their tongues in service, so that like a sponge they do not hurt the wounds but wipe them clean. Rich man, in your dogs piety conquered hunger: in you fullness did not win piety. For that the dogs took care to do this with zeal, experience itself, which is always before our eyes, proves. For dogs always heal their own wounds by licking: dogs heal the poor man by the teaching of nature, and man neglects man, while nature itself gravely accuses him. It is true, it is true, that the rich man cannot give even crumbs, in that the miser is always in want. The sermon must be put off, brothers, because we have used up the time for speaking, and the places of the reading that we must above all expound come next.

Sermon CXXII.

On the same

Our sermon today, brothers, ought to recount, as far as it is able, the virtues of Saint Andrew: but since we said that we would pay back what remains on that rich man and on Lazarus, the poor man of the Gospel, and since the prerogative of his apostleship and of his martyrdom suffices and abounds for the glory of blessed Andrew, if it please you, let us pay what we promised, what we owe, the Lord himself paying it back. For, knowing that weariness always breeds distaste both in the one who speaks and in the one who hears, in the former exposition we put off the greater part of the reading set before us, so that, with the strength of our minds restored, we might take in what follows of the saving word with full vigour and with due hearing.

For after what we have said, this follows. And lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom (Luke 16:23). And lifting up his eyes. Late does the rich man lift up his eyes, which he always kept cast down to the earth. Rich man, the eyes you lift up are themselves your accusers; the eyes you lift up do not appease the judge, but inflame him; they bring back not pardon, but guilt; and they

exact a heap of punishments, not comfort. Where do you lift your eyes? why do you still cry out, rich man? where do you look, rich man? There is Lazarus, there is the betrayer of your impiety, the witness of your crime, the one who proves your cruelty.

And he cried out, he says, Father Abraham, have mercy on me (Luke 16:24). Now you recognise a father, and now you do not know that he is a father to you, whom you so spurned as a father in Lazarus: now the just man meets you, who then, to be kind to you, allowed Lazarus to be tormented a long time. Unhappy man, whom his very origin so convicts, whom the very author of light so condemns; unhappy man, for whom in the judgement, because of the greatness of his crime, neither the begetter could have mercy, nor the father forgive, nor affection bring help. Why do you still cry out, rich man? Still rich, but in crime, not in wealth; not in substance, but in guilt. Why do you cry out? what do you ask? In this place no petition is being pressed any longer, but a lawsuit, where on the opposite side stands he who suffered: but the parties to the suit stand in different places: this one pleads from close by, that one from afar; this one prompts from the bosom, that one cries from Tartarus; that one entreats from rest, this one complains from punishment.

But what does the rich man say? Father Abraham, have mercy on me. You would say well, if Lazarus, sitting in the bosom, did not hold the very breast of the judge; you would say

well, if Lazarus did not possess all the secrets of the most just examining judge. In vain does he, whom an innocent confessor so accuses, entreat the judge; and to no purpose does he think that the judge can help him, when he who endured so much himself pronounces sentence by the judge's mouth.

Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus. Are you still so cruel to Lazarus? Send Lazarus. Where? To hell from the lap, from the lofty throne to the deepest chasm, to the gnashing of torments from holy quiet, from so great a silence of the blessed. And send Lazarus. As I see, what the rich man is doing comes not from new pain, but from old spite, and heaven burns him more than Gehenna. It is a grievous evil, it is an unbearable burning for them to see happy those whom they once held in contempt. Malice still does not leave the rich man, whom punishment already possesses, who does not ask to be brought to Lazarus, but wants Lazarus brought down to himself. To the bed of your torment, rich man, the kind Abraham cannot send Lazarus, whom you did not deign to admit to your table. Now your turns are reversed: you see the glory of him whose torment you so despised; he sees your torments, he who then marvelled at you in your glory.

But let us see, brothers, why he so laments that Lazarus should be sent to him. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. You are wrong, rich man: this flame is not so much of the tongue as of the mind, not so much of the tongue as of the heart; and

this is still the heat of conscience, not that last burning which remains for you and awaits you. For if the whole fire of the last judgement already surrounded you, and the sentence of that hopeless condemnation already held you, you would never lift your eyes, never presume to speak with your father, never to pray for yourself, never to intercede for your brothers. Surely, if the whole fire of hell already possesses you, if the flame of Gehenna embraces you, why do you want relief for the burning of your tongue alone? Unless it is because, while your breast pants with the flame of its crime and guilt, the tongue burns the more, blazes, seethes, the tongue that insulted the poor man, that refused mercy: it goes ahead to the judgement, it tastes and suffers the torments first, it is the first of the whole body to feel the burning, it that, when it first tasted here the various foods of delight and the perfumed cups, would not order piety, did not command that mercy be done, but even disparaged it when others did it. He it is who was clothed in purple and fine linen. What is this, rich man? does fine linen not protect you from the heat? does purple not withstand hell? These things have stayed behind; these things have deserted you, and now you yourself sweat naked, you burn, you who once mocked the heat, clothed in an artful nakedness.

And send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. What is this, rich man? where are the torrents of your winepresses? where are the barns enlarged against the hunger of the poor no less by greed than by plenty?

where are the wines kept against the need of the poor through the years and through the very forgetting of time? where are the outpourings, the spillings, the rivers of your services? All these have perished for you, not for your crime, you who thirst for a drop from the tip of a finger: had you given even that alone to the poor man, you would not thirst. A drop made you merciless, and a crumb inhuman, the things in which the poor man's whole living and life consist. I should like to know, rich man, whether, set in punishment, you even forgive yourself, since you would not have come to these evils if you had then given a crumb from such great barns, a drop from such great winepresses. Little is what the flesh needs, what nature demands, what suffices for life; avarice is the cause that man stores up things great and many, not for himself, but for others, to his own torment, present plainly, or to come.

But you say, rich man: "Even if I refused wine, I ask for water, which the very author of all things and nature have provided as common to all living things." I think, rich man, that you refused even water to the poor man, against whom you set very many dogs so that he might not enter your gate, might not come to your well. But what is it that you say? Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, and not to bring water? so the water is near: and if it is near, why do you not take it from close by? why? because your hands are bound, deservedly, rich man, because when Lazarus's hands were loosened by infirmity you disdained to help. Man ought, he ought to share

his limbs with the feeble: and Job, since he did not give them but paid them back, said: I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame; I was a father of the infirm (Job 29:15–16). Man, if you have no coin, give the poor man your hand, because he shows greater mercy who leads the feeble poor man by the hand to his own table. He gave himself to the poor man who fitted himself to the service of the poor man, fitted himself to the poor man's servitude. Again, brothers, let us put off the fullness of the present word, so that at a third hearing we may set forth what sentence the rich man received from most blessed Abraham.

Sermon CXXIII.

On the same

It is the mark of a shameless debtor either to put off what was lent or to deny what was promised; of an honest one, to pay both without delay and at once. We promised that we would pay back all that remains on that rich man, who, though he was seen to be harsh towards Lazarus, proved more savage and cruel towards himself. Thus far both the holy Evangelist and our sermon, as far as it could, have made plain what the rich man said to Abraham. It was said: And lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham far off, and crying out he said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame (Luke 16:23–24).

To him Abraham now answered: Son, you received back good things in your life (Luke 16:25). O wonderful piety! he still calls him son, whom he sees to have so degenerated by his own cruelty. O singular goodness! he still calls him son, whom he saw to be the home-born slave of hell, the offspring of punishments, already the lowest chattel of Gehenna. But he calls him son, so that the son's impiety may be exposed more and more, when

even towards such a one the piety of a father's word perseveres. "You call me father, I call you son, so that you may grieve bitterly at having lost what you were born. I still call you son, so that you may grieve more bitterly at having lost what grace and nature had given you; for not to have had is not so great a pain as to have lost what one had is a sorrow. I call you son, so that you may understand that what you suffer is of judgement, not of fury: I call you son, so that in me my patience, and in you your punishment, may remain."

But this man, brothers, understands that he is not a son, he who acknowledges and weighs that it is by his own merit that he lost what by nature he had of so kind a father. He would surely then have answered to his race, if he had been kind, if hospitable, if merciful, if he had been humane towards the poor man. He who does not do the works of his begetter denies his race, as the Lord teaches: If you were children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham (John 8:39). He proves himself true to his race who stands by as the champion of his father's work. But what does Abraham say? Son, you received back good things in your life. If the crime of this rich man is only this, that he received back good things, how guilty is he who seizes what is not his due? If he is so criminal who shuts up what is his own, who does not bestow what he has received, how liable to punishment is he who both broods over his own and seizes what belongs to others?

Brothers, let us give what is ours, if indeed it is ours; let us at least give what we think is ours; let us shun what is others', keep away from what is not ours; and surely, if we have taken anything from anyone, let us give it back with all speed: lest, leaving everything here, poor there in wealth, rich in crime, we be brought to this rich man. Yet let the rich man learn that he received back good things, not that he received them. You see, brothers, that by the word of holy Abraham the mind of this rich man is betrayed, his sense convicted, his understanding punished, for he believed that whatever he possessed by the Lord's bounty was not given to him, but paid back. Understand with what sense he went about, with what heart he walked, he who believed God to be his debtor, and, rich to his own harm, bound his Lord over as liable to his interest: not knowing that the Lord, though he walked poor on earth, yet ascended rich into heaven. And he gave, he did not receive on loan, who gave to one five talents, to another two, to another one; hence he also promises that he will exact interest, not pay it, when he says to the servant: You wicked and slothful servant, you should have given my money to the bankers, and I would have come and would surely have exacted it with interest (Matt 25:26–27). But this rich man is the more impious for this, that he was not pious towards another: for though he received back good things, he received back, unworthy as he was, good things not for good but for evil.

But let us pass on to Lazarus, and ask what it is that he says: And Lazarus likewise received back evil things. And let this suffice for merit, abound for glory, if he did not do good things, but received back evil things. Plainly blessed, brothers, is he who faithfully believes that from God he receives good things and receives back evil things. Blessed is he who always pays God his debts: surely, if he cannot, let him at least ask with all humility that his debts be forgiven him, as the Lord himself teaches: Say: Forgive us our debts (Matt 6:12). Blessed is he who pays God his debts even when he does not understand that he has contracted them, as the Prophet teaches more deeply when he says: What I did not seize, I then paid back (Ps 69:5). Blessed is he who before God always accuses himself so as to excuse himself, as the Scripture admonishes thus: The just man is an accuser at the beginning of his speech (Prov 18:17). And if he is just, why does the just man accuse himself? because no one living will be justified in your sight (Ps 143:2). Before man a man may perhaps glory in his justice, in his innocence, in his merit; before God there is no man who boasts of his innocence, who glories in his own justice. Hence it is that that Pharisee, since he does not pray but counts up his just deeds, puts them to account, belches them out, goes away unjust and worse than the publican (Luke 18:11–14).

But let us come to the rest. But now this man is comforted, he says, and you are tormented. See, brothers, understand, brothers, from what has

been said, that, though the distinction of places held the just and the unjust apart, one region of hell still contained them; and though a great chasm already separated them, the heavenly dwelling did not yet separate them; and though a sad gulf divided them, the height above assigned to the angels did not yet divide them. A flaming sword (as the lawgiver relates) turned at the gate of paradise, so that no access might lie open to man there (Gen 3:24): with gates of bronze and bars of iron the gates of the underworld were bolted shut, so that no way out might lie open to the souls that had been flung there from on high.

For the bond of the father's debt, too, which assigned each one to death, was held written with the pen of fault and with the ink of guilt itself, and for the harm of the offspring the long interest of the ages kept running. Nor was there anyone fit to enter paradise, to quench the flame set there by God, or to open the gates of hell barred from heaven, or to discharge the bond that was kept shut up in the ark of the Law by the command of God. Hence it is that the Lord himself came, he who had banished the first man, that is, the stubborn servant; the Lord himself, who had barred paradise, who had shut hell, came down with all his power to the earth and into the underworld, to quench what had been kindled, at once to open what had been shut, to abolish the misdeed of the first-formed man. Hence it is that he carries the battering ram of his cross as he goes to attack hell, to crush and break the very gates of Tartarus, fortified with bronze and with iron.

From his side he pours out water, to temper the way to paradise; to quench the fire of hell on the side of the saints, to wash out the whole bond of the debt, and to discharge the old one, and that by suffering he himself might remit what he himself had brought in by imposing it.

Recognise, brothers, rejoice, brothers, that after the triumph of Christ the custody of the saints was dissolved, and that nothing further is owed to hell in respect of the saints: since Christ penetrated even into the underworld to set free the just, not the unjust. Let us understand, brothers, how much Christ has profited us; or rather, how without Christ there was salvation in nothing, since, besides this dissolution of bodies, the souls of the saints too were held bound in the underworld. Blessed then is Lazarus, who owed everything to God, so as to owe nothing to crime. Blessed, because here he received back so many evils, so that there he might possess all good things.

And Abraham added, saying: No one can cross from here to you, nor pass over from there to here (Luke 16:26). It terrifies, brothers, the hearing of this word terrifies us exceedingly, which shows that after death those once assigned to penal custody in the underworld cannot be transferred to the rest of the saints, unless, already redeemed by the grace of Christ, they are released from this despair by the intercession of the holy Church; so that what the sentence denies, the Church may merit, grace may grant.

Yet here the rich man still asks, and says: Father Abraham. He still calls him father, who by his merits has so lost both father and fatherland. Father Abraham. Here the wretch lies even in punishment. Father Abraham, send him to my father's house (Luke 16:27). If he truly calls this man father, the house of what other father is he then asking for? unless perhaps he believes that he has as a father in his absence him whom in his presence he sees he has so lost: and so he believes that his father's house is kept for him by the favour of him whose bosom he sees denied him there, sees his rest refused him.

Father Abraham, send him. Whom? Lazarus, of course. Where? To my father's house. Now, and late, the rich man, not merciful but to be pitied, invites Lazarus to his father's house, whom all that time, as he lay at his gates for the pity of his substance, he did not take in; and under a show of piety he wants Lazarus to go back to his former wounds, to his past groans, whom by his first request he could not call down to his own torments. Before he said: Send to me. Now he says, Send to my brothers. He feels pain; the unhappy man acts so as not to see happy him whom he once thought unhappy: Send to my brothers. Where? To my father's house. To what end? For I have five brothers, he says, that he may testify to them, lest they too come into this place of torments (Luke 16:28). To whom is he pious, who is so impious to himself? Shamelessly he presumes to obtain penance for others, he who so cruelly made no provision of pardon for himself.

Send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. And do you think that Lazarus will be enough for your five brothers, who for so long a time, with so many wounds, crying out with his whole body, achieved nothing with you? Rightly Abraham answered him: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them (Luke 16:29). Let Lazarus rest after such labours, and you, weep for your punishments, which you bear by your own merit. But God long ago provided for the salvation of your brothers and of all, not by your counsel but by his own gift: he gave the Law through Moses, he bestowed prophecy through Elijah; let them hear them, then, so that they may not feel your torments.

The rich man answered: No, father Abraham, but if someone rises from the dead, they will believe him (Luke 16:30). Abraham answered him: If they do not believe Moses and Elijah, neither will they believe if someone rises from the dead (Luke 16:31). Nothing is so true, brothers: he who would not believe Christ speaking from heaven through the Law, coming from heaven, will no longer deserve to believe him returning from the underworld. Christ himself, brothers, our God and Lord, spoke to Moses from heaven, he himself spoke on earth in an earthly body, he himself returned from the underworld with an earthly body: and yet, when he told what good things are in heaven, what evils there are in the underworld, the brothers of that rich man, who are understood as the Jewish peoples, would not believe him with all their obstinacy.

But, brothers, since time now prevents us from saying who the rich man is, or who Lazarus the poor man, and who are the rich man's five brothers, and does not allow us to open what spiritual understanding lies hidden in this story, let us, taught by Christ what awaits the just with him, what awaits the unjust in the underworld, act, let us run, by word, by deed, by mercy, so that we may lay hold of the good things above, and, struck with terror, avoid and turn aside from the evil things.

Sermon CXXIV.

On the same

As often as a rich man in purple is set before us by God, as often as a wounded poor man is placed before us, so often is a skamma of mercy laid open for us, so often a stadium of piety opened to us; so that from the heavenly spectacle we may observe in how short a time the poor man, however poor, comes to the palm, the rich man to ruin. A man, he says, was rich, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted splendidly every day (Luke 16:19). And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, longing to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table (Luke 16:20–21). The rich man was clothed in purple, the poor man in bruises; the rich man in fine linen, the poor man in filth; the rich man in gold, the poor man in stench; the rich man reclined on a couch of down, the poor man lay on the hardest ground; the rich man belched his feasts, the poor man panted out pus; the rich man poured out wines, the poor man tears; the rich man, sated, threw away loaves, the hungry poor man had not even crumbs; the rich man fed with his dishes those that barked at the poor man, the poor man filled the rich man's dogs with his wounds.

And, not to say more, we have read that all good things came to the rich man, all evil things to the poor man; and yet adversity did not break the poor man, nor did all prosperity profit the rich man: on the contrary, poverty advanced the poor man to philosophy, pain to virtue, contempt to patience, necessity to will, hunger to fasting, thirst to endurance, death to life, punishment to reward, earth to heaven, want to the kingdom; and so purple raised the rich man to pride, fine linen to luxury, plenty to inhumanity, abundance to impiety, ointments to languor, splendour to blindness, loftiness to ruin. So prosperity does not raise up the slothful, nor does adversity lay low the brave: because it is not riches, nor poverty, but the mind that either leads the grateful to reward, or brings the ungrateful down to punishment.

At the rich man's gate the poor man is placed, full of sores: and this happens not by human chance, it happens by divine judgement, so that the conflict of the rich man and the poor man might take place on earth, the spectacle remain in heaven. The rich man stood clad all over in the armour of riches; and against him the poor man lay clothed in his flesh alone, unless perhaps his breastplate was the one wound of his whole body. The rich man lingered among choirs of servants; the poor man, stripped of his skin, was driven by the goads of pains. The rich man hurled the darts of impiety, Lazarus held up the shield of tender mercy; the rich man brandished his cruelty to wound the poor man; the

poor man's strength foiled the rich man's guilty soul, because, as his body forsook him, he passed wholly into his soul, and, trampling on the flesh, he ascended wholly into the spirit, an armour-bearer of heaven, so that the rich man's cruelty might find nowhere to strike.

For God had brought it about for this reason, that the rich man should always be before the poor man's eyes, the poor man before the rich man's, so that each in turn might render the other a cure for their different sickness. The poor man was sick in body, the rich man in mind. Hence it is that the cure of the poor man was put off, that the rich man might take from the wound medicine, from the groaning compunction, from the tears penance, from the patience an example, from the hunger mercy, from the thirst feeling; in sum, heavenly fellowship from earthly compassion: surely, that the rich man, supported by such great goods, might be grateful to God, when the poor man remained grateful to God in all evils, the rich man looking on. Rightly, then, he who lay there was carried by the angels; he who mourned was comforted in the lap of Abraham; and he lives to God for ever who did not even know how to live for himself in the world.

It came to pass, he says, that the poor man died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). But the rich man died, and was buried in hell. The wretch received the burial of his soul before that of his body, and he was not given over to the rest of his body before he was given to the sepulchre of punishment;

so that he might live for punishment for ever, since he has once died to life.

And he was buried in hell: and he saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom (Luke 16:23). What a reversal of things! where the rich man went down! where the poor man went up! There he looks up at him whom he had looked down on here; and from hell he sees in Abraham's bosom him whom, as he lay before him, he did not see from his proud couch. Father Abraham, have mercy on me (Luke 16:24). Foolishly he asks of the father the mercy which he had refused to his brother. Have mercy on me. What has he to do with mercy, for whom everything has already turned to punishment? Or what supplication before the father will be able to help him, whose accuser sits in the father's bosom? Lazarus holds the father's breast, and beats upon the whole equity of his holy heart, so that he may keep himself father of the good son, judge of the bad one.

Father Abraham, have mercy on me: and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. Send Lazarus: "that he himself, who is the cause of my torment, now a minister of refreshment, may now himself hold out the comfort of the tip of his finger, he to whom, as he lay there, I then refused the comfort of my whole hand." And send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. So he thirsts for a drop who, when the poor man thirsted, poured out vats of wine; and he believes that a drop from the tip of a finger will quench the flames of Gehenna, he who

with his measures through the whole day did not quench the burnings of drunkenness. But he asks that this drop be given him for refreshment, which he had refused for the poor man's burning. It is this drop, rich man, that makes you cruel; it is this drop, refused by you, that dried up the mouth of Lazarus, because for the refreshment of the body a drop is enough, and a crumb.

Longing, he says, to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the table. Bread was scattered, wine was poured out, and what was refused to the poor man for the last extremity of his life was all lost to the rich man in pomp. And send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue. The tongue is in the head, the head of evil; it disparages the needy, insults the poor, barks at piety, carps at mercy: and rightly it is first in Gehenna, foremost in torment, leader of punishments, because it forbade mercy, the tongue to which it had been given to command it.

And although the order of the reading both compels me to speak and invites you to hear who the rich man in purple is, who Lazarus the poor man is, who the rich man's five brothers are, how before the day of judgement the rich man feels the torments of Gehenna; yet grief calls me back to say: The rich man died and was buried in hell.

And if there is a prison under the earth, if there is a burning kausis, if there is an underworld tormenting without end, if there is a grim officer to snatch us away to these things after the labours of this age, why are we dazed? where are we? what is this sleep that mocks us? what is this

deadly forgetfulness that holds us? why, despising all things, is our one care not to escape such evils, lest, living for the world, running for others, we be suddenly snatched away to punishments so great, so many, so cruel?

And if there is a possibility of ascending to the things above, if there is the power of living in the heavens, if there is the bosom of Abraham prepared for the rest of all good men, if Lazarus is in the bosom of so great a father; or rather, since there is no doubt, where places, and persons, and names are described, why do we not exchange earth for heaven? why do we not buy eternal things with perishable ones? why do we not purchase lasting things with things that will perish? so that we may both avoid the punishments of hell, and may see broadly, have and hold, these things that we long to hear about in narrow measure.

Sermon CXXV.

On the unjust steward

Salt is a wholesome seasoning of all foods, if measure is not lacking: otherwise, without measure, it both perishes itself and spoils what it has salted; for excess makes bitter what measure could have seasoned. So the sense that is in us, if it keeps measure, gives savour, brings forth understanding, begets prudence, enlarges the heart, increases the wit, ripens what is to be said, orders what is to be heard, and becomes sweet to itself, becomes for those who taste it the whole fullness of sweetness; and plainly that sense will be honeyed which brings forth from the mouth nothing bitter. We have said this first, so that in the senses of the Gospel the measure of our own sense may be held in check: that it may not violate the food of life, the divine pasture, the heavenly savour, but keep it for us with most careful sobriety, according to that saying of the Apostle: Not to be wise beyond what one ought to be wise, but to be wise with sobriety (Rom 12:3).

But now let us hear what the Lord said: A certain man was rich (Luke 16:1). And who was this man, if not Christ? Who the rich man, if not he who in our poverty possessed all the riches of creation? A certain man was rich. This he impressed

again and again upon the Jews, that they might understand that in him to whom human poverty belonged there was a wealthy Godhead. He was rich. He was rich in his majesty, who in the eyes of the Jews was poor. And how was he not rich, he to whom angels ministered, powers were obedient, the elements were servants, and things that were not came into being when bidden, came when called?

A certain man was rich: and he had a steward. Whom, if not man, to whom the whole possession had been entrusted, to cultivate the world? A certain man was rich, and he had a steward: and this man was defamed before him. As if he had not foreknown, as if he had not foreseen, he to whom hidden things are known, before whose eyes even the things that are covered are naked.

And this man was defamed before him. Did he then believe rumour? did he learn it as rumour brought the news? Far from it. But because he began to inquire into the things he knew, which he covered with his loving-kindness, at the time when the earth was accusing: The voice of your brother's blood cries out from the earth (Gen 4:10); the earth cried out, heaven cried out, the angels grieved, when the whole rumour of the world was already speaking. And this man was defamed before him for having squandered his substance. The younger son was read earlier to have squandered this man's substance; now the steward is said to have squandered his goods. Just as the same Christ is God and man, the same householder and father; so it is clear that this

same one is both steward and son: here there is diversity of causes, there is a change of names, there is no variety of persons.

And he was defamed before him for having squandered his goods, and he called him (Luke 16:1–2). He called him through the Gospel. And he said to him. And what does he not do through the Gospel, through which he rebukes conduct, lays bare hidden things, opens the conscience, chastises what has been committed, counts up evils, and threatens punishment to one who persists in them, though to one who turns back he promises pardon? And he called him, and said to him: What is this I hear of you? He charges as heard what he knew, because he does not wish to hasten sentence against the accused; and one convicted before him he summons as one merely accused, he who longs to let pardon thus go before judgement.

What is this I hear of you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward. Why does he join things so severe to things so kind? why does he remove him from the stewardship before he hears the account? Give an account, for you can no longer be steward. Now he asks for the account like a man, now like God he announces things present and things to come. Give an account, for you can no longer be steward. He asks an account, not to exact it but to remit it; he asks, so that he may be asked; he asks here, so as not to ask it of you; he asks in this age, so as not to ask at the judgement; he asks quickly, so that the time of punishments may not

shut out the time of satisfaction. Give an account of your stewardship: for you can no longer be steward. Why? Because the end of life has come, the time of death; already the summons from on high binds you, already the judgement calls. Hurry, then, lest you lose the time of satisfaction, you who have lost the time of work.

Give an account. That is to say: set the account in order, set what is yours in order, lest you pay back what is mine; and you will set it in order if you now stop squandering. "I took up your former debts when I took you up; I paid, when I absolved you; I, the examining judge, stood for you to be heard by the examining judge; the judge, I entered into judgement; I was made the accused of my accused, I took up penalties from those under penalty, I did not flee the sentence from the condemned; the destroyer of death, I received death; I penetrated the underworld, the destroyer of hell, so that by these things I might not only withdraw you from your punishment, but also make you a sharer of my dignity. Act, then, so that you, whom the time of your stewardship has shut out, may not be shut in by the perpetuity of the condemnation I pronounce."

But now let us examine what the steward answered. He said within himself: What shall I do? (Luke 16:3) What shall I do now? Man always longs to do good things at the moment when death has taken away the time for doing them. He said within himself. He seeks counsel within himself, who outside had nothing now with which to help himself. He said within himself.

He pricks his heart, goads his mind, and stirs up everything within, to wring from himself the penance that he could give for himself. To dig I am not able. It was not his strength but his time for labour that had failed. To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed. He dreads the confusion of the judgement to come, in which there is no longer a time for repenting but for punishments, and where the accused is more ashamed of his conscience than of the fire of Gehenna.

To beg I am ashamed. And who is not ashamed to beg in the heavens? Wretched the man whom time held rich: eternity will possess him a beggar; and Tartarus will have him naked, whom heaven could have received and held wealthy. The present figure is aimed at a people, but it is good for us, very good, if we each apply these things to ourselves, if we refer them to ourselves, who on earth ought to feel ourselves stewards, not think ourselves masters; to have received the ministry of a temporary paying-out, not to have found a perpetual right of possessing; to beware lest the report of substance wasted go before us to the householder, according to that saying of the Apostle: The sins of some men are manifest, going before to judgement; and some men they also follow (1 Tim 5:24). He does not reach the appointed end of life who loses the time of his stewardship, he who is rumoured to have squandered what was entrusted to him. Hence, hence comes the untimely departure, hence death before its day, hence the bitter summons, hence the giving back more bitter than itself, as the Prophet

laments, crying: Men of blood and deceit shall not live out half their days (Ps 55:24).

But would that, when illness warns us of our summons, when fever harshly shuts us out of our stewardship, when the force of pain drives us to hasten to render up our stewardship, we followed the deed and the mind of the present steward, turned to the counsel of the soul, to compunction of heart, to penance of mind, to the support of mercy, to the patronage of piety, to the advocacy of confession! surely we would ask for the bonds of the Lord's debtors; and if not all, at least the half, like this steward, we would remit for our own pardon; so that we who, by squandering the goods entrusted to us, are called stewards of iniquity, may at the last, by a pious fraud, obtain the praise of the judge himself.

And he praised, he says, the steward of iniquity (Luke 16:8). And since the deed of the steward in the Gospel raises no small question, he who, accused of many things, is read to have pleased by a single fraud: why he pleased in this way, or who he is, we shall set forth more fully, God helping, in the following sermon.

Sermon CXXVI.

On the same

How advantageous, how profitable it is to loosen the knots of debtors, to slacken the chains of securities, the example of the present steward teaches and instructs us: who, while he moderates the heaps of bonds with prudent consent, not only escaped the narrowest straits of the examination, but even won the praise of the examiner, a praise to endure for ages. And you, brothers, temper with most kindly hearing what my promise has made me owe you on the present reading, lest a severe examination weigh upon me and you together, whom understanding will be able to relieve kindly. So let us now follow what remains of the reading, and hear what counsel the steward found.

He said, he says, within himself: What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? (Luke 16:3) To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed. I know what I shall do… (Luke 16:4). So, calling together each of his master's debtors, he said to the first: How much do you owe my master? (Luke 16:5) And he said: A hundred jars of oil. And he said to him: Take your security; and sit down quickly, write fifty (Luke 16:6). Then he said to another: And you, how

much do you owe? (Luke 16:7) He said: A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him: Take your writing, and write eighty. And the master praised the steward of iniquity, because he had acted prudently (Luke 16:8).

Even now it is plain that in the Gospel readings very many questions are contained, darkened by divine mysteries, veiled by heavenly senses, and that what is uttered by the mouth of Christ from the heavenly secrets does not easily submit to human understanding. And the master praised, he says, the steward of iniquity, because he had acted prudently. I ask, what does a worldly mind grasp in this place? what does the common hearing grasp and receive here? where between the steward and the master's debtors the invention of a cunning fraud is praised, where the debtor's honesty is taken away, shame removed, innocence violated, all modesty buried, where the steward, at the time for rendering his account, burns more in fraud than he panted in luxury in the time of his stewardship; at the moment of the examination he rages against the master's very property, to its loss, more than he poured out and squandered in the days of his administration; and he who before had emptied the substance by squandering, by emptying the bond overthrows more of what remained; nor does he care how he might make good what was lacking, but contrives how he might lessen what remained.

He said to the debtor: How much do you owe my master? He did not say: "How much do you

owe me?" He was appealing to the conscience, calling the debtor's mind to witness, by speaking thus. And why is it that, with no regard for the master, the steward was provoking the debtor to so great a fraud? How much do you owe my master? He says: A hundred jars of oil. Take your security, and write fifty. To so great a fraud the steward conspired and acted, so as to lose all good faith, while he contrives the security. How much do you owe my master? Both knew that the creditor on high was present everywhere and always, and could not be forestalled by fraud; but even under the master's eyes he who has once begun to steal does not stop. Granted, however, that it is the way of men that a debtor should seek fraudulent short cuts, and that a steward should look after himself by stealing so: why, again, does the master approve the fraud? applaud the thefts? proclaim the falsehood? Does he call prudence what is wickedness, and judge pious what affords many a very bad example of falsehood? Let it savour so to carnal senses; to spiritual ones, which belong to the divine light, let it now begin to shine.

The parable that had been given beforehand through the younger son is repeated through the steward. The steward of iniquity is the people of the Gentiles, named from the mammon of iniquity. Make friends for yourselves, he says, of the mammon of iniquity (Luke 16:9): the people that, having forsaken the Creator, had given itself wholly over to the servitude of mammon. Whoever is free from the captivity of this mam-

mon and is no longer weighed down by the cruel weight of money, let him take his stand on a heavenly watchtower, and from there look down on mammon lording it over the world and the worldly with tyrannical fury. It commands nations, gives orders to kingdoms, decrees wars, hires warriors, sells blood, works deaths, betrays fatherlands, destroys cities, subjugates peoples, presses on fortresses, harasses citizens, presides over the forum, blots out law, confounds right and wrong, and, reaching even to deaths, tempts faith, violates truth, carps at good name, squanders honour, loosens affections, takes away innocence, buries piety, cuts the ties of kinship, undermines friendship. And what more? This is mammon, the master of iniquity, who unjustly lords it over human bodies and minds.

So the steward of this mammon, that is, the Gentile people, guilty of substance thus squandered, is summoned by the Lord through the Gospel to render an account of his stewardship, that is, of the natural good. To him it is then said: You can no longer be steward. When the end of the age is announced to him. Indeed he believes, according to the Apostle, that the figure of the world passes away (1 Cor 7:31), that the times of human stewardship pass; and within himself, returning to himself, he asks what he ought to do. He said within himself: What shall I do? The heart groaned, the mind felt pain, faith answered, belief gave saving counsel, that the steward should now return to the true master, and by paying out mammon should, a victor, subject the cruel

master to his own servitude, so that what had been the instrument of perdition might become an occasion of salvation.

So the steward, once a Gentile, now a Christian, goes to his master's first debtor. Whom? The Jewish debtor, whom he asks what and how much he owes his master, as if he did not know the measure of the debt. The one who carried the security already knew it through the Gospel, but by asking he was seeking in this way a confession; indeed, the debtor confesses both the kind and the amount of the debt, saying: A hundred jars of oil. Why not a weight of silver or of gold? why not a hundred and ten, or ninety, but a hundred? So that both from the debt and from the number a heavenly mystery may shine out. The Jew owed oil, which by the bond of the Law he had received for anointing kings, prophets and priests, as a figure of the Christian chrism, until it should reach the very prince of kings and of prophets and of priests, to whom the whole hundredfold fullness of chrism was to be rendered and poured out. But since the debtor, against the good faith of the security, impiously killed the creditor so as not to pay the debt, the security of the Law itself, that is, the Law, passed to the Gentiles: so that the Jew, convicted through the Gentile, because he turned his debt into a crime, may pay the interest of penance.

You see, then, that the steward urges not fraud but penance: he invites to the gaining of mercy, he does not drive to falsehood, when he says: Take your security, sit down quickly, and write

fifty. That the fiftieth number belongs to mercy David makes plain when he sings the fiftieth psalm, crying: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy (Ps 51:3). The fiftieth number laid open mercy, in that the Law prescribes that the fiftieth year, which is the jubilee, blots out and loosens the ties of all debtors, of all contracts (Lev 25:10). This steward, then, acts so that through the mercy of Christ the Jew may become solvent, he who through the security of the Law was held fast, confounded by unpayable debts. The Jew owes oil, he who, according to the Apostle, had dried up in himself the fatness of the fruitful olive by the barrenness of disbelief (Rom 11:17). Hence too, by the warmth of the Gospel faith, it now returns whole into the Christian branches and revives whole into grace.

Then he said to another: And you, how much do you owe? He said: A hundred measures of wheat. After the grain of wheat, which is Christ, was sown in the earth of our flesh and was made fruitful for the abundance on high through the Lord's burial, it came about that man now owes his author the hundredfold fruit. Unless, he says, the grain of corn falling into the ground dies, it remains alone (John 12:24). Seeing this, then, the steward makes good provision when he says: Take your security, and write eighty. For as the fiftieth confers mercy, so the eightieth prefigures the whole of faith and grace. This is the number in which the reader well versed in the Law and well studied in the Gospel understands that there are the Decalogue of the Law and the ogdoad of

grace. So when the steward says, Write eighty, he acts so that through grace he may pay what he could not pay back through nature. Rightly, then, this steward deserved the praise of his master, he who in the bonds contrived not fraud, but salvation.

But as to what he said: The children of the age are more prudent in their generation than the children of light (Luke 16:8), it is to be understood thus: that those who were once children of the age, that is, the Gentiles, are now the chosen of God; and those who were children of God, that is, the Jews, are now left among the children of the age. In their generation. That by which they were reborn, not that by which they were born. Let these things be written, he says, for another generation (Ps 102:19). This other generation is that of those who seek the Lord. May the God of knowledge and of enlightenment enlighten your hearts, and pour the whole fullness of his knowledge into the secret place of your mind.

Sermon CXXVII.

On the beheading of Saint John the Baptist

Today, while the virtue of John and the savagery of Herod are told us, our inmost parts were shaken, our hearts trembled, our sight grew dim, our understanding was dulled, our hearing fled. Or what stands firm in human senses, when the greatness of crimes has destroyed the greatness of virtues?

Herod, he says, seized John and bound him, and put him in prison (Matt 14:3). John, the school of virtues, the teaching of life, the pattern of holiness, the rule of justice, the mirror of virginity, the title of modesty, the example of chastity, the way of penance, the pardon of sins, the discipline of faith; John, greater than man, equal to the angels, the sum of the Law, the sanction of the Gospel, the voice of the apostles, the silence of the prophets, the lamp of the world, the herald of the judge, the forerunner of Christ, the harbinger of the Lord, the witness of God, in the middle of the whole Trinity, is given to an incestuous woman, handed over to an adulteress, consigned to a dancing girl. Rightly, then, our inmost parts were shaken, our hearts trembled.

But Herod is the one who profaned the temple, took away the priesthood, confounded order,

violated the kingdom, corrupted whatever there was of religion; whatever there was of life, of law, of morals, of faith, of discipline, he destroyed and confounded. Herod, an assassin against his citizens, a robber against the nobles, a ravager against his allies, a plunderer against his household, a slayer of the people, a killer of his sons, a homicide against strangers, a parricide against his own, making the earth drunk with gore, remained in thirst for blood. Hence it is that he drained the pious blood of John in a huge cup of cruelty: but let the reading itself now speak.

Herod, he says, seized John, and bound him. He who had loosed the chains of sins is bound with the chains of a sinner, so that pardon, bound, may leave no room for pardon. He bound him and put him in prison. Herod, you commit adultery, and John goes to prison? Is this how you judge, sitting, the accused, in the place of the judge, the persecutor of innocence in the place of its avenger? I ask, where is the face of things? where is good name? where is shame? where is the repute of the public examining judge? surely, where is God? where is man? where is right? where is law? where are the very rights of nature? All things together, Herod, are confounded, by your acting, by your judging, by your commanding.

He seized John, he says, and bound him, and put him in prison. Herod, the case pursues you, the chains convict you, the prison accuses you, the wrong done to John, brought out in public, spreads it abroad of you: whoever inquires into

the cause of his custody finds in you what to punish, and in John what to grieve over. John, known to the world, recognised by the fame of his virtue, most renowned for his holiness, while he draws to himself those who inquire into the wrong done him, makes your incest known to all; he brings it about that public confusion holds you, whom secret correction could not correct. John pressed Herod with warnings, not with accusation; he wanted to correct him, not that he should perish: but Herod, burning with the torches of lust, preferred to perish rather than to return, and to possess unlawfully his brother's wife.

To the captives of crimes, to the enemies of innocence, freedom is always hateful, virtue opposed to the vicious, holiness detested by the sacrilegious, chastity hostile to the unchaste, integrity a punishment to the corrupt, frugality adverse to the dissolute, mercy unbearable to the cruel, piety to the impious, justice to the unjust. The Evangelist proves this when he says: For John said to him: It is not lawful for you to have the wife of Philip your brother (Matt 14:4). See why John gives offence, see why Herod rages: he who warns the wicked offends; he who rebukes the criminal incurs hatred. John spoke what was of the Law, of justice, of salvation; surely what was not of hatred but of love: see what reward he obtained from the impious man for his piety.

Wishing, he says, to kill him, he feared the people (Matt 14:5). He easily turns aside from justice who in his causes fears not God but men. This fear can put off the opportunity of sinning,

it cannot take away the will: hence even those whom it has held back from crime it makes more eager for crime, and a man seethes in his mind until he accomplishes the evil he plans. It is the fear of God alone that corrects minds, puts crimes to flight, keeps innocence, grants a lasting opportunity.

But let us hear the very passion of most blessed John. On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced in the midst of the banqueting hall, and pleased Herod: whence he promised with an oath to give her whatever she should ask of him (Matt 14:6–7). But she, prompted beforehand by her mother: Give me, she says, here on a dish the head of John the Baptist (Matt 14:8). This is the ancient malice of woman, which cast Adam out of the delights of paradise (Gen 3:23); this made heavenly men earthly, this sent the human race into hell, this took life away from the world for the fruit of one tree. This evil that leads men to death, this evil Elijah the prophet fled (1 Kgs 19:3); and he whose tongue was made the key of heaven fled like a guilty man from the face of a woman; this found true toil and distress, this that now kills John the Baptist, casts down childhood, ruins youth, entices and disquiets old age that is already dead.

Prompted beforehand by her mother: Give me, she says, on a dish the head of John the Baptist. From her mother's breast, roaring, a new beast, scorning the prey of the body, goes straight for the head itself, to cut it off. And the king was saddened, yet because of the oath, and because

of those at table, he commanded it to be given, and sent and had John beheaded, and his head was brought on a dish, and given to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother (Matt 14:9–11). You have heard, brothers, how great a cruelty is born of pleasure, how great an impiety of lust.

And his head was brought on a dish. The house is turned into an arena, the table moves into the cavea; the diners become spectators, the banquet is changed by fury; the food becomes slaughter, the wine passes into blood, an end is set to the birthday; at the rising a setting is displayed, the banquet is changed into homicide, the instruments sound out a worldly tragedy; in comes a beast, not a girl; she seeks to cut off, not to dance; a wild animal runs about, not a woman; she tosses a mane over her neck, not hair; she spreads her limbs in windings, she grows with the increase of her savagery; she becomes great in cruelty, not in body; and the singular wild beast, until she seizes her prey, roars with her mouth, gnashes with her teeth; she does not receive the steel, but draws it.

But lest anyone think that we wish to declaim about such things, we do not wish to declaim, but to cry aloud: that the joys of your festivities may be cautious, and the solemnity of your birthdays may keep measure in its rejoicing; that Christ may be present at our feasts, that we may dine before the face of the author; that by the decency of the banquet nature itself, which brought you forth, may be honoured; that the gladness of your table may reach the poor, that your household

may dance with the discipline of innocence, that luxury may keep away, extravagance be put to flight; that the plague of dancing girls, the allurements of singers, the kindlings of pleasures, the burdens of the belly, the shipwrecks of minds may be cut off together with the banquets of Herodias; so that your present joy may come to everlasting gladness.

Today, brothers, we have brought our sermon not against Herod only, but also against Herodias; because the hearer understands well how great is the happiness of the martyr when he has heard the misery of the persecutor: yet it is fitting for us to know that John was born of his death, and Herod died of his birthday.

Sermon CXXVIII.

On Saint Apollinaris, bishop and martyr

Blessed Apollinaris, first in the priesthood, alone adorned this church of Ravenna with the home-born and illustrious honour of martyrdom. Rightly Apollinaris, for according to the command of his God he lost his soul here, so as to find it for life everlasting. Blessed is he who so finished his course, kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7), that he was truly found by the believers first in his place. Nor let anyone believe him less than a martyr because of the name of confessor, him whom he sees, at God's bidding, returned daily and many times to the contest. Hear Paul saying: I die daily (1 Cor 15:31). To die once is little for one who can often bring back to his king a glorious victory over his enemies. It is not so much death as faith and devotion that makes a martyr; and as it is a mark of virtue to fall in the battle line, in the conflict, for love of one's king, so it is a mark of perfect virtue to carry on and complete the contests for a long time. It is not that he did not persecute the martyr, because he did not inflict death at once; rather he proved him a martyr, because he did not wring his faith from him; the cunning enemy hurled what darts he could, and exhausted every kind of his weapons: yet he could not move the

mind of that bravest of leaders, nor violate his constancy.

It is a supreme thing, brothers, to despise the present life for the Lord, if need be; but it is glorious also, while living, to scorn the world and trample it underfoot together with its prince. Christ was hastening to the martyr, the martyr was hastening to his king. Rightly did we say "was hastening", according to that saying of the Prophet: Rise up to meet me, and see (Ps 59:5). But that she might keep her champion for herself, the holy Church ran vehemently to meet Christ, so as to reserve the crown for victorious justice, and to grant herself the presence of her warrior in time of war. The confessor often shed his blood, and with his wounds, by the faith of his mind, bore witness to his author.

Looking up to heaven, he looked down on the flesh and the earth. Yet the still tender infancy of the Church prevailed, held him, and obtained that the martyr should be held back from his desire. Infancy, I say, brothers, which always obtains everything, which contends more by tears than by reckoning of strength. For the countenance and the sweat of the strong cannot do as much as the tears of little ones can, because there bodies are broken, here hearts; there the judgements of the mind are scarcely moved, here all piety bends down and descends.

And what more, brothers? Holy mother Church strove, strove, that she might never be separated from her prelate. See, he lives; see, like the good shepherd he stands in the midst of his

flock, nor is his spirit ever separated, which went before in body for a time; went before, I say, in outward form, but for the rest he rests among us in the very dwelling of his body. The devil is extinguished, the persecutor has fallen: see, he reigns and lives who desired to be slain for his king, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Sermon CXXIX.

On Saint Cyprian, martyr (of doubtful authorship)

Since today we have come together to God on the birthday of the holy martyr Cyprian, on which he triumphed over the devil in a wonderful contest, and since he has left us a glorious example of his virtues, it is fitting therefore that we exult and rejoice. So when you hear of the birthday of the saints, my dearest ones, do not think that that day is meant on which they are born from the flesh into the earth, but that on which they are born from the earth into heaven, from labour to rest, from temptations to quiet, from torments to delights, not fleeting, but strong, and stable, and eternal, from worldly laughter to the crown and to glory. Such birthdays of the martyrs are worthily celebrated. So when a festival of this kind is kept, do not think, my dearest one, that the birthdays of the martyrs are celebrated with dinners alone and with more lavish feasts: but what you celebrate in the memory of the martyr is set before you to imitate.

Look, then, my dearest one, at the eagerness of the people standing round. For on this day once a crowd of the impious stood by, when holy Cyprian was struck down at the tyrant's command; there were crowds of the wicked, choirs

of onlookers waiting; now a multitude of the faithful has flocked together devoutly to rejoice together: then a crowd of those who raged, now of those who exult; then of the hopeless, now of the hopeful. This is why the birthdays of the martyrs are celebrated with yearly gladness, that what was done once may remain through every age in the memory of the devout. The deed was done, my dearest one, so that you might not say that you did not know; they are celebrated every year, so that you may not say, "I have forgotten."

Rouse yourselves, then, my dearest ones, to imitate these things; long for this grace of greatness of soul; ask that this be given you which he merited to obtain. For all who desire heavenly things cannot be entangled in the snares of earthly goods, because they have set their way of life in the heavens: as the holy Apostle says: But our way of life is in heaven (Phil 3:20). Let the desire of our heart, then, be directed to the heavenly dwelling, where, when your treasure has been scattered to the poor, there will your heart be also (Matt 6:21). But the treasure of all good things is Christ, who with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit may deign to heap up and fill you with heavenly gifts, both now and for ever.

Sermon CXXX.

At the consecration of a bishop

As the long expectation of a great promise kindles the heart and wearies the mind, so the longed-for fulfilment of the promise itself rouses all the senses and the inmost parts of the bowels. Hence it is that today, as Isaiah said, holy mother Church, festive, all rejoicing and adorned, has come forth, has put on the tunic of her gladness; and as a bride she has set a mitre upon herself, and has arrayed and adorned herself with varied ornament, as the sky shines with the lights of the stars, and the earth blooms with its flowers; and as a garden brings forth its shoots, so has she brought forth with gladness in the sight of all her sons (Isa 61:10–11).

Because, according to the promise of David, today in place of the father a son has been born to her (Ps 45:17), who is not to bow her down with weight, nor frighten her with authority, nor trouble her with agitation, nor disturb her with harshness, but to sustain her with faithful service; to make her wholly secure with watchful care, to provide what is needful with solicitous labour, to order the household with gentle instruction, to go to meet guests, to serve parents, to obey kings, to work together with the powers,

to give reverence to the old, grace to children, love to brothers, to bestow affection on the little ones, to show to all a free servitude through Christ.

David said: Hear, O daughter, and see (Ps 45:11). I shall say: "Hear, O mother, and see": in place of your fathers sons have been born to you (Ps 45:17). Let them be old men in prudence, fathers in gravity, sons in charity, young men in virtue, offspring in sweetness, infants in innocence, little ones in malice, not knowing the things of the world: possessing the whole presence of the kingdom of God, as the Lord bears witness when he says: Let the little ones come to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:14). Such does the tie of perpetual virginity beget, such does the joining of the heavenly life beget, knowing nothing of sex, conscious of conception, acquainted with childbirth, ignorant of corruption, whole in modesty, closed in integrity, chaste in her children, spread wide in fruitfulness. This mother, so pious, while today she celebrates the birthday feast of one of her offspring, opens her bosom, extends her embrace, sends forth her voice, sings in divine canticles, to call all, to take in all, to enclose all in the lap of charity to rejoice with her.

There is present too the mother herself of the Christian empire, perennial and faithful, who, while by faith, by works of mercy, by holiness, in honour of the Trinity, she follows and imitates the blessed Church, has merited to bring forth, embrace and possess an august trinity. Thus the Trinity rewards those who are fervent in its love

and ardour: she has merited that honour should be given her, that she should rejoice that the grace of God had made for her a religion like her own. She has merited that the dignity of the bearer should overflow through the bearer to her descendants. Pray, brothers, that the Christian princes too, since with pious devotion they deign to come to our joys, to be present at our solemnities, may be commended for a long time, with like grace, by the devout entreaty of all the priests.

Sermon CXXXI.

On God, how he is seen; on the spite and stubbornness of the Jews; and on the death of man

We have often said that God is not seen with bodily eyes, that divinity is not enclosed by the carnal mind, that human reason does not grasp the Maker of things, but faith alone reaches God, belief wholly perceives him, and the sight of man, however great it is, beholds not how great he is, but that he is. Indeed Moses, who from servant is advanced to friend, from man into God, seeks the face of God, but does not find it; asks, but does not receive; and he is told that he may see only the back of God (Exod 33:23): so that man may seek to follow God, not to go before him; nor presume to seek what things are before God; but as a worshipper acknowledge that all things are through God.

Often God shows men the form of a man, and gathers his so great magnitude into the small figure of our making, so that our weak eye may be able to behold the divine presence, our narrow sight may be able to receive it. So God came to Abraham in the form of a man, comes in the figure of a guest, and in the manner of a weary traveller received water for his feet; and, invited to table, he is filled with the setting-out of the

calf and the bread: and so he wholly entrusts and commits himself to human service, that by touch itself, by sight, he seems to fill out a true man, and this at the time when the true God came to give offspring to the extreme barrenness of a hopeless old woman, opening her womb for childbirth (Gen 18:1–10). So he meets Jacob, a fellow traveller to the traveller, and so offers himself as a companion in human fellowship, that God puts himself wholly into the wrestling with the man who challenges him, and he seemed to win by sinews or muscles at the very time when, the victor, he gives heavenly gifts, gives divine bounties (Gen 32:25–30).

So Isaiah saw God sitting in royal attire (Isa 6:1), that he might recognise that unless kings are ruled by God the king, the rulers themselves, since they are men, can rule nothing. So Daniel sees God the Father, with snowy hair, in venerable old age, terrible in his antiquity, surrounded by angels, fiery on his seat, sitting down to judge (Dan 7:9–10). So he beholds the Son of God himself coming in the son of man with the clouds of heaven (Dan 7:13), that he might know that Christ, unknown before to so many unbelievers, had always been known to the faithful. If God is so often seen by men in the figure of a man, why is it that the Jew, now seeing Christ to be man, is so exasperated, unless perhaps figure, honour, truth is thought an injury?

The Evangelist has told us today that Christ said: If anyone keeps my word, he will not see death for ever (John 8:51). To which word the

Jews answered: Now we know that you have a demon: Abraham our father is dead, and the prophets; and you say: If anyone keeps my word, he will not taste death for ever (John 8:52). Can it be that you are greater than our father Abraham? (John 8:53) Whom do you make yourself?

How unbelief has seized them all! O how spite shuts the eyes! how greatly wickedness, having judged beforehand, confounds the judgement of the heart! O how harshly obstinacy cuts off reason! human sense, perverted, cannot hear what it has once resolved to hate: to the wicked goodness is hateful, justice an enemy to the unjust. Hence it is that lying men cannot know the truth, and the mind, as judge, cannot find what is true amid the reports of falsehoods. He who has decided to err always hears what he wants, not what is. Christ had said: If anyone keeps my word, he will not see death for ever. The Jew does not examine what he has heard, does not seek to interpret to himself what was said: what he himself thinks impossible he demands that the one who promises should prove; but at once from the conception of his mind he gives birth to blasphemy, sows insults, spreads curses, and strives so to empty the authority of the speaker with abuse that he who seems thus subject to human things may not be believed able to give eternal things to mortals.

Now we know that you have a demon. A demon, the author of evil, promises evil things, not good; he is accustomed to kill, not to give life; nor does he want men to be eternal, whom he does not allow even to be temporal. So Christ is not a

demon, but God, who gives back the life he had given, and by his word makes men eternal, whom the devil by his persuasion had made temporal.

Abraham, he says, is dead, and the prophets, and you say: If anyone keeps my word, he will not see death for ever. Let the faithful man hear, so that by the revealing of faith he may know what the faithless man does not know how to hear, what he cannot see who has plunged himself into the darkness of disbelief. Christ said: He will not see death. Your obstinacy, Jew, rightly seeks to call it falsehood. Abraham and the prophets, hearing the word, kept it tenaciously, but yet they died, but not for ever. So when he says, He will not see death, and has added, for ever, he promises resurrection; he does not deny that they will die in time. Jew, us whom death in the present age made not to be, resurrection remakes everlasting for the future. Hear him saying this more openly: Everyone who believes will not die for ever, but will pass from death to life (John 5:24; 11:26). How does he not die? Because he passes from death to life. He dies, then, everyone dies who is born of a mortal condition; but he lives, and lives for ever, everyone who is reborn of the life-giving generation.

But I say: why did he who could take away death wish man to pass through death? for the physician who forestalls diseases seems more welcome than he who applies to diseases a late medicine, and not without pain. Jew, Christ the physician would have done this too, if the sick man had not been ungrateful to the physician.

He both gave life and foretold to man that death would come: but he who had not felt adversity did not know how to keep prosperity. How good good things are we cannot know except by the knowledge of evils. So Christ will be magnified, who both gave life before, when it was not yet possessed, and now gives it back when lost: and man, more knowing of life, will be more careful of himself, will be more grateful to his author.

Can it be that you are greater, he says, than our father Abraham? Plainly greater, and as much greater as a master than a servant, as God than man, as the maker than the thing made, as the life-giver than the dead, as the raiser than the raised. Jesus answered: Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56). He, to show that Abraham lives, said that he had seen his day, that is, the day on which Christ was born to the world. The Maker of days is not held by a day, the author of time knows no times; but Christ, born man for man's sake, took up both day and time. Abraham rejoiced to see my day. If Moses and Elijah run to meet him on the mountain to behold the promised Christ (Matt 17:3), how should Abraham not also run to meet the Virgin's childbearing, so that, the most patient of watchers, he might fix his eyes on the blessing promised among the nations, that is, in his seed?

Amen, amen, he says, I say to you, before Abraham I am (John 8:58). If all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made (John 1:3), and this is he to whom the Father said: Let us make man to our image and

likeness (Gen 1:26), how did Abraham not see him? Let us make man to our image, and likeness. As the angel and God differ in substance, so do they in image. So it is to none but the Son that the Father speaks when he says: Let us make man to our image and likeness, they who have the same image and the same substance.

They took up stones to throw at him (John 8:59). Those who built the tower, too, so as to fall from higher up, provided themselves with stones; and these wretched men brought stones not to kill God, but with which to kill themselves. Jesus hid himself. Not fearing, but forgiving: God, when he flees the sinner, spares him; God does not want to destroy the rebel when he turns aside.

Sermon CXXXII.

On the unity of the faithful

If nature begot and brought forth all things perfect, all strong, all needing nothing, then surely piety would be abolished, talent would fail, art would perish, gold would lie dark in the earth, the gem would be hidden in the stone: yet the artificer's discipline finds both, cleanses, sets apart, polishes; and the same art brings them to the beauty and grace of a precious necklace; and what the earth brings forth from the generous spring of nature either grows rough with thorns or runs wild under a rustic luxuriance that masters it, unless the skilful industry of the farmer calls it back to its cultivation; and, not to wander further, let us bring forward the things on which we rely by one example, and that a home-grown one. In the cradle the newborn man is already man in man, but hidden; there is a body, and there is not; limbs are seen, and they are not limbs; things live that are not strong in sense; piety bends down, industry toils, art labours; and to say it more fully, as many limbs as a man has, so many teachings labour to bring the man to completion. And what more? all things that nature begets or brings forth, piety nurses, industry cultivates, art adorns.

And what wonder is it, brothers, if God, who willed to suffer for man's sake, so as to honour man's industry, willed that in present things nature too should be weak? Hence it is that the sense lies hidden in the letter, the divine mystery is concealed in human speech; so that what already lies open to believers, though still to come, may be obscured for the unbelieving and for those who do not believe, as though the punishment of the faithless overflowed to the glory of the faithful. For it is no small torment not to perceive what is seen, not to know what is heard, to shun saving things as harmful, to beware of virtues as if they were vices, as the Lord himself says: I speak in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not hear (Luke 8:10); and to the faithful: But to you it has been given to know the mystery of God (Mark 4:11).

Let no one, then, brothers, hold the word of the Gospel common or cheap because of its simplicity, especially since the very trumpet of the Gospel reading, sounding forth, has proclaimed beforehand what is not to be denied to those who ask well and desire piously, saying: If two of you agree on earth about anything whatever they ask, it will be done for them by my Father (Matt 18:19). You have heard how much the agreement of holy petition can do and prevail: he did not say this or that, but promises that he will grant all, whatever the unity of the petition desires, when he says: About anything whatever they ask, it will be done for them. With this caution and reverence kept, however, that what is worthy of God

be asked of God; for he who asks evil things of God judges and thinks God the author of evil: and since he prays for cheap and unworthy things, the degenerate petitioner does not know the power and might of the giver. Not impious things, then, but pious; not earthly, but heavenly; not things suited to allurements, but to virtue; not things worthy of hatred, but fit for concord, are always to be entreated from such a giver.

Where are those who presume that the assembly of the Church may be despised, and claim that solitary prayers are to be preferred to the venerable congregation, when he promises that he will be in the midst of two or three gathered together, and will grant all things for which he has been asked (Matt 18:20)? He who denies nothing to so few, what will he deny to those who ask in the assemblies and congregation of the saints? So the Prophet, believing, glories that he has obtained this, when he says: I will confess to you, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the assembly of the just and in the congregation (Ps 111:1). He confesses with his whole heart who hears that the whole of what he has asked in the assembly of the saints is to be granted him.

But some, under a show of faith, strive to excuse the sloth of their contempt; so that, neglecting the ardour of the venerable gathering and congregation, they pretend that they have assigned to prayer the time which they have given and spent on household cares; and while they are enslaved to their own desires, they despise and look down on divine institutions. These

are they who scatter the body of Christ, disperse its members: nor do they allow the form of the Lord's condition to come to its beauty, which the Prophet, when he had seen it in the spirit, sang thus: Beautiful in form above the sons of men (Ps 45:3). Each member indeed has the proper task of its own office, which, however, they will be able to fulfil only if, joined to one another and fitted together, they come to the beauty of a perfect body. This, then, is the difference between the glorious fullness of the congregation and the vanity of separation, presumed out of ignorance or negligence: that in the health and honour of an entire body its beauty is the unity of the members, and in the separation of the vitals there is a foul, deadly and horrible ruin.

Man, what else has your own body taught you, either a joining so divided, or a division so joined, but that out of many you should live as one, and as one in many? The eye is precious through the saving commerce of the members, but if it remains in the body; otherwise, when it is missing from the body, it will not be present to itself: all the members owe it the service of its light; but the eye itself too feels that it owes to the body that it is light, for, though it provides the ministry of the members together with all the members, torn from the body it does not even see. Whoever he is who thinks himself to be something, let him, taught by such an example, remain in the Church, that he may be something; otherwise, when he is missing from her, he at once ceases to be anything to himself. Whoever desires to know this

more fully, let him read through the teachings of the Apostle speaking of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12–27), for the friendly brevity of the sermon does not allow us to run through them.

The Law was given not to one, but to all. Christ came not for one, nor to one, but to all, and for all; that he might restore all into one: the Prophet, foreknowing the future, proclaims thus this one good, this one pleasant thing: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity (Ps 133:1). For to God not singularity is acceptable, but unity. The Holy Spirit glides down with all the abundance of his fount upon the apostles gathered into one (Acts 2:1–4), whose coming the disciples had been admonished by the Lord's precept to await together (Acts 1:4). Brothers, he loses the divine gifts, forfeits the bounty of grace, is defrauded of the goods of charity, the blessing of unity will not remain with him, who, an evil-doer of himself, and foolishly sufficient to himself out of his own failing, thus seeks life outside the Church, the life which the Prophet testifies is in her alone, saying: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity; for there the Lord has commanded blessing and life for ever (Ps 133:1, 3).

Sermon CXXXIII.

On Saint Andrew, apostle

Blessed Andrew is rightly believed to have been born today, since he was not poured forth from his mother's womb into the present life, but is known to have been begotten to heavenly glory by the conception of faith and the childbirth of martyrdom. Since no mother's cradle took him up wailing, but the secret places on high received him triumphing; since he does not draw the weak nourishment of milk from his bearer's breast, but as a most devoted soldier of virtue has shed his blood for his king. He lives, because as a warrior of the heavenly service he slew death.

He follows here the Lord in dying, burning and panting, and with the whole stride of his virtue he presses on to cling to the Lord's footsteps, lest his course should make him unlike his brother, whom nature had made like him, the calling his companion, grace itself his equal. At one word of the Lord, like him he left father, fatherland, wealth: in labours, reproaches, journeys, insults, vigils, by Christ's bounty, he gave himself untiringly to his brother's company: the one thing is that in the time of the Lord's Passion he fled; but not even in this was he unequal, for he fled. But if denying is thought any fault, fleeing is not more

grievous than denying. But other things must be passed over in silence: pardon, brothers, made equal those whom fault had thus set apart.

And the fervour of martyrdom that followed proved fully devoted those whom the fear that went before had disproved. For the cross from which they had shrunk back they afterwards rush upon ardently with joined strength, so that from where they had taken on guilt, from there they might climb to heaven, from there take their reward and crown. For Peter climbed a cross, Andrew a tree; so that those who longed to suffer with Christ might express in themselves the figure and form of his Passion, and, redeemed by the wood, might be brought to fulfilment in the palm. Thus our Andrew, though he yields in rank, yet does not yield in reward and labour.

Sermon CXXXIV.

On Saint Felicity, martyr

Since time does not allow us to count up the various and manifold triumphs of the martyrs, which the cruelty of the persecutor, mocked so many times, has heaped up, the whole discourse of our sermon takes refuge in her who merited to have as many sons as the days the world received. Truly the mother of lights, the fountain of days, who shines through the whole world with the sevenfold flash of her offspring. Blessed is she who not only suffers for the Law, but as a holy mother merited to bring forth the sevenfold band of the Law itself: a sevenfold band, brothers, which would light up not the secret of one temporal tabernacle, but would illumine the everlasting Church with holy incense. Happy is she who merited to carry as many pledges of virtues as the sacred volumes of the commandments that the ark of old carried (Exod 25); and that, as the ark taught by the word, so she might teach by example. Even then, brothers, she bore them as martyrs, when she consecrated them by the sevenfold and mystical number of her childbearing.

Here, here let holy Paul come, who is still in labour until Christ be formed in man (Gal 4:19).

Behold, a woman again and again is in labour, until weakness be changed into power, flesh pass over into spirit, earth be transferred into heaven. She burned, she panted to bring forth in one day as holy martyrs those whom as little ones she had scarcely brought forth through the course of years. Behold the woman, behold the mother, whom the life of her sons made anxious, their death secure. Blessed is she, beside whom in the glory to come there stand as many lampstands as there were offspring; blessed is she who sent so many ahead to the kingdom; more blessed is she who lost nothing of her own in this world. She ran about more gladly among the pierced corpses than among the dear cradles of her sons, because with inward eyes she saw as many prizes as wounds; as many rewards as torments; as many crowns as victims. And what more, brothers? She is not, she is not a true mother who does not know how to love her sons so.

Sermon CXXXV.

On Saint Lawrence

Today's day is made illustrious by the crown of the baptism of the martyr Lawrence, the merits of which illustrious martyr no part of the Roman world is ignorant of. He suffered in the very head of the nations, that is, in the city of Rome itself. For there he ministered as deacon, and in the very flower of his youth he dyed the beauty of his youth purple with his blood. His passion is renowned and greatly to be wondered at: I will tell it briefly, with the Lord's help.

When he was then archdeacon, blessed Sixtus was bishop, whose triumph of martyrdom was three days before. When, then, holy Lawrence was following his bishop Sixtus as he went to martyrdom, upheld by faith, sad in his affection, not because the other was suffering, but because he himself was being left behind by him, the venerable old man looked back at the venerable young man and said to him: "Do not be sad, son; after three days you will follow me." Then he, having drunk down the prophecy, already most ready in heart, drunk with the spirit, hoped for as certain the future that he who knew it had foretold.

Then he was seized and brought in: and since he was archdeacon, the riches of the Church were surely believed to be with him, riches that the persecutor desired, not so much greedy as raging. He hated the man he was killing: but he loved in his keeping what that man despised. Now holy Lawrence was poor in riches, rich in character: he did not deny that he had the riches of the Church, but in order to show them he asked for a delay of three days, then he ordered the throngs of the poor to be gathered. Then, on the very day of his crown, presented for examination, as if about to show what the other was looking for, he showed what he had. Then the persecutor says: "Where are the means of the Church?" But he, stretching out his hand towards the poor: "These," he says, "are the means of the Church."

He spoke the truth, but a bitter one. But what wonder, if truth increased hatred? The cruel tyrant and greedy enemy, smarting at having been mocked, who had perhaps intended a milder penalty, to kill the venerable young man with the sword, ordered flames to be made ready; he blazed more than he burned; he burned in the flesh, he blazed in the heart. His torment was the heavier, the more inward it was. Then that noble gridiron of Lawrence was brought forward, to toast, and to speak more truly, to roast him for martyrdom: he was bound to the iron, but he thought the gridiron of torment a bed of rest: I said torment according to the mind of the one punishing, not according to the conscience of the one suffering. For there is no torment of the

condemned where there is no penalty of sin. And so the most blessed martyr, showing how quietly he lay on that fiery iron, said to those standing round: "Turn me now, and if one side is cooked, eat."

We wonder at his patience: let us wonder at the gift of God. There faith not only did not burn, but even consoled the one who was burning. Why did faith console the one who was burning? Because it held fast the One who promised as faithful. That faith should not fail, that hope should not be turned away, that charity should be kindled the more among the fiery penalties of the body, these were gifts of God. My brothers, let no one claim for his own power what none but God gives. Rightly does the Apostle, addressing the martyrs, as you heard when it was read today in his Epistle: To you, he says, it has been granted for Christ, not only that you believe in him, but also that you suffer for him (Phil 1:29). Therefore let us praise the merits of the martyrs as gifts of God, let us love them, let us pray, let us bring in our will after them. For the will follows, it does not go before. But yet charity is not lacking, if the will is not lacking; for the burning will itself is called charity. Who is there who fears while willing? who is there who loves while unwilling? let prayer be fervent, and let the martyr's feast be celebrated: but so that he who celebrates may not be empty, let him imitate.

Sermon CXXXVII.

On the preaching of Saint John the Baptist

After the richness of the Jewish soil had been exhausted by the ploughshare of the Law and by constant tilling, blessed John, flying to the desert of the Gentiles, setting fire to the briars of crimes with the fire of the spirit, cutting down the unfruitful trees with the axe of vengeance, levelling the rough hills of pride, raising the valleys of humility as he made them even, and fitting the whole plain of the earth (the grass being lost), laying beneath it the waters of the Jordan to nurse it: and so he prepares wide fallow fields for the seed of the Gospel, and makes them fruitful. The word of the Lord came, he says, upon John the son of Zechariah in the desert (Luke 3:2). The Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us (John 1:14). Upon John? Why not to John, but upon John? Because what is from above is above all. The word of the Lord came upon John. Because John is a voice, God the Word. The word of the Lord came upon John. God upon John, the Lord upon the servant, the word upon the voice. But you say to me: "What of the fact that the voice goes before the word?" It goes before, but does not go beyond: it goes ahead for the homage of the one who follows, not as a sign of its own power. The voice is

not itself the judge, but the messenger of the one who judges: the word judges, the voice thunders before: power regards the one who commands, not the one who cries out. But let the voice itself acknowledge this, bear witness to it, affirm it, the herald himself, who cries out: He who comes after me, he says, is mightier than I (Matt 3:11). Why? Because in me there is terror, in him there is the sentence.

He came into all the region of the Jordan (Luke 3:3). He came to the Jordan, because a water jar could no longer wash the Jewish filth, but a river could. As it is written: There were, he says, stone water jars, according to the purification of the Jews (John 2:6). He came to the Jordan. So that he might carry the penitent by water, not by wine. He came into all the region of the Jordan, preaching a baptism of penance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3). With John there was pardon, but not without penance; there was remission, but bought with mourning; there was the cure of the wound, with pain; there was a baptism that would take away the fault, but would not blot out the conscience. And what more? Through John's baptism man was purified for penance, he was not advanced to grace. But the baptism of Christ so regenerates, so changes, so renders man new out of the old, that he does not know what is past, does not remember the things of old, he who, made heavenly out of earthly, now possesses heavenly and divine things. Hence it is that to the son returning after his dissoluteness the father gives back the first robe of immortality, puts on

him the ring of liberty, kills the fatted calf (Luke 15:22–23), changes the waters of penance into the wine of grace, so that undiluted cups might now satisfy the banquet of grace: so that the sober drunkenness of the Lord's cup might abolish the pains of conscience, the groans of penance, the laments for sins: as the prophet says: And your cup that inebriates, how excellent it is! (Ps 23:5) For as much as earthly drunkenness is ugly, so much is heavenly drunkenness excellent and comely.

He said therefore to the crowds that went out to be baptised by him: Offspring of vipers, who showed you how to flee from the wrath to come? (Luke 3:7) Produce therefore fruits worthy of penance, and do not begin to say: We have Abraham as father (Luke 3:8). For I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up sons to Abraham (Luke 3:8). For already the axe has been laid to the roots of the trees (Luke 3:9). Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire (Luke 3:9). Offspring of vipers. He rebukes by an example, he brands by a comparison, he exposes by a figure, so that he may now change not only their ways, but the very nature of the venomous brood. Offspring of vipers. Because those whom God had created men, had made sons of Abraham, malice brought forth and turned into vipers; and those whom the heavenly Maker had filled with the sweetness of loving-kindness, bitter impiety made to pour out deadly vomit, serpent's venom; and, by an unspeakable omen of cruelty, to be conceived

from the death of the father, to be begotten from the death of the mother. Offspring of vipers. An offspring ungrateful to nature, whose birth is the ruin of its begetter, whose life is the death of its parent.

Offspring of vipers. The viper, at the time of her conceiving, is said to bite off the head of her spouse when she has taken it inside her mouth, so that through bloody kisses she conceives not a foetus but a crime; as if she bore sons as the executioners of her own wickedness, by the order of vengeance, not of nature. For the brood, conceived from the slaughter of the father, demand the nourishment of blood before that of milk, and seek vengeance; for the vipers are said to cut open their mother's womb, and with entrails still unripe, with ripe fury, to break the wicked abode of their conception, so that for them to live is this: not to see their mother, the mother who bore them such as they are. Compelled, we have described more broadly the type and figure of the comparison that holy John had made, so that it may be a matter not of abuse but of truth that the Jews are so named by him.

Offspring of vipers. He shows, brothers, that the Synagogue and her sons were such, to whom Christ had come with the affection of a spouse, as John says: He who has the bride is the bridegroom (John 3:29): amid the embraces and the bloody kisses of Judas, the head of Christ was demanded, and sought with the mouth, when it is said: Crucify, crucify (John 19:6). Whence the pledges conceived in blood are at once so armed for their

mother's destruction, that, the womb of the Synagogue being burst open, they ran together at the voice of John and were reborn to the offspring of God. Offspring of vipers, who showed you how to flee from the wrath to come? What is this wrath to come? That which has no end, which does not release man by death, but binds him: nor does it allow him any longer to have hope of pardon, whom once it has assigned to the penalty of Tartarus.

Warned in this way, they recognise both their kind and their crime, and so they answered, saying: What shall we do, that we may be saved? (Luke 3:10) And he answered and said to them (Luke 3:11). What he is about to say, brothers, I fear to say, lest he make as many defiant as the despisers I see among my hearers today. What shall I do? I fear to speak, I cannot keep silent: piety forbids me one thing, usefulness drives me to another: piety, lest the hearer, while he despises, should fall under it; usefulness, lest he who would do it should not hear, and through this the teacher should fail. I speak, brothers, so that both the naked man may clothe himself and I may strip myself. He who has two tunics, he says, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise (Luke 3:11). Do you think he asks much who asks one of two tunics? He does not ask much, because he does not ask a jewel, but a tunic; not gold, but bread. And if he who does not give one of two tunics is guilty, what is he who has refused one out of very many, who imprisons his clothes and shuts

up his bread for this purpose, that the poor man may perish of hunger, be consumed by cold? That man buries his clothes, he does not store them; he trusts them not to care but to sepulchres: what he refuses the poor man he gives to the moths: and he himself, through his clothes, is the devourer of his own body, as the Lord says: Their worm shall not die (Isa 66:24); because the hunger of the poor man has struck Christ; the pain of man has leapt to the entrails of God, the groan of the captive has pierced to the inmost parts of Christ, the contempt of the needy has overflowed into an injury to his Creator, as he himself declares when he says: I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat; I was naked, and you did not clothe me (Matt 25:42–43).

The publicans also came, saying: What shall we do? (Luke 3:12) Let the publicans hear: Ask nothing more than what has been appointed you (Luke 3:13). He has disclosed what makes a publican guilty: that you ask no more. He who asks more is an exactor of fraud, not of tribute: let them consider how guilty before God he is who sells up the weary and the downtrodden; more and more he presses them down and wears them out with his fraud, and on one scarcely able to meet his debts he lays more, and increases what is not owed. The soldiers also came, saying. Let the soldiers too hear what this master answered the soldiers also when they asked: And we, what shall we do? (Luke 3:14) And he said to them: Extort from no one, nor accuse falsely; be content with your pay. He is a true soldier who does not

extort, but defends; who does not bring a false accusation, but repels it; who runs for the king's pay, not he who runs for plunder.

Blessed John so taught divine things as not to disturb human things: he set the commonwealth in order, he did not overturn it; he proved that what he taught was ordained by God, that one is able to do and keep justice. But what lies between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ, since it must be explained more fully, we leave unsaid now.

Sermon CXXXIX.

On remitting a brother his offence

As gold lies hidden in the earth, so the divine sense is concealed in human words: and therefore, whenever the Lord's sayings are opened to us, let the mind awake, let the heart attend, so that the understanding may enter the secret of heavenly knowledge. Let us hear why the Lord began so today. Look to yourselves, he says (Luke 17:3). What is this newness of speech? Where does this warning tend, beyond the common usage? Look to yourselves, he says. He looks to himself who does not intrude upon the acts of others, importunate, shameless, curious. Look to yourselves, he says. The wandering eye, the wanton gaze, the shameless look does not look back at its own ruins, it runs, and runs down, to the falls of others; blind to its own crimes, it sees clear through to others' errors; ignorant of its own evils, it is the accuser and witness of others'; lukewarm towards its own guilt, it flames and blazes up at the examination of another's, and an innocent man's. And, not to say much, as the Lord said: The eye that does not see the beam in itself sees the speck in another (Matt 7:3). Is not the eye the author of transgression? And the woman saw, he says, that the tree was good to eat, and

pleasing to the eyes to look upon (Gen 3:6). The gate of death, the torch of envy, the furnace of spite, with the whole blaze of greed it runs over the things of others faster than fire runs through dry and earthy grass. It is God's doing that the eye, opened so into a sphere, is narrowed, very narrow, into the pupil, so that it may see what it sees with measure, not look on it with envy; foresee, not seize; look out, not look down: let the eye be the window of the soul, the mirror of the mind, the light of the body, the leader of the members, not the entrance of vices.

But let us return to what was said before. Look to yourselves, he says. To yourselves: he did not say "to yourself", because whatever a man has looked to for another, he looks to for himself; and as much as he himself will see to for another, the other will see to for him, as is clear from what follows: If your brother sins against you, he says, rebuke him; and if he does penance, forgive him (Luke 17:3). Come, man, at God's command, forgive, forgive sins: be merciful towards offences, be yourself the remitter of the sins committed against you; only do not lose in yourself the insignia of divine power; whatever you do not remit in another, you will deny to yourself in another.

If your brother sins against you, he says, rebuke him. Rebuke as a judge, as a brother remit, because charity joined to frankness, frankness mingled with charity, both checks terror and raises up the brother: a brother is in a fever when he hurts his brother, he is in a frenzy when he does wrong to his neighbour, he does not know

himself, he is a stranger to humanity: he who does not help him by compassion, who does not care for him by patience, does not heal him by pardon, is not healthy, he is sick, he is weak, he has no feeling within, and is shown to be estranged from human sense. Your brother rages: ascribe it to illness, help him as a brother; ascribe what is happening so to the fever, and you will not be able to impute the wrong done to your brother; and you will prudently give the fault to the illness, the pardon to the brother; so that his health may come back to your glory, his pardon overflow to your reward.

If your brother sins against you, he says, rebuke him; if he does penance, forgive him. Let no one who hears this, remitting the censure to himself, in vain presumption take on a part and impose it on his brother who does wrong: and so think it hard to remit offences. Let a man think of himself as a sinner, as one who will sin: and then he begins to love pardon, not to love vengeance. You hear that you ought to remit, and you do not hear that it ought to be remitted to you. You too will sin tomorrow against him who sinned against you today; and he will be your judge who before was your accused, and he will give you back pardon if you gave it: if you did not give it, either he will deny pardon, or, if he gives it, he will charge more than he will forgive. Remit to the one who sins, remit to the one who repents, so that, when you sin, it may be repaid you in pardon, not given. Pardon is always good, but sweetest when it is owed. He has overcome the penalty,

forestalled the judge, escaped judgement, who by remitting has already provided pardon for himself before he does wrong.

And if seven times in a day, he says, he sins against you, and seven times in a day turns to you, saying: I repent, you shall forgive him (Luke 17:4). Why does he bind by law, narrow by number, close with a limit the pardon that he so urges through mercy, so sets free through grace: if seven times, if eight times? does a number overcome grace? does a reckoning stand against goodness? and does one fault hand over to penalty one whom seven wrongs committed have already given over to pardon? Far from it. For as he is happy who has remitted seven times, so he is happier who has remitted seventy times seven. Peter, unmindful of this command, asks the Lord, saying: If my brother sins against me, how often shall I remit to him? Seven times? (Matt 18:21) The Lord answered: Not only seven times, but seventy times seven (Matt 18:22). The prescribed number, then, does not narrow pardon but widens it, and what it ends by a precept it leaves without end to choice; so that, if you have remitted as much as he commanded, there may be so much of obedience, and of reward.

But the seventh number, a number that seems small, is found most ample in mystery: for the seventh number, stepping through the days, makes the Sabbath, which the Lord blessed and assigned to rest, both from his own work and from human labour. The seventh number, running through ogdoads, so multiplies the weeks

sevenfold as to close for us Pentecost, fulfilled with the solemnity of the mystery, and then to pour the whole shower of the Holy Spirit upon the Church's harvest with a heavenly sound. The seventh number, when it hastens through the months, consecrates for us the feasts of the seventh month with the whole holiness of fasting (Lev 23). The seventh number, when it goes through the years, makes weeks, makes the year that gives rest to the land, and looses all the ties of brotherly obligation (Deut 15). The seventh number of years, when it goes round the weeks, brings the fiftieth year, which is called the jubilee, to the whole fullness of pardon and remission (Lev 25); that servitude may be taken away, liberty return; that the documents and records of securities may be torn up; that the debtor may rise again, the debt be buried; that the poor man's field may return, that the rich man's whole contract made out of greed may perish.

And if the seventh number, multiplied sevenfold through days, through months, through years, has conferred the whole of remission and pardon, let the Christian hearer reckon and consider what the seventh number multiplied seventy times seven can bring. Then truly the contract of what is lent and owed will cease, then truly the whole condition of servitude will be abolished, then that, that liberty without end will come, then the eternal field will return, to live for ever. It will come, then will come the true remission, when even the very necessity of sinning will be abolished, when, as uncleanness perishes, the

world (mundus) will truly now be called clean (mundus), when, as life returns, death will be no more, when, as Christ reigns, the devil will now perish. Pray, brothers, that the Lord may also increase faith in us, so that we may be able to believe, to see and to hold these good things.

Sermon CXL.

On the Annunciation of Saint Mary the Virgin

Let the gaze of our eyes now be pure enough to be able to look into the brightness of the divine rising: for if the whole health or purity of our eyes can scarcely bear the radiance of the sun as it is born, how great a clearness of inward sight must be prepared, so that it can bear the splendour of the author rising and shining forth? But in the sixth month, he says, the angel Gabriel was sent into a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph (Luke 1:26–27). The holy Evangelist marks out the place, the time, the person, so that the truth of the account may be proved by the manifest evidence of the facts themselves.

The angel was sent, he says, to a virgin betrothed. God sends to the virgin a winged carrier: for he who brings grace gives the earnest and receives the dowry; he who at once discharges the pledge of the virgin's consent brings back the troth and hands over the gifts of power. The swift interpreter flies to the bride, to keep off and hold back from the bride of God the affection of a human betrothal, and not to take the virgin away from Joseph, but to give her back to Christ, to whom she was pledged in the womb when

she was being made. Christ, then, receives his own bride, he does not snatch away another's; nor does he make a separation, when he joins to himself in one body his own creature whole.

But let us hear what the angel did: Having come in to her, he says: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you (Luke 1:28). In this word there is an offering, the offering of a gift, not the simple courtesy of a greeting. Hail. That is: receive grace. Do not tremble, do not be solicitous about nature. Full of grace. Because in others there is grace, in you the whole fullness of grace will come at once. The Lord is with you. What is this: the Lord in you? Because he comes to you not with the purpose of visiting, but glides down into you by a new mystery of being born. He fittingly added: Blessed are you among women (Luke 1:28). Because in those in whom Eve, accursed, punished the womb, in them now Mary, blessed, rejoices, is honoured, is looked up to. And she has truly been made now the mother of the living through grace, who was the mother of the dying through nature.

When she had heard, she was troubled at his word (Luke 1:29). Why is it that she sees the person and is troubled at the word? Because the angel had come gentle in appearance, strong in war, mild in bearing, terrible in speech, uttering human things, promising divine things. Hence also the virgin, whom the sight had stirred but lightly, the hearing troubled exceedingly; and her whom the presence of the one sent had moved little, the authority of the one sending shook with all its weight. And what more? At once she

felt the Judge from on high being received within her, where she had already seen and beheld the heavenly harbinger. For though, with a gentle motion and a loving affection, God was turning a virgin into a mother for himself, the Lord a servant into a parent for himself, yet her inward parts were troubled, her mind shrank back, her very condition trembled, when God, whom the whole creation does not contain, withdrew and hid himself whole within a human breast.

And the Virgin, he says, was pondering what this greeting might be (Luke 1:29). Let your charity note, as we said, that the Virgin consented to a greeting not of words but of things; and that the voice was not one of common homage, but was the whole force of power from on high. So the Virgin ponders, because to answer quickly belongs to human facility, but to ponder belongs to the greatest weight and to a fully ripened judgement. He is very ignorant of how great God is who is not astonished at the mind of this Virgin, does not wonder at her heart: heaven takes fright, angels tremble, creation does not bear it, nature does not suffice, one girl so contains God in her breast, receives him, delights him with hospitality, that as the rent for that house she demands peace for the earth, glory for the heavens, salvation for the lost, life for the dead, kinship of the earthly with the heavenly, the commerce of God himself with flesh, gains them as the wage for that very womb, and fulfils that word of the Prophet: Behold, the inheritance of the Lord, sons; the reward, the fruit of the womb (Ps 127:3). But let the sermon

now close, so that, by God's gift and with time permitting, we may speak more pleasingly of the Virgin's childbearing.

Sermon CXLI.

On the Incarnation of Christ

How great is the secrecy of a royal bedchamber, with what reverence, with what trembling the place is held where the very power of the prince takes its rest, how to no stranger, to no unclean man, to no faithless man is access open there and permitted; how clean, how chaste, how faithful the homage that waits there: this is taught by the manifest insignia of the imperial court. Who that is base, who that is unworthy draws near to the very doors of the palace? Certainly no one is admitted to the bridegroom's chamber unless he is very near, very intimate, of good conscience, of praiseworthy repute, of approved life. But within that very chamber God takes the virgin alone; virginity untouched alone is received.

Hence, O man, warned by these examples, reckon who you are, how great you are, of what kind you are, and only then consider whether you can penetrate the secret of the Lord's nativity, whether you merit to come to the chamber of that breast where the whole majesty of the King on high, the whole majesty of divinity rests; whether you ought, a rash examiner, to look with human eyes, with bodily senses, into the virgin's concep-

tion; whether you can, a bold and curious arbiter, gaze upon the very hands of God as they work for themselves the holy temple of a body within the womb of the bearer, lay bare to your sight the mystery hidden from the ages, reveal to yourself the sacrament invisible to the angels themselves; and so preside over the heavenly building as to grasp clearly how God entered the inner sanctum of closed flesh, how in that venerable womb he painted the features of the sacred body without the Virgin's awareness, how without the sense of her who conceived he made firm the bones that would last for ages; how, beyond the order of man, he brought forth the true form of a man; how, without the solicitude of the flesh, he assumed the whole truth of flesh; by what reason, beyond the nature of our flesh, he took up its quality entire: and if free access to these things has not lain open to you, could God not now assume from flesh what in the beginning he assumed from slime? Rather, because everything is possible to God, and it is not possible for you to reach even the least of God's works, do not examine the Virgin's conception, but believe; think piously that God willed to be born, because you do injury if you inquire; grasp by faith the great mystery of the Lord's nativity, because you will not be able to attain even the least of God's works without faith, as Scripture says: All his works are in faith (Ps 33:4).

But you want everything here to stand on reason, where everything consists of faith; which yet does not subsist without reason, but by God's

reason, not yours, man. What is so reasonable as that God can do whatever he has willed? He who cannot do what he wills is not God. What God commands, then, the angel carries out, the Spirit fulfils, power effects, the Virgin believes, nature receives, the heavens tell, the firmament announces, the stars show, the Magi proclaim, the shepherds adore, the cattle know, as the prophet bears witness: The ox knew its owner, and the ass its Lord's manger (Isa 1:3). You, man, if not at once with the angels, acknowledge him at least very late with the beasts; lest, while you delay, you be placed after the very beasts to which you had earlier been compared. See, the beasts fawn with their tails, coax with their ears, lick with their tongues, and with what motion they can they acknowledge that their author has come, against nature, into your nature; and you, with the Jews, examine and carp, who shut out their Lord from their lodgings, whom the beasts received in their mangers. Hence, if at last you are going to lend a pious hearing at least to the angels, admit, if not happily, at least graciously, what the angel has to say: which a word very necessary for you compels us, holy brothers, to put off today and to relate in the following sermon.

Sermon CXLII.

On the Annunciation of Saint Mary the Virgin

You have heard today, dearest brothers, the angel treating with a woman of the restoration of man. You have heard it being dealt with, that man by the same courses by which he had slipped down to death might return to life. The angel treats, treats with Mary of salvation, because an angel had treated with Eve of ruin. You have heard the angel building out of the slime of our flesh, with an ineffable art, a temple of the divine majesty. You have heard God being placed on earth, man in heaven, by an incomprehensible mystery. You have heard that in an unheard-of way God and man are mingled in one body. You have heard the frail nature of our flesh strengthened by the angel's exhortation to carry the whole glory of the Godhead.

Indeed, lest the fine sand of our body should give way in Mary under so great a weight of the heavenly building, and lest in the virgin the slender rod that was to carry the fruit of the whole human race should be broken, the voice of the angel, to put fear to flight, at once went before, saying: Do not be afraid, Mary (Luke 1:30). Before the cause, the dignity of the virgin is announced from her name: for Mary in the Hebrew tongue is

called in Latin lady (domina): the angel therefore calls her lady, so that the trembling of servitude might leave the bearer of the Ruler (dominator), whom the very authority of her offspring caused and obtained to be born, and to be called lady.

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace (Luke 1:30). It is true that he who has found grace does not know how to fear. You have found grace. With whom? With God. Blessed is she who alone among human beings merited to hear it, before all. You have found grace. How much? as much as he had said above: full. And truly full, since with a generous shower it would pour over and pour into the whole creation. For you have found grace with God. When he says this, the angel himself wonders, either that a woman alone, or that all men through a woman, had merited life: the angel is astonished that the whole God comes within the narrow confines of a virgin's womb, God to whom the whole creation together is narrow. Hence it is that the angel lingers, hence it is that he calls the Virgin from her merit, addresses her from grace, scarcely discloses the cause to her as she listens, so as to bring her understanding forward, scarcely frames it, with long trembling. Consider, brothers, with what reverence, with what trembling it befits and becomes us to be present at so great a mystery, when the angel himself, not without fear, dispels the fear of her who listens.

Behold, you will conceive in the womb (Luke 1:31). Rightly will you conceive what flesh does not know, condition does not have, nature does

not admit. Behold, you will conceive in the womb. Who comes to the fruit before he feels the labour and the sweat of the earth? Who picks apples before he bestows and spends his toil on the plant? Who comes to any dwelling without a road? Who, beyond nature, receives the increase of nature? Blessed then, and truly blessed is Mary, who without the cares of begetting, without the loathings of a mother's pain, came to such glory of offspring. Blessed is she who so received and kept the divine pledge in her own breast, that the whole outside of the body did not know of it. Blessed is she who so entrusted to her mind alone, and confided to it, what she had received from on high as the angel told it. Within the Virgin's house the heavenly business is so carried out that, the bars remaining, the very enclosures of the house do not feel it.

You will conceive, and bear a son (Luke 1:31). He who enters and goes out, and leaves no traces of his entrance and his going out, is a divine inhabitant, not a human one; and he who by his conception keeps the virgin and by his birth leaves her a virgin is not an earthly man, but a heavenly one. Let the order of our flesh, then, withdraw; let our nature claim nothing for itself here, where for a divine offspring a heavenly order is established in a divine nature. Let the words conception and childbirth not weary the mind of the listener, nor lightly move the sense of the Christian, where for a heavenly offspring the divine insignia of God's power are carried out.

You will conceive and bear a son. He did not say "for you"; he said "yours". Why? Because the holy one shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Virgin, grace made you a mother, not nature; loving-kindness willed that you be called a bearer, which integrity did not allow; in your conception, in your childbearing modesty grew, chastity was increased, integrity was strengthened, virginity was made firm, all the virtues persevered. Virgin, if all things are kept safe for you, what did you give? If a virgin, how a mother? If a bride, how a bearer? He by whom all things were increased for you diminished nothing, Virgin. Virgin, your author is conceived of you, your origin arises from you, in your offspring is your begetter, in your flesh is your God, and he who gave light to the world received the light of the world through you. Warned therefore by the angel, Virgin, do not presume to call him your son, but as soon as you have borne him, call on the saviour: because virginity does not give birth to a son for itself, but gives birth to the pledge of the author, and integrity carries its own lord, not a nursling, as the angel says: And you shall call his name Jesus (Luke 1:31), which in the Latin word is called Saviour.

And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be? (Luke 1:34) See, Mary asks: and if he who asks doubts, why does Zechariah alone incur blame as a complaining questioner? Because the examining judge of breasts saw through not the words but the hearts; he judged not what they said, but what they meant; for the case of those

who asked was unlike, the manner wholly different. She believed against nature, he doubts on behalf of nature; she asks the order of a matter left whole, he writes it down that what God commands cannot be done; he, with examples urging him on, does not come to faith, she without an example runs through to faith; she wonders at the childbearing of a virgin, he disputes about a conception in marriage. Rightly, then, she speaks, she knows and confesses God in her body; he is silent, until, convinced, he should give back from his own body John, whom he had denied.

How shall this be? Why? Since I do not know man (Luke 1:34). Woman, what man are you looking for? the one you lost in Paradise? Give back the man, woman, give back God's deposit, give back from you the one you lost through you: pass over the order of nature, recognise the order of the Creator. He will assume from you and make a man, who in the beginning made you and assumed you from a man; do not look for a man, let the work of man cease, because for the restoration of man the divine art suffices. Hence it is that God himself comes to you, because you repented of having come to man.

No longer flesh to flesh; but the Holy Spirit will come upon you (Luke 1:35). Because what is born of the flesh is flesh; and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). He, then, who is born of the Spirit is without dispute God, because the Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you (Luke 1:35). The power of God overshadows, lest

human frailty, about to carry God, should give way. And the power of the Most High will overshadow you. She does not know the heat of our body, whom the shade of divine power protects; nor does she seek the secret of a worldly dwelling, who sees herself enclosed round with the veil of the splendour from on high.

Therefore the holy one that will be born of you shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Let no one here take "holy" in a common sense, but in that singularity with which it is cried in the heavens: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Sabaoth (Isa 6:3). Mary, moreover, is sent to Elizabeth, a virgin to a barren woman, a girl to an old woman, so that in a loving contest both might take, might receive alike, the one faith from the newness, the other power from the necessity.

When she had heard these things, Mary answered: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word (Luke 1:38). She who is called lady by the angel herself knows and confesses herself a handmaid. Because a devout mind grows into homage with the bands of benefits: it is increased towards grace, it does not leap up into arrogance, does not swell into pride. Be it done to me according to your word. She who believes the word rightly conceives the Word: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1); and she comes to the whole matter, who consents by hearing to the secret of faith. How greatly the heretic sins who does not believe after the fact,

when he sees that she believed it so before the fact!

Sermon CXLIII.

On the same

A sermon on the birth is indeed owed to you, but it is more fitting to believe the ineffable mystery of the Lord's Nativity than to relate it. The Virgin has given birth. What nature does not have, use does not know, reason is ignorant of, the mind does not grasp, heaven takes fright at, earth is astonished at, creation wonders at, how will human speech tell it? Indeed the Evangelist, just as he opens the Virgin's conception, the Virgin's childbearing in human speech, so he closes it in a divine secret: and he does this so that man may not presume to examine what he has been commanded to believe. Who attains to the secret of God, the Virgin's childbearing, the causes of things, the business of the ages, the commerce of divinity and flesh, man and God one God?

The Evangelist says thus: The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee whose name was Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, and the virgin's name was Mary (Luke 1:26–27). The angel was sent from God; where an angel is the mediator, let human opinion cease; where the messenger is heavenly, let earthly interpretation be driven

away. Let human curiosity grow numb, where the interpreter is one from on high. The angel was sent from God. He who hears more attentively that he was sent from God shrinks from searching out the secret of the Godhead. What God commands through an angel, he merits to know who fears to know. Hear the Lord saying: Upon whom shall I look, but upon the humble and the meek, and him who trembles at my words? (Isa 66:2) The humble and the meek: as meek as is he who obeys commands, so unmeek is he who examines commands.

The angel was sent to a virgin. Because virginity is always akin to the angels. To live in the flesh beyond the flesh is not an earthly life, but a heavenly one. And if you wish to know, to acquire angelic glory is greater than to have it; to be an angel is a matter of happiness, to be a virgin a matter of virtue; for virginity obtains by strength what the angel has by nature. The angel, then, and the virgin perform a divine office, not a human one.

Having come in, he says, the angel said to her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women (Luke 1:28). Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you: you see with what gifts the virgin has been pledged. Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Hail: that is, receive. What? The powers of gifts, not of modesty. Hail, full of grace. This is the grace that gave glory to the heavens, God to the earth, faith to the nations, an end to vices, order to life, discipline to morals. This grace the angel brought, the Virgin

received, to give back salvation to the ages. Hail, full of grace. Because to individuals grace has given itself in parts, but to Mary the fullness of grace gave itself whole at once. We all, says the Evangelist, have received of his fullness (John 1:16). Hence David too says: He came down like rain upon the fleece (Ps 72:6). The fleece, though it is from a body, does not know the passions of the body; so virginity, though it is in the flesh, is ignorant of the vices of the flesh. The heavenly shower, then, poured itself with a gentle gliding down into the virginal fleece, and the whole wave of divinity hid itself in the absorbent fleece of our flesh, until, wrung out through the gibbet of the cross, it should pour itself upon all the earth as a rain of salvation. And like drops dripping upon the earth (Ps 72:6). So that the times, divided by life-giving drops, might water the seedlings of faith, not drown them.

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you. The angel was sent from God, and what does he say? The Lord is with you. So he was with the Virgin, who had sent to the Virgin. God went before his messenger, but did not withdraw from God: he cannot be held by places who is held in all places; and he is whole everywhere, without whom nothing is whole. Blessed are you among women. Truly blessed is the virgin who both possesses the beauty of virginity and has borne the dignity of a mother. Truly blessed is she who both merited the grace of a conception from on high and carried off the crown of integrity. Truly blessed is she who both received the glory of a divine offspring

and stood forth as queen of all chastity. Truly blessed is she who was greater than heaven, stronger than the earth, wider than the world; for God, whom the world does not contain, she alone contained. She carried him who carries the world, she bore her own begetter, she nourished the nourisher of all the living.

But let us see what the Evangelist says: Mary, he says, when she saw the angel, was troubled at his word (Luke 1:29). The flesh was troubled, the inward parts were shaken, the mind trembled, the whole depth of the heart was stunned: because at the entrance of the angel the virgin felt the entrance of divinity. The temple of the human body was troubled, and the narrow confines of the fleshly abode were stirred, when the whole greatness of God was hiding itself in a virgin's breast.

But, if you please, before we penetrate the secret of the Christian faith, let us speak to those who refer the virgin's childbearing, the great mystery of godliness (1 Tim 3:16), the restoration of human salvation, to an injury to divinity. God came to the virgin, that is, the artificer to his work, the Creator to his creature. When does the restoration of the work not redound to the honour of the artificer? When is it not counted honour and glory, if a maker repairs what he has made? Lest anyone should lose his work, does he not call it back when it grows old, and raise it when it falls, and re-form it for the better when it is destroyed? Therefore what is done in the virgin's childbearing is not an injury to the

Creator, but is the salvation of the creature. If God made man, who blames him for remaking him? and since it is worthily believed that he formed him from slime, why is it judged unworthy that he re-formed him from flesh? Which is more precious, flesh or slime? Therefore, the more precious the material of our restoration, the greater the glory.

Or when is God not the moulder of man in the womb? Hear Job: Your hands have made me and fashioned me (Job 10:8). And after: Like cheese you curdled me: with bones and sinews you knit me together, you gave me life and mercy (Job 10:10–12). And David: You formed me, and laid your hand upon me (Ps 139:5). And God to Jeremiah: Before you were in the womb I knew you, and in the womb I sanctified you (Jer 1:5). If, then, he drew Job's features in his parent's belly, if he put together David's limbs in his mother's womb, if he sanctified Jeremiah in the womb of his bearer, if he filled John with the Holy Spirit in the womb of a barren woman, what wonder now if he dwelt in the womb of a virgin, he who took woman from the side of man? He took back man from the womb of woman, who formed the virgin from the body of man; and accordingly, man, what seems new to you is held old by God.

But you say: "What necessity of being born had God, who has the power of making at hand?" What necessity? That by being born he might remake the very nature that he had made by working: because she who had been made to beget for life was herself begetting for death. Through the

first man's sin nature received a deadly wound, and began to be the origin of death, she who was the beginning of life. This, then, is the business of the nativity that compelled Christ to be born: that the nativity of the author might give nature its cure, and that the curing of nature might be the quickening of her sons.

Sermon CXLIV.

On the same

The depth of the matter makes us adjourn the sermon on the nativity of Christ, and the greatness of the mystery compels it. The Virgin has given birth: who will speak of it? The Word was made flesh (John 1:14): who will tell of it? If the Word of God gives wailing to infancy, how will imperfect man cry out in a word? As great a light as the star gave the Magi seeking by night, so great a brightness does the teacher's sermon on the Lord's birth give to its hearers: that they may rejoice to have found Christ, may not presume to range about, may honour the infancy with gifts, not lessen it. But pray, brothers, that he who grew little by little in our body may deign to grow little by little in our word.

The Evangelist related today that the angel spoke thus: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace with God (Luke 1:30). Do not be afraid, Mary: why? Because you have found grace. It is not he who finds that fears, but he who loses. She found, she found, by conceiving, the grace of an offspring from on high, she who by giving birth did not lose the insignia of virginity. Do not be afraid, Mary. Why should she fear, who conceives the security of things, gives birth

to the joys of the ages? There is no fear where the business is divine, not human; where there is the consciousness of virtue, not of shame. Why should she fear, who received him whom all things fear that are feared? Why should she fear, whose champion is the judge of the case, her integrity the witness of her innocence? Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace with God. What was in the beginning with God, the Word, God, the virgin found within herself, and she became a great temple of the Godhead, she who was a tiny guest-house of humanity; and him whom the littleness of the human body could not hold, the greatness of a virginal womb began to hold.

Behold, he says, you will conceive in the womb (Luke 1:31). For reverence' sake it would have been enough to say "you will conceive"; what is it that he heightens, "in the womb"? That the conception might be truth, not figure; that the childbirth might be the reality, not an image; that, as true God was born of true God, so from a true conception the truth of a human body might be born. In the birth of Christ, brothers, the injury of the human body was taken away, not its nature; nor was the creature destroyed, but the fault condemned. There is, then, a heresy that falsely says that Christ assumed an airy body: it pretends that he did not have flesh, but feigned a man.

You will conceive in the womb, and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. What is Jesus in Hebrew, Soter in Greek, is said in Latin Salvator. Rightly, then, all things are kept safe (salva) for

the Virgin who bore the Saviour (Salvatorem) of all. And you shall call his name Jesus, because in this name the whole majesty of the Godhead is adored: all who dwell in the heavens, all who inhabit the earth, all who are held in the depth of hell, prostrate themselves before this name, adore it. Hear the Apostle saying: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth and in the underworld (Phil 2:10). This name, which gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, running to the lame, speech to the dumb, life to the dead, and the power of this name has put to flight the whole authority of the devil from possessed bodies. And if the name is so great, how great the power? But who is this who is called by this name? Let the angel now say it. And he shall be called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32). You see that what the Virgin conceives is not an earthly offspring, but a heavenly one. The Virgin gave birth, but God took up the Son. Therefore he who disputes about this nativity in a human way is aiming at every injury to so great a Begetter.

And the Lord, he says, will give him the throne of David his father (Luke 1:32). From here the heretic breeds the clouds of his unbelief, from here he fashions for himself the material of his error. "Behold," he says, "it is not I who say it, but the angel: The Lord God will give him; is not he who gives greater than he who receives? and he who receives did not have it before he received." But let us hear these things, brothers, not as unbelievers but as believers; and let what is to them

an occasion of error be to us an argument for faith. The Lord God will give him. Who gives, or to whom does he give? Surely God gives to man, divinity to flesh. The Lord God will give him. Which God? Surely the Word who was in the beginning, always God. To whom does he give? To what was made flesh, and dwelt in us (John 1:14). Hear the Apostle saying: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:19). To himself, surely, not to another. This God, then, who was in Christ, was giving the kingdom to himself in Christ, and conferring on the body taken up what he had always possessed by his divinity, as is proved from the very words of the angel.

The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. You see that when he receives, he is called the son of David; when he gives, he is named the Son of God; he himself said: All that the Father has is mine (John 16:15). And what necessity is there of receiving, where there is the power of having? He says: All that the Father has is mine. Who receives what is his own? Or is it of the giver's grace, if what is given belongs to the one who receives? We acknowledge that he received, but it is he who was born, who took up flesh, who took up infancy, who bore the cradle, who took up the ages, who endured labour, who felt hunger, who suffered thirst, who did not flee from so many kinds of injuries, who climbed the cross, who underwent death, who entered the sepulchre: heretic, ascribe to him what he received. But do you think that he disdains to receive honour from God, who received such in-

juries from men? Or do you reckon that he scorns to have the kingdom conferred on him by a father, who took up penalties and death from enemies? Heretic, what belongs to injury, what to infancy, what to age, what to time, what to the given, what to the received, what to lessening, what to death, if you understand that it belongs not to divinity but to the body, you will inflict no injury on the Son, you will make no distance in the Trinity.

But let us return to ourselves, and now speak of what is ours. The Lord God, he says, will give him the throne of David his father, and he will reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32–33). He who in heaven always sat with the Father has now received the throne of David on earth: he who will reign for himself always has now been allotted an eternal kingdom for us in the house of Jacob. Let us rejoice, brothers, because he who reigned for himself is going to reign for us; let us rejoice, because he came to reign on earth, so that we may be able to reign with him in heaven. Hear the Apostle: If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him (2 Tim 2:12). He was born for us; for us surely he came to give the kingdom, as he himself promises when he says: Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the origin of the world (Matt 25:34). He said "for you", not "for me". He comes, that he may be with us always, that he may always be before our eyes, he who now is held only in our hearts. He will come, so

that those who have glory from the kingdom may have confidence from familiarity.

And of his kingdom there will be no end. You who believe in his coming, rejoice, because he has promised a kingdom without end, where there is service without a successor, where the dignities are perpetual. But how is it that those who canvass for things that will pass do not canvass for things that will last? How is it? How is it that they buy fleeting honours with gold, and will not receive everlasting ones freely? Brothers, here the offices are prepared, here the places are decreed, here the honours are assigned; here, he who has not received his letters of appointment from the faith of the Gospel will not have there the insignia of the eternal dignities. Therefore, if service delights us, if we wish to serve as soldiers for ever, let us take up the arms of Christ, let us keep watch, let us be sober, let us conquer the devil, let us lay low the vices, so that we may receive rewards and crowns alike from our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who reigns with God the Father now and always, and for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon CXLV.

On the generation of Christ, and on Joseph wishing to put Mary away

You are going to hear today, brothers, how the blessed Evangelist has related to us the mystery of the generation of Christ. The generation of Christ, he says, was thus: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to have in the womb from the Holy Spirit; but Joseph her husband, since he was just and did not wish to expose her, wished to put her away secretly (Matt 1:18–19). And how is he just, who decided not to examine the conception of his bride? He does not inquire into the cause of a modesty under suspicion, he does not vindicate the good name of the marriage, but feels its loss? He wished to put her away secretly. This seems to suit a pious man more than a just one; but by human judgement, not divine. With God neither is piety without justice, nor justice without piety; in the heavenly sense equity is not had without goodness, nor goodness without equity. Virtues, if they are separated, fall apart; equity without goodness is savagery, and justice without piety is cruelty. Joseph, then, was rightly just, because he was pious; and pious, because just. Indeed, in that he

thinks of piety, he was free of cruelty; in that he tempers the case, he kept judgement; in that he puts off vengeance, he escaped crime; in that he shuns the accuser, he fled the sentence. His holy mind was in turmoil, struck by the newness of the matter; there stood his bride, pregnant but a virgin; she stood full with a pledge, but not empty of modesty; she stood troubled about the conception, but secure about her integrity; she stood clothed with a mother's gift, but not shut out from the honour of virginity.

What was the bridegroom to do at this? Accuse her of a crime? But he himself was the witness of her innocence. Speak of a fault? But he himself was the guardian of her modesty. Press a charge of adultery? But he himself was the champion of her virginity. What was he to do at this? He thinks of putting her away, because he could neither betray her outside nor keep within what had happened. He thinks of putting her away, and he tells God everything, because he had nothing to tell man. And we, brothers, whenever a matter troubles us, the appearance deceives, the colour of the affair keeps us from knowing what lies within, let us decline judgement, withhold vengeance, flee from sentencing, tell God everything; lest, while we are perhaps too easily eager for the punishment of the innocent, we pronounce a harmful sentence on ourselves, as the Lord says: With what judgement you judge, it will be judged of you (Matt 7:2).

Certainly, if we keep silent, God will cry out, the angel will answer, who forestalled Joseph

thus, lest he should abandon innocence: Joseph, he says, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife; for what has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20). She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus; for he will save his people from their sins (Matt 1:21). Joseph, son of David. You see, brothers, a race called in one person, you see a whole lineage named in one man, you see the line of David's pedigree now cited in Joseph. Joseph, son of David. Born in the twenty-eighth generation, how is he called the son of David, unless because the secret of the race is opened, the faith of the promise fulfilled, the conception from on high of the heavenly birth now sealed in virginal flesh? Joseph, son of David. With such a word the promise of God the Father had been uttered to David: The Lord swore truth to David, and he will not disappoint him: of the fruit of your womb I will set upon your throne (Ps 132:11). Which deed indeed glories in such a song: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand (Ps 110:1). Of the fruit of your womb: rightly "the fruit of your womb", rightly "of the womb", because the heavenly guest, the inhabitant from on high, so came down into the guest-house of the womb as not to know the bars of the body; so went out from the dwelling of the womb that the virginal door did not open, and that was fulfilled which is sung in the Song of Songs: A garden enclosed, my sister, my bride; a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed (Song 4:12).

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid. The bridegroom is warned not to fear his bride's case;

and truly a pious mind, while it suffers with another, takes more fright. Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid. Lest, though you are secure in conscience, you give way at the knowledge of the mystery. Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid. What you see is power, not crime; here is not a human lapse (lapsus), but a divine gliding in (illapsus); here is a reward, not guilt; here is an increase of heaven, not a loss to the body; here is not the betrayal of a person, it is the secret of the judge; here is the palm of the examining judge, not the penalty of torment; here is not a man's theft, it is God's treasure; here is not a cause of death, but of life. And so do not be afraid, because she who is in labour with life does not deserve to be killed. Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife. To call a bride a wife is of divine law: as therefore, virginity remaining, she is a mother, so, modesty remaining, she is called wife.

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife; for what has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit. Let them come, let them hear, who ask who it is whom Mary bore. What has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit. Let them come, let them hear, who have striven with a Greek whirlwind to cloud the Latin purity, Anthropotokos, Christotokos, so as to take away Theotokos, blaspheming. What has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit. And what is born of the Holy Spirit is spirit, because God is spirit (John 3:6; 4:24). Why, then, do you ask who he is that was born of the Holy Spirit, when God himself

answers you that he is God? when John rebukes you, who says: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word, God, was made flesh, and dwelt in us, and we saw his glory (John 1:1, 14). John saw the glory; the faithless man looks at the injury. What has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit. And we saw his glory. Whose? His who was born of the Holy Spirit, his who, the Word, was made flesh, and dwelt in us. What has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit. The virgin conceived, but of the Spirit; the virgin was in labour, but with him whom Isaiah foretold: Behold, a virgin shall receive in the womb, and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is interpreted, God with us (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23). God with us, with them man. And cursed is the man who puts his hope in man (Jer 17:5).

Let those who ask hear: who is he that was born of Mary? You will bear a son, says the angel, and you shall call his name Jesus (Luke 1:31). Why Jesus? The Apostle says: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld (Phil 2:10); and do you, a crafty examining judge, now ask who Jesus is? Every tongue now confesses that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:11); and do you still inquire who Jesus is?

You will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus; for he will save his people. He will not save another's. From what? From their sins. That he who forgives sins is God, if you do not believe Christians, believe, most faithless man, at least

the Jews, who say: Since you are a man, you make yourself God (John 10:33). Who can forgive sins, but God alone? (Mark 2:7) They denied that he was God, who did not believe that he forgave sins; you believe that sins are forgiven by him, and do you hesitate to confess him God?

The Word was made flesh, that the flesh of man might be advanced into the glory of God, not that God might be turned into the injury of the flesh, as the Apostle says: He who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit (1 Cor 6:17). And how, when God joins himself to man, is he not one God? Human laws put an end to all contentious questions within thirty years, and is Christ, for about five hundred years, to answer the cases of his nativity, suffer lawsuits over his birth, sustain questions about his state? Heretic, cease to judge your judge, and adore God in the heavens, the God whom the magus adored on earth.

Sermon CXLVI.

On the same, and on Joseph the bridegroom, and the bride a mother

Whenever, the turning posts of the year having been passed, the day of the Lord's Nativity draws near, and the brightness of the virginal childbearing is spread through the whole world with a flaming flash, it is of our will, not of fright, that we keep silent. What mind would presume to set itself in the way at the very rising of the divine king? When the sun's rays burst forth, human sight is dulled; when God shines forth, how is the whole gaze of our minds not wounded? With our senses restored, then, after the stupor of the new light, it is time for us now, having seen the generation of Christ through the flesh, to contemplate also the secrets of his divinity.

The generation of Christ, says the Evangelist, was thus (Matt 1:18). Brothers, if we wish to understand what is said, let us not weigh divine words by human measures; human sense must be set aside where all that is said is divine. So, that Christ is born is not custom, but sign; not nature, but power; not order, but authority; and it is a heavenly miracle, a reason not human. Here what will worldly knowledge grasp? here what will the understanding of the flesh look

for? The generation of Christ, he says, was thus. He did not say, "Thus it was made", but "Thus it was", because the generation of Christ was with the Father when he was being begotten from his mother. What was, always was; what was made, this was being rendered: he was God, he was being rendered man; he took us up from the womb, he who had moulded us from clay.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed. It would have been enough to say: when Mary had been betrothed. What does "bride mother" mean? if mother, not bride; if bride, not yet mother. When Mary his mother had been betrothed. Bride by virginity, mother by fruitfulness; a mother not knowing man, knowing childbirth. Or how was she not a mother before the conception, who after the childbirth is a virgin mother? Or when was she not a bearer, who begot the author of the ages, gave a beginning to things? Nature, a virgin, is ever a mother; so corruption is ever a stepmother. It belongs, then, to the virginal gift that a virgin should regenerate through God what a virgin begot through God: God and integrity are a heavenly fellowship; virginity joined to Christ is the perfect tie of virtue. That the Virgin conceives is the honour of the Spirit, not the burden of the flesh; that the Virgin is in labour is the secret of God, not a conjugal service; that Christ is born belongs to the divine majesty, not to human feebleness: it is the whole glory of the Godhead, where no injury of the flesh is felt.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to have in the womb from the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18). Why is it that the secret of heavenly innocence is directed to a bride, and not to a free woman? Why is it that the bride's danger is thus brought about by the bridegroom's jealousy? Why is it that so great a power is thought a crime, sure salvation a peril? Why is it that among the innocent modesty so labours, shame gives way, chastity is wearied, faith is wounded, accusation stands forth, the case presses, all room for excuse is taken away? Who excuses the bride whom her conception accuses? Or what will an outside defender avail, when an inside witness of the deed stands by? What do we hold, brothers? Not the strokes of letters, not letters, not syllables, not a word, not names, not persons in the Gospel are empty of divine figures. A bride is sought, so that even then the Church might be signified as the bride of Christ, according to that saying of the prophet Hosea: I will betroth you to myself in justice and judgement, and in mercy and tender mercies, and I will betroth you to myself in faith (Hos 2:19–20). Hence John says: He who has the bride is the bridegroom (John 3:29). And blessed Paul: I have betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor 11:2). Truly a bride, who by virginal childbearing begets anew the new infancy of Christ.

Joseph the bridegroom is a steward, so that this one may fulfil in that Joseph the figure of Christ's Passion: Joseph by his prophetic dreams

incurred jealousy, Christ by prophetic visions received envy; Joseph, sent into the pit of death, comes up alive from the pit, Christ, given to the sepulchre of death, returns alive from the sepulchre. Joseph was sold, Christ was valued at a price; Joseph is taken over into Egypt, Christ is driven into Egypt; Joseph ministers bread abundantly to hungry peoples, Christ fills with the bread of heaven the nations dwelling through the whole world. So it shines out why this Joseph bore the type of the heavenly bridegroom, carried his image, walked as his figure.

Mary is called mother, and when is Mary not mother? The gatherings of the waters, he says, he called seas (maria) (Gen 1:10). Did not she conceive in one womb the people going out of Egypt, that a heavenly offspring, reborn, might emerge into a new creature, according to that saying of the Apostle: Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised in Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor 10:1–2)? And so that Mary might always go before human salvation, the people whom the begetting wave sent forth into the light she herself rightly went before in song. Mary, he says, the sister of Aaron, taking a timbrel in her hand, said: Let us sing to the Lord, for he has been gloriously honoured (Exod 15:20–21). This name is akin to prophecy, this is saving to those who are reborn, this is the badge of virginity, this the beauty of purity, this the sign of chastity, this the sacrifice of God, this the virtue of hospitality, this the col-

lege of holiness; rightly, then, this maternal name is the name of the mother of Christ.

We have said why the mother is a bride, why Joseph is the bridegroom, why the maternal name is Mary's, to show that everything about the birth of Christ was mystical: now let us set out from other causes why a bride was sought for the childbearing of Christ. Isaiah had foretold that a virgin would bear God of heaven, king of the earth, Lord of the world, restorer of the world, slayer of death, giver back of life, author of everlastingness (Isa 7:14): how sad this would be to the worldly, how terrible to kings, how fearful to the Jews, the very event of the Lord's nativity proved. For when Judaea heard from the Magi announcing it that Christ was born, Herod learned it, at once the Jews set about destroying Christ, Herod about killing him (Matt 2:1–16); and while they fear a successor for themselves, they tried to destroy the saviour of all. Indeed, because they could not find him, they wipe out his homeland, mix milk with blood, dash his contemporaries together in parricidal fury; they tear in pieces the companions of his innocence, because they could not find partners in fault to punish. And if they do these things when Christ is already born, what would such savagery have done when Christ was conceived? Hence it is that a bridegroom is provided, a husband's appearance is provided, to hide the miracle, to cover the sign, to veil the Virgin's childbearing, to give no room to the charge of crime, to elude thus the snares of the raging one. Christ, though given over to death, if

he had been extinguished in the womb, headlong death would have taken away what had come for our salvation. And since this passage could bring us much if it were expounded, let it suffice, brothers, that we have had a foretaste of the Lord's mystery today.

Sermon CXLVII.

On the mystery of the Incarnation

What it was, brothers, that made the Lord Christ enter into the commerce of an earthly body, enter the narrow confines of human flesh, dwell in the lodging of a virginal womb, since we began to hear it before, let us hear more fully today. You are my life, you are my salvation, you are my glory: and so I do not allow you to be ignorant of what God has given me to know.

The Evangelist knew God when he says: No one has ever seen God (John 1:18). So the God whom he knew, he acknowledged, he felt: because creation could not see him, it was carried along by hard servitude, it rendered a sad homage on account of the invisible majesty; fright had besieged all things; fear had loosened the universe; terror had shaken everything; in heaven the divine splendour had laid the angels low; on earth thunders and lightnings were shaking the hearts of mortals. Thus fright, too great, shut out love for the One who rules; it drove the angels to the earth; it drew men to idols; it filled the world with vain errors: it made all flee the Creator, worship creatures. He cannot love who fears greatly: hence it is that the world preferred to perish rather than to fear; death itself is lighter

than fright. Indeed Cain, when he began to be harassed by the terror of his parricide, asks for death, believes it rest if he should perish (Gen 4:14). And why should I speak of Cain? That Elijah, when he felt himself sprinkled with the whole of fear, sought again the death he had fled, thinking it better to give way to death than to fear (1 Kgs 19:4). Peter too, troubled by fear of the Lord's power, begged Christ to depart from him: Depart from me, he says, for I am a sinful man (Luke 5:8). He said this because the weight of fright had extinguished whatever there was of love and faith; so fear, unless it is tempered by love, makes even a devoted servitude defiant.

God, then, seeing the world tottering through fear, at once acts to call it back with love, invite it by grace, hold it by charity, and bind it with affection. Hence it is that he washes the earth, grown old in evils, with an avenging flood, and calls Noah the parent of a new age, addresses him with gentle speech, gives him a familiar confidence, instructs him lovingly about the present, consoles him through grace about the future; and now no longer by commands, but by a shared labour, he shuts up in one ark the offspring of the whole world (Gen 7), so that the love of companionship might take away the fear of servitude, and what had been saved by common labour might be preserved by common love. Hence it is that he calls Abraham from among the Gentiles, increases him in name, makes him the father of faith, accompanies him on the way, keeps him among strangers, enriches him with goods,

honours him with triumphs, binds him with the pledge of promises, rescues him from injuries, caresses him with hospitality, makes him wonderful by an offspring past hope (Gen 12); so that, filled with so many good things, drawn by such sweetness of divine charity, he might learn to love God, not to fear him; to worship by loving, not by taking fright. Hence it is that he consoles Jacob in dreams as he flees (Gen 28), challenges him to a contest as he returns, binds him in the wrestler's embrace; so that he might love the father of the contest, not fear him.

Hence it is that he calls Moses with a father's voice, speaks to him with a father's charity, invites him to be the liberator of his people (Exod 3). And what more? He makes him God: he gave him to be God of Pharaoh (Exod 7:1); he makes him God, he fortifies him with signs, arms him with mighty works, wins wars by his commands, grants the soldier to conquer by his very word, allows him to triumph by precepts, and through all the crowns of the virtues advances him to his friendship, grants him to be a partaker of the heavenly kingdom, and grants that he himself be the lawgiver; yet he received all this that he might love: indeed, he was so kindled with the love of God that he himself loved ardently, and so admonished others to love: You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole strength (Deut 6:5). Whatever there is of heart, whatever of mind, whatever of human strength, he willed to be so

possessed by the love of God that man's worldly affection should have nothing to violate.

But through these things we have recalled, when the flame of divine charity kindled human hearts, and the whole intoxication of the love of God poured itself into human senses, with wounded mind they began to wish to gaze on God with fleshly eyes. God, whom the world does not contain, how could narrow human sight contain? What will be, what it ought, what it can: the right of love does not regard. Love does not know judgement, lacks reason, knows no measure. Love does not accept consolation from impossibility, does not receive a remedy from difficulty. Love, unless it reaches what it desires, kills the lover; and therefore it goes where it is led, not where it ought. Love gives birth to desire, swells with ardour, ardour stretches towards things not granted. And what more? Love cannot not see what it loves: hence it is that all the saints counted as small all that they had merited, if they did not see the Lord. And indeed, brothers, how will one render homage for benefits, if he does not see the giver of the benefits? Or how does one believe that he is loved by God, whose sight he does not merit? Hence it is that love, which longs to see God, even if it has no judgement, has yet the zeal of piety. Hence it is that Moses dares to say: If I have found grace before you, show me your face (Exod 33:13). Hence it is that another says: Show your face (Ps 80:4). Indeed, even the Gentiles themselves made images for this reason,

that in their very errors they might see with their eyes what they worshipped.

God, then, knowing that mortals were tormented and wearied by the desire of seeing him, chose this means of making himself visible, which would be both great to the earthly and not least to those on high. For what had been made on earth by God like himself, could it fail to be held honourable in heaven? Let us make man, he says, to our image and likeness (Gen 1:26). Perfect devotion owes to the image what it owes also to the king. If he had taken an angel from heaven, he would nonetheless be held invisible; if from the earth something less than man, it would both be an injury to divinity, and would have cast man down, not lifted him up. Let no one, then, my dearest ones, think it an injury to God, if God came to men through a man, and assumed from us, so that he might be seen by us, he who lives and reigns, God, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon CXLVIII.

On the same

Today, brothers, we must repay yesterday's sermon, today we must repeat the joy of the Lord's nativity: when the Virgin conceives, the virgin gives birth, the virgin remains, it is not custom, but sign; it is not reason, but power; it is the author, not nature; it is not common, but unique; it is divine, not human. Let the labour of empty philosophy cease, then: that Christ was born was not necessity, but power; it was honour, it was not injury; it was the mystery of godliness, it was not loss to the Godhead; it was the restoration of human salvation, it was not a diminishing of the divine substance. He who, not by being born, made man from untouched slime, by being born himself made man from an untouched body; the hand that graciously assumed clay into our handiwork graciously assumed flesh too for our restoration. So, that the Creator is found in his creature, that God is found in flesh, is the honour of the creature, it is not an injury to the Creator.

But he believes this an insult who believes clay to be more precious than flesh. Does he perhaps repent of having been changed from the injury of clay into the honour of flesh, into the glory of man? Man, why are you so cheap to yourself, you

who are so precious to God? Why, so honoured by God, do you so dishonour yourself? Why do you ask from what you were made, and do not inquire for what you were made? Was not this whole house of the world that you see made for you? For you the light poured in removes the darkness poured round, for you the night is tempered, for you the day is measured: for you the sky is made radiant with the varied brightness of sun, moon and stars; for you the earth is painted with flowers, groves, fruits; for you was created in the air, in the fields, in the water, the beautiful, unbroken and wonderful multitude of living things, lest a sad solitude should confound the joy of the new world.

Hence it is that he made you to be from the earth, so that you might be lord of earthly things, and might be in common with them in the communion of that same substance: and yet he did not so make you, earthly, equal to the earthly, as not also to make you, animated from heaven, equal to the heavenly: and so that you might have reason in common with God, a body in common with the beasts, he gave you a soul from heaven, he gave you a body from the earth, so that in you the knit concord of heaven and earth might be preserved. Yet still your Creator devises what he may add to your honour: he places his image in you, so that the visible image might make the invisible Maker present to the earth, and in earthly things he gave you his own stead, so that so wide a possession of the world might not be denied to the Lord's vicar. And if these things are so, why

is it now thought an injury, when God took into himself in his clemency what he had made in you by himself, and willed to be truly seen in man, in whom before he had willed to be seen by way of an image; and granted that he should himself be the reality, who before had received to be the likeness?

The virgin conceived, the virgin gave birth: let the conception not trouble you, let the hearing of the childbirth not confound you, since virginity clears whatever there is of human modesty. Or what wound to shame is there, where the Godhead enters into fellowship with integrity, ever its friend; where the angel is the interpreter, faith the bridesmaid, chastity the betrothal, virtue the marriage gift, conscience the judge, God the cause, integrity the conception, virginity the childbirth, a virgin the mother? Let no one, then, judge in a human way what is done by a divine sacrament, let no one examine a heavenly mystery by earthly reason, let no one treat the secret of newness by custom, let no one measure by an example what is singular, let no one make an insult out of loving-kindness, let no one run into danger from salvation.

Certainly he who desires to know higher things, let him go back to the Law, let him seek through the Law the knowledge of the Law, let him learn the deed of the author by the authority of the author. The Law relates that God created man for a life of his own, that he commanded the earth to bring forth fruits for man in a spontaneous servitude; that he commanded wild

beasts, cattle, herds to be subject to human power, not to skill, so that man, knowing no labour, ignorant of pain, might possess delights in blessedness (Gen 2). But that man might not have all these things, the angel who was held among the first envied him, and preferred to be changed into the devil, lest he should see man so full of glory. Indeed, kindled by this spite, he attacks the woman with guile, and leads the virgin on to taste the forbidden fruit: the virgin, led on, at once leads on the virgin, her husband, and cast down the state of life, while she serves the food of death, the fodder of sin; and she herself becomes the material of the ruin of all, she who had been made for a singular solace. Hence the first sin, hence the origin of death, hence labour, hence pain, hence groaning, hence the bitter condition of our servitude was propagated. For man, once the lord of all, was cast down into the servitude of all, and fears all, he who was feared by all; and scarcely prevails by skill, he who reigned by power.

Hence it is, brothers, hence it is that such is the order of Christ's birth: the devil had come to a virgin, an angel came to Mary; so that what the bad angel had cast down, the good angel might lift up. That one urged unbelief, this one faith: she believed the persuader, this one believes the author. Christ is born, that by being born he may restore the corrupted nature; he took up infancy, he endures nourishment, he runs through the ages, that he might establish the one perfect, enduring age which he himself had made: he

carries man, so that man may no longer be able to fall; him whom he had made earthly, he made to be heavenly; animated with a human spirit, he quickens the spirit into the divine: and so he lifts him whole into God, that in him he leaves nothing of what belongs to sin, to death, to labour, to pain, to earth, by the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, now and always, and through the immortal ages of ages. Amen.

Sermon CL.

On the flight of Christ into Egypt

If no word lays open, no sense takes in, no human mind grasps the conception of the Virgin, the childbearing of the Virgin, who could speak of God having fled as a man? The angel of the Lord appeared, he says, to Joseph in sleep, saying: Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt (Matt 2:13). If we have said that it was of loving-kindness that Christ was born, what shall we say of what we read, that Christ fled? Perhaps, as we said that he was born to restore nature, let us say that he fled away to call back those who flee. And indeed, if to call back the straying sheep he himself strays on the mountains, how should he himself not flee the fleeing peoples, so as to lead them back? Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Why is it that the cause of heaven is so handled that human sense is confounded, the mind wearies, the understanding labours, the hearing is dulled, faith wavers, hope stumbles, belief itself gives way?

Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Man persecutes, and God flees; the earth rages, and heaven trembles; the dust flies, and the angels are troubled with fright, and the father's fright is shown as the son flees. Take the child and

his mother, and flee into Egypt. When Saul persecuted David, he fled for refuge to Judaea, and the neighbourhood took him in (1 Sam 21–22); the house of one widow was enough for Elijah to hide in (1 Kgs 17). When Christ flees, there is no place, the province falls short, the homeland gives no help. While he migrates, the neighbouring nations, the bordering regions are not enough: but he seeks for his exile the sad place of Egypt, foreign in dress, barbarous in tongue and in manners. Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. If the refuge of all things flees, the help of all goes into hiding; if the strength of all is in terror, if the defence of the universe does not defend itself, why is human flight censured, trembling rebuked, terror blamed? Why is Peter charged with a crime, who denies, and John, who is terrified and flees, and all the disciples, because they desert through fright (Matt 26; Mark 14)?

And granted, brothers, that these things happened: why are they committed to writing, why are they told in books, why are they read out to the ages, why are they made known in the daily readings, why are they spread among all the nations? Can it be so that every tongue, place, age, time, all things should come to know a divine fear? For as deeds of valour, when they are read, raise minds to advance, so things of weakness, when they are recited, cast minds down. What then does the Evangelist mean, writing these things for everlasting memory? It belongs to a devoted soldier to keep silent about his king's flight, to tell of his steadfastness, to speak of his

valour, to be silent about his fears, to lay open his feats of strength, to keep back his weaknesses, to blot out his reverses, to proclaim his victories, so that he may both break the boldness of the enemy and rouse the valour of his comrades. The Evangelist, then, by recording such things, seems to have roused the barking of heretics and to have taken away their defence from the faithful.

Take, he says, the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Flight is commanded, not a journey; necessity is imposed, not will: the angel enjoins a sojourn abroad in hiding, not free passage; so that the way, which is troublesome in itself, should be ever more troublesome through fear. So it is time now for us to ask for what reason these things were written for us. Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. When a warrior flees in battle, it is a matter of skill, not of fear; when God flees from man, it is a matter of mystery, not of fright: when the mighty withdraws before the weak, he does not fear his pursuer, but draws him out into the open; for he who desires to bring back a public victory over the enemy wishes to conquer in the open; he who wishes to hand on his triumph to the ages does not allow himself to engage in a hidden combat. A secret victory and a hidden valour leave no example to posterity. Hence it is that Christ flees, to yield to the time, not to Herod: for he did not flee death, he who had come to carry off the victory from the enemy; nor does he take fright at human plots, he who had come to lay open all the cunning of the devil's fraud; nor did he fear then, when an

infant, since both as man he did not know how to fear, and as God he was able not to fear. Christ, brothers, if he had been slaughtered then in that flock of sucklings, death would have been a mischance for him, not his will; it would have been not power, but weakness; it would have been necessity, not authority; and it would have been the reward of innocence, it would not have been the glory of majesty. Surely, where then would be what was said by God: You shall not cook a lamb in its mother's milk (Exod 23:19; 34:26)?

It will come to pass, he says, that Herod will seek the child (Matt 2:13). Herod was seeking, but the devil was seeking through Herod, for he saw that the Magi, whom he held as princes in his errors, had fled from him. If Christ, bound in swaddling-clothes, occupied at his mother's breasts, silent of tongue, hidden in deed, with no power to walk, changed the devil's standard-bearers, that is, the Magi, into most faithful leaders, the devil already saw what Christ could do at full age: and therefore he stirred up the Jews, he incited Herod, to forestall the infancy of Christ that he suspected, to anticipate the future insignia of his power, so that the cunning schemer might take away the standard of the cross, deadly to himself, most victorious for us. The devil sensed, he sensed that Christ by his teachings, by his mighty works, would soon restore life, and that he who, still wailing, had seized the very summit of the world would seize the whole world, according to that word of the prophet: Before the child knows how to call father or mother, he shall receive the

strength of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria (Isa 8:4). And, as the Jews themselves prove when they say: You see that we gain nothing; behold, the whole world goes after him (John 12:19), Christ had promised through the Law and through the prophets that he would come in the flesh, would climb the steps of the ages of life, would announce the glory of the heavenly kingdom, would preach the teaching of faith, and by the sole command of his word would put demons to flight, would give sight to the blind, a running step to the lame, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, remission to sinners, life to the dead.

Hence Christ, who was to fulfil these things as a grown man, as an infant put off death; he did not flee it. Indeed, the Evangelist asserts that his flight came not from fear of danger, but from the mystery of prophecy, saying thus: Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. And after: That what was said by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, who says: Out of Egypt I have called my son (Matt 2:15; Hos 11:1). Christ therefore fled, so that the truth of the Law might stand, the faith of prophecy, the testimony of the Psalmist, as the Lord himself says: It was necessary that all things be fulfilled that are written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me (Luke 24:44). Christ fled for us, not for himself; Christ fled to keep the mysteries that were to be dispensed in their times.

Christ fled to provide for the mighty works to come, to take away from the unbelieving the

matter for excuse, and to give to those who were to believe the confidence of faith, since in persecution it is better to flee than to deny. Indeed Peter, because he would not flee, denied; John, so as not to deny, fled away (Mark 14).

Sermon CLI.

On the same

Today's reading has moved hearts, shaken the inmost parts, stunned the hearing. Behold, he says, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in sleep, saying: Arise, take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt (Matt 2:13). He at whose birth virginity offers no resistance, reason no obstacle, nature no contradiction: what power, what force, what peril prevails, so that he is driven to flight? Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. It would have been more reverent to say, "Go into Egypt", so that it might be a journey, not a flight; will, not necessity; judgement, not fear; human at least, if not divine: but now flight is commanded, commanded from heaven, commanded through an angel, so that fear seems to have taken hold of heaven before earth.

Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Flee into Egypt, from your own to strangers, to the sacrilegious from the holy; from your temple to the shrines of demons, to the homeland of idols from the region of the saints. So the breadth of Judaea is not enough, so the wide possession of the world is narrowed, the secret place of the temple does not hold him. The crowd of priests does not take him in, the un-

searchable multitude of kinsmen does not hide him, so that profane Egypt is engaged as the hiding-place of the Godhead: so the matter presses, if there is no leisure to consider the modesty of the virgin, the labour of the mother, the shame of her sex, the danger to Joseph, the weariness of the long distance, the ruin of the whole household, and, what is harder than these, Jews about to sojourn among the Gentiles, with whom they do not even have communion; or rather, for whom it is a deep shipwreck by violation of the Law. O how hard is a sojourn abroad, even among fellow citizens and brothers! He knows the savour of his own home who feels another's: and where is that word: Lord, you have become our refuge (Ps 90:1)? And: Our God is refuge and strength (Ps 46:2)? If the refuge flees, if strength fears, if the stronghold migrates, what life, what hope, what security, what defence is there? Against the plots of a king who was free, one widow was enough for Elijah (1 Kgs 17); against the threats of Herod, a captive, the whole of Judaea is not enough for Christ. Elijah consumes with fire from heaven those sent to him (2 Kgs 1); Christ is saved by flight alone. Let it suffice to have heaped up so far the complaints over the flight of Christ.

Brothers, that Christ fled was a matter of mystery, not of fear; it was the Creator's deliverance, not his peril; it was of divine power, it was not of human frailty; he did not flee because of the author's death, but fled for the sake of the life of the world. For he who had come to die, why should he flee death? Christ would have

slain the whole cause of our salvation, if he had let himself be slain as a little child. Christ had come to confirm by examples those whom he had taught by precepts, and to do himself what he had commanded to be done; and to prove possible by sight what seemed impossible to hearing. He had come to pour into the world the knowledge of his Godhead, and to take away the ignorance of the human race. He had come to rouse the sluggish hearts of mortals to faith by mighty works. He had come to overcome the devil in public combat, so that he might be both conquered by all through a divine command and laid low through a human example. He had come to fulfil the promises of his presence, so as to grant to see him those to whom he had given to know him. He had come that the Jew might come back from contempt of the Law. He had come to bring the Gentiles into the faith. He had come to choose apostles as teachers of the world, and to fill them with heavenly teachings, to strengthen them with mighty works, to arm them with signs, so that by signs they might tame the fierce, by mighty works heal the sick, by teachings instruct the teachable: and, to crown all, he had come to destroy death by dying, to break up the underworld by penetrating it, to unbar the sepulchres by rising again; by ascending to heaven to make a gift of the earthly to the heavenly. All these things would surely have perished for us, if Christ, when he was in the cradle, had not fled.

But, hearer, you may say: "Since he could have done otherwise, why did he submit himself to

injuries so many, so great?" Why? First, because neither could man be saved without man, nor could human injuries be cut away without human injuries: he makes the cause his own who wishes to protect another; he who does not suffer with another cannot cut away passions. Christ took us up into himself, to give himself to us; he bore our passions, to take away our passions. Hence it is that Christ fled, to temper our flights in persecutions. A martyr who is seized must hold to steadfastness; one not seized must flee the persecutor, so as both to grant the persecutor time to come to his senses and not to take away from himself time to pray, as the Lord says: If they persecute you in this city, flee into another (Matt 10:23). He who provokes a persecutor makes one; he who turns aside corrects him. We must therefore flee, we must not provoke, if we wish our persecutors to be saved, for whom we are commanded to pray. Pray, he says, for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44). We must pray, we must flee, so that both he who rages through ignorance may be healed, and he who suffers may come by the palm through patience, not come by peril through rashness. Brothers, if the martyrs had not fled from Saul, they would not have made him Paul, and a martyr. This Christ taught us to do, this example he left us; so that, since the Lord fled, the servant may not think it unworthy to flee.

And there is another reason why Christ fled, why as an infant he put off the time of his Passion, why he ascended the cross past the thirtieth year

of his bodily life: that he who had made man perfect for life might restore him into perfect life; and such as he had given him to the earth, such he might give him back to heaven. And that he fled to Egypt goes back to another reason. He fled to Egypt to chastise the unbelief of the Jews through the faith of the Gentiles: for Egypt obediently received its Lord whom Judaea had put to flight, so that he might lay open in a figure that his Church was to be set before the Synagogue, the Gentiles before the Jews, in faith.

Sermon CLII.

On the slaughter of the infants

Where jealousy tends, where spite leaps forth, where envy is carried, the savagery of Herod has laid open today: for in being jealous for the narrow bounds of a temporal kingdom, it strives to extinguish the birth of the eternal king, as the Evangelist says: Then Herod, seeing that he had been mocked by the Magi, was exceedingly angry: and sending, he killed all the boys who were in Bethlehem and in all its borders (Matt 2:16). Seeing that he had been mocked by the Magi. Impiety is pained that it has been mocked, cruelty rages that it has been put off, guile snarls that it has been deceived, and fraud, turned back upon itself, is dashed to pieces. Herod gnashes his teeth, falling himself into the snare he laid: hence he unsheathes the iniquity he had stored up: out of faith he takes up the arms of unbelief; with earthly fury he seeks him whom he does not believe born from heaven; to the bosoms of mothers he drives the camps of soldiers, among the breasts he storms the citadel of piety, on tender breasts he hardens the steel, he sheds milk before blood, he makes them feel death before life, he thrusts darkness on those entering the light.

So acts the master of evil, the minister of guile, the artificer of wrath, the inventor of wickedness, the author of impiety, the plunderer of piety, the enemy of innocence, the foe of nature, evil to all, worse to his own, worst to himself: whom Christ fled, not to escape him, but so as not to see him. Reaching for the heights, he falls from on high; knocking at heaven, he enters the deep; he goes against himself who goes against God; he slays himself who tries to slay life, since salvation cannot be taken by perdition, life by slaughter, eternity by an end. O ambition, how blind always! O how very evil presumption always is! O how he loses what is granted who grasps at what is not granted! Herod, besieging an earthly kingdom, attacks the heavenly; gaping after earthly things, he rushes upon the divine, and pursues lovingkindness itself with utter impiety. He had heard that a king was born; he had asked where, when, from where; and for what: but he did not ask as he ought, because with him there was love of sinning; love of innocence did not remain. Resolved upon wickedness, ready for outrage, prepared for crime, he does not inquire into the causes of innocence, he abrogates right, he confounds what is lawful and unlawful, he whose companion is malice, to whom equity is hateful, iniquity ever a friend, who lives by slaughter, who fortifies himself with blood, who pursues cruelty, for whom everything stands on fear, nothing stands on love.

Herod, blind then, thus seeks Christ with swords, tracks him with gore, searches him out

with cruelty; fearing a successor, he fell upon the author; he slew the innocent, wishing innocence to perish. The ruler of the people, the guardian of morals, the censor of discipline, the investigator of justice, the defender of equity, the preserver of innocence, the enlarger of the people, makes the cause of the innocent one the crime of the innocent, turns into punishment the gift of those who foretold him, decrees that the rising of the author be the setting of those just rising, orders the business of the one who saves to be the peril of those who were to be saved. A judge summons those who hear, questions those who speak, convicts those who deny, presses the accused, strikes the guilty, rebukes those privy to the deed, adds the accomplices, hands over to the sentence those he has found out.

And the infants? Their tongue was silent, their eyes saw nothing, their ears heard nothing, their hands did nothing; and those who have no act at all, whence their fault? They took up death who did not know how to live; time did not help, age did not excuse, silence did not defend those whose only crime before Herod was this, that they were born. And indeed, how should they not pay back to nature what she had lent them, from whom the cause of the author was being exacted? Unhappy man, who prepared everything for his own accusation, left no room for excuse, but prepared the whole for punishment! Who will excuse him whom innocence assails, infancy attacks, milk accuses like blood? So much against Herod.

But Christ, who foreknows things to come, who is privy to secrets, the judge of thoughts, the searcher of minds, why did he abandon those whom he knew would be sought on his account, and knew would be slain on his account? Born a king, and a heavenly king, why did he neglect the soldiers of his innocence, why did he despise an army of his own age, why did he so leave the guard posted at his cradle that the enemy, seeking the king alone, should rage against the whole soldiery? Brothers, Christ did not despise his soldiers, but promoted them: to them he gave to triumph before living, them he made to seize the victory without a contest; them he gifted with crowns before limbs; them he willed to pass by vices with virtues, to possess heaven before earth, and not to engraft them in human things before the divine. Christ therefore sent his soldiers ahead, he did not lose them; he received back his battle-lines, he did not abandon them. Blessed are those whom we have seen born to martyrdom, not to the world. Blessed are those who have changed labours into rest, pains into refreshment, griefs into joy. They live, they live, who truly live, who merit to be slain for Christ.

Blessed the wombs that bore such, blessed the breasts that poured themselves out for such, blessed the tears which, shed for such, conferred the grace of baptism on those who wept. For in different manner, by one gift, the mothers are baptised in their tears, and the sons in their blood. In the martyrdom of the sons the mothers suffered; for the sword, passing through the

limbs of the sons, reached the hearts of the mothers, and it must be that they who were companions of the passion are sharers of the reward. The little one smiled at his slayer, the infant played with the sword, the suckling looked at the horror of the striker as at his nurse, the age that did not know the light rejoiced as it was about to die, the infant son looks on every man not as an enemy, but as a parent. The mothers bore whatever there was of anguish and of pain, and therefore they will not lack the joy of martyrdom, who shed the tears of martyrdom.

Here let the hearer attend, let him attend, so as to understand that martyrdom does not stand by merit, but comes by grace. In little ones, what will, what choice, where nature itself too was captive? Of martyrdom, then, we owe the whole to God, nothing to ourselves. To conquer the devil, to give up the body, to despise one's vitals, to endure torments, to tire the torturer, to win glory from injuries, life from death, is not of human virtue; it is of divine gift. He who runs to martyrdom by his own virtue does not reach the crown through Christ: but may he lead us to the heavenly pasture who deigned to lie in our stable, Jesus Christ the Nazarene, our Lord, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon CLIII.

On the same

Brothers, it is not for human sense to lay open the mystery of the virgin childbearing: what nature does not have belongs to the author, not to nature; it is the work of the spirit from on high, which the flesh cannot perceive; where there is no indication of humanity, there is the sign of the Godhead, as the prophet says: The Lord God himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall receive in the womb (Isa 7:14). Where there is nothing of earthly usage, there all is of the heavenly order; what is not of the world cannot be subject to worldly understanding. A conception that keeps the virgin, a childbearing that leaves the virgin: what it begets is divine, not human; God walks where no footprint of human passage is found at all; custom fails when miracles are wrought; customs do not look to signs, singularity admits no example, as today's reading lays open, which tells of the divine battles of little ones.

Risen up for its king, his own cohort longs as one to die before him rather than to die with him: soldiers dedicated to Christ began to serve before they lived, to fight before they played, to shed their blood before they longed for the breasts'

milk: burning souls could not bear the delays of the body; flying from the lap to the raging wedges of the enemy, they forestall caresses with feats of valour, kisses with wounds, ointments with the sword, so that they may dwell in heaven before earth, carry the rewards of the spirit before the flesh, bring back triumphs to God before taking in the nourishment of men. Truly, truly, brothers, these are the martyrs of grace: they confess while silent, they fight without knowing, they conquer unwitting, they die unaware, unknowing they take up palms, ignorant they seize crowns. Therefore, as virginity, knowing no corruption, conferred honour on the mother, so infancy, unaware of the passion, has seized the palms and the crowns of martyrdom. But what shall we say of this, that the king himself, who ought to have stood his ground, fled alone, and fled at the Father's warning? That flight is of inmost love, not of craven fear. Had Christ stood his ground, the Synagogue would have them as sons; the Church would not have them as martyrs.

Sermon CLIV.

On Saint Stephen, the first martyr

As inscriptions fixed to the boundaries of estates proclaim their owner, so the very names of the saints often point to their merits and bear witness to their distinctions. So Abraham showed by the addition to his name what he believed by faith, when from Abram he is called Abraham by God: so that he who was to be enlarged in his race might first be enlarged in his name, as the Lord says: And your name shall no more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of many nations (Gen 17:5). So his holy wife, when from barren she becomes fruitful, from Sarai was called Sarah, so that she too might grow in name before she grew in offspring; and because, the Lord permitting, she let out a laugh at the thought that an old woman, already furrowed with wrinkles, should conceive, that a fruitfulness already despaired of should bear, that barrenness at the very end of old age should become pregnant, she straightway named what she bore Laughter; and she fitted into the name what she had undergone in her feeling when she laughed: And she called his name Isaac (Gen 21:3), which is interpreted laughter. So Jacob, who in the womb

began to wrestle before he lived, to overcome by strength before by limbs, even within his mother's womb obtained the very name of supplanter, because before he was born he is known to have supplanted his brother, rejected by God (Gen 25).

And since it is long to go through each one: as Peter obtained his name from the rock, because he was the first who merited to found the Church on the firmness of faith, so Stephen was named from the crown, because he was the first who merited to undergo the combat for the name of Christ, the first who merited to inaugurate martyrdom with the blood of Christ's soldiers. Let Peter hold the ancient principate of the apostolic choir, let him open the kingdom of heaven to those who enter, bind the guilty by his power, mercifully absolve the penitent; Stephen is the first of the martyrs, let Stephen lead the purple-clad army, he who, an eager warrior, poured out his own blood for the still warm blood of his Lord. And because he himself won for himself a purple dyed with his own gore, rightly he afterwards obtained from his king the crown, he who already at his birth was allotted his name from the crown: truly, him whom he foreknew and predestined, he has now called first to the glory of martyrdom.

Sermon CLV.

On the Kalends of January, which were defiled by the various superstition of the Gentiles

When Christ was born in loving-kindness for our salvation, the devil at once brought forth against the divine goodness many baneful prodigies, to make a mockery out of religion, to turn holiness into sacrilege, to prepare out of the honour of God an injury to God. Hence it is, brothers, hence it is that today the Gentiles drag out, drag about, drag along to be seen their gods, with studied foulness, with contrived disgrace, fouler than foulness itself, gods whom they make unfit to be seen. What vanity, what madness, what blindness, to acknowledge gods, and to defame them with wretched mockeries! They are mockers, they are not worshippers, who make sport of the gods they venerate; they treat them with injuries, they do not honour them, who so deform the gods by whom they think they were formed; they confound them, they do not glorify them, who compose them out of confusion itself.

Truly, as the Apostle says: Since they did not see fit to hold God in knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do what is not fitting (Rom 1:28): when they give the divine to those from whom they take away the human, when

they judge worthy of heaven those whom they make unworthy of the very earth, truly they have been given up to a reprobate mind; and this is not of human judgement, it is of the wisdom of God, that they themselves should be the avengers of the injuries done to God, who are proved the authors of the injury. What wrath, what vengeance could so punish upon the idols the affront to God, that posterity, by a foul worship, should judge those whom antiquity, with altars, incense, victims, gems, gold, falsely declared to be gods, to have been the foulest of men, and should mark their life, manners, deeds on their very faces, and teach that such are to be fled rather than worshipped!

Let us weep, brothers, for those who have followed such things, and let us rejoice that we, by heaven's gift, have escaped such things. Those whose adulteries they shape in statues, whose fornications they commit to images, whose incests they set out in pictures, whose cruelties they commend in books, whose parricides they hand down to the ages, whose impieties resound in tragedies, whose obscenities they act in play: by what madness would they believe these to be gods, unless, possessed by desire of crimes, by love of wickedness, they long to have criminal gods? He who desires to sin worships and venerates the authors of sins. Hence it is that the adulterer has attached himself to Venus; hence it is that the cruel man gives himself over to Mars.

We have said this, brothers, to lay bare the cause: why the Gentiles today make their gods

commit such things as we endure, and make them such as to be a horror and a shame to those who see them; they bring it about that one day even those who make them may shudder at them and abandon them, and that Christians may glory that they have been freed from such things through Christ: provided only that they are not polluted by their spectacles, that they do not defile themselves by touching their frankincense, that they flee the peril of consenting to such things, since consent is always equal to deeds, as the Apostle proves when he says: Not only those who do them, but also those who consent to those who do them (Rom 1:32). And if the damnation for consent is so great, who could mourn enough for those who make themselves into images? Have not these lost the image of God, forfeited the likeness, been stripped of the garment of Christ, who have formed themselves into the sacrilegious forms of images?

But someone says: "These are not pursuits of sacrilege, these are vows of merriment; and this is the gladness of what is new, not the error of what is old; this is the beginning of the year, not an affront of paganism." You are wrong, man: these are not games, they are crimes. Who plays with impiety, who jests with sacrilege, who calls an outrage a laugh? He deceives himself greatly who thinks so; he is a tyrant who presumes to take the dress of a tyrant. He who makes himself a god sets himself up as a contradictor of the true God; he has refused to bear the image of God, who has chosen to bear the mask of an idol; he who has

chosen to jest with the devil will not be able to rejoice with Christ. No one plays with a serpent in safety, no one jests with the devil unpunished.

If, then, there is in us any inward feeling of piety, if there is in us any regard for humanity, if any affection for the salvation of our brothers holds us, let us draw away those who so run to perdition, are swept away to death, are dragged to Tartarus, hasten into Gehenna. Let the father, then, draw away his son, the master his servant, the kinsman his kinsman, the citizen his fellow citizen, man man, the Christian all who have likened themselves to beasts, made themselves equal to cattle, fitted themselves to herds, shaped themselves into demons. And he who sets free finds a reward; he who neglects it incurs disfavour. Blessed is he who is the guardian of his own life and the provider of another's salvation.

Sermon CLVI.

On the Epiphany and the Magi

Whenever the careful skill of physicians blends an antidote of healing juices against deadly diseases, if the sick man presumes to take it outside the art, outside the prescription, outside the time, what was provided for health becomes a cause of danger; so the word of God, if a rash hearer presumes to know it outside the master's teaching, outside the doctrine, outside the dogma of faith, what is the matter of life becomes the occasion of perdition. We must take care, brothers, lest through unskilfulness in hearing, what was divinely written for our progress should turn to the harm of souls.

Do you think that the Evangelist teaches today that Chaldeans, searchers of the stars, Magi wandering through the constellations, investigating the affairs of the sky in the darkness of nights, ascribing the causes of being born and of dying to the courses of the stars, establishing the good or ill of men by the choice of the luminaries, found the birth of Christ, hidden from the ages, with a star for their guide? Far from it. So the world thinks, so the Gentiles understand, so the surface of the reading suggests: but the word of the Gospel speaks not human things, but divine;

not usual things, but new; not things deceiving by art, but resting on truth; not things playing on the eyes, but fixed in hearts; not things wavering in conjecture, but made firm by authority; coming from God, not from fate; not gathered by numbers, but acquired by mighty works.

When Jesus had been born, he says, in Bethlehem of Judah, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? We have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him (Matt 2:1–2). When Jesus is born, the origin of things rises, the bestower of the race is begotten, the author of nature is born, to restore nature, give back the race, recreate the origin. Adam, the first man, father of the race, origin of generation, so lost the good of nature, the freedom of the race and the life of the offspring when he offended, that a succession to be lamented carried the evil of nature, the servitude of the race, the death of the offspring. Hence it is that Christ by being born gave back nature, by dying took away death, in rising calls back life: and he who had given man a soul from heaven made man from there to consist also of flesh, so that the earthly stain might not again sink the heavenly sense into the fall of the flesh, as the Apostle says: The first man from the earth, earthly; the second man from heaven, heavenly: as is the earthly, such also are the earthly; and as is the heavenly, such also are the heavenly (1 Cor 15:47–48). And John the Evangelist: Everyone who is born of God does not sin, but the genera-

tion of God keeps him (1 John 5:18). Hence it is, then, that Christ is born, to raise to the heavenly nature those lying in an earthly offspring.

When Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judah. Bethlehem, brothers, in Hebrew is called house of bread. By these words, then, the house of Judah is marked, the race is named, so that the faith of the promise, the truth of the prophecy might be fulfilled, as Jacob says: Judah, your brothers shall praise you, your hands on the back of your enemies, the sons of your father shall worship you (Gen 49:8). And after: A prince shall not fail from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until he comes for whom these things are laid up, and he shall be the expectation of the nations (Gen 49:10). Whence David too: Judah, my king (Ps 60:9).

When Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judah in the days of King Herod. Why is it that in the time of a wicked king God comes down to earth? that divinity is mingled with flesh? that a heavenly commerce comes about with an earthly body? Why is it? And when does the true king not come to drive out the tyrant, to set free his homeland, to restore the world, to give back freedom? Herod, a renegade of the Jewish nation, had seized the kingdom, taken away freedom, profaned the holy things, confounded order; whatever there is of discipline, whatever of worship, he abolished; rightly, then, since human help is lacking to the holy nation, divine help comes to its aid, and God himself stands by it, which had no man to stand by it. So Christ will

come again, to overthrow the Antichrist, that the world may be set free, the homeland of paradise be given back, the freedom of the world made perpetual, the whole servitude of the age taken away.

Behold, Magi came from the East. From the East to the East the Magi come, so that he who had bidden them come might himself receive them as they came: for when would a magus seek out God, unless God bade him? when would an astrologer have found the king of heaven, unless God revealed him? when would a Chaldean on earth worship one God without God, he who in heaven served as many gods as there are stars? It is a more heavenly sign from the Magi than from the star, that the magus knows the king of Judaea, the author of the Law, and the Jew does not know him; Chaldea announces him, Judaea does not announce him; Jerusalem turns away and flees back; Syria follows and worships.

Behold, Magi came from the East, saying: Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star. And yet what is it that is seen? Truly, as the Apostle said: Though he was rich, he became poor (2 Cor 8:9); though he was rich in his Godhead, he becomes poor in our flesh; and he began to have one star, he who made, has and holds the whole creation. We have seen his star. At last the magus sees him who has the star, who is not had by the star; nor is he driven by the course of the star, but he himself drives the course of the star, whose course he so directs through heaven, so governs its going, so tempers

its way, that it serves the steps of the Magi and is sent to their pace. For when the magus walks, the star walks; when the magus sits, the star stands; when the magus sleeps, the star keeps watch: so the magus perceives that for those whose condition of travelling is equal, the necessity of serving is equal; and now he believes the star to be not God, but judges it to be a fellow servant, which he sees thus bound over to his services.

Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him. In saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews, they do not ask, but insult: when those who know ask those who do not know, they are not themselves ignorant, but they convict the negligent, rebuke the idle, expose the wicked, scourge the stubborn, accuse the servants of not having gone out to meet their Lord. For what do they seek from men, who through God knew what they were seeking? What need had they for this of the service of a human showing, whom the stars of heaven served for this? What use to them was the lamp of the temple, for whom the wondrous star of heaven was shining?

Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? That is to say: Why does the king of the Jews lie in a manger, and not recline in the temple? Why does he not shine in purple, but lies squalid in swaddling-clothes? Why does he lie hidden in a cave, and is not openly held in the sanctuary? The beasts received in a manger him whom you disdained to receive in his own house. The ox has

recognised, as it is written, its owner, and the ass its lord's manger (Isa 1:3); but you, Israel, have not sought your Lord.

We have seen his star. The star appeared not of its own will, but at command; not at the nod of heaven, but at the impulse of the Divinity; not by the law of the stars, but by the newness of signs; not by the clime of heaven, but by the power of the one being born; not from art, but from God; not by the science of the astrologer, but by the foreknowledge of the Maker; not by arithmetical reckoning, but by divine decree; by heavenly provision, not by Chaldean curiosity; not by magic art, but by Jewish prophecy.

So, when the magus saw that human cares had perished, that his own arts had failed, the labours of worldly wisdom been emptied, the sweat of all the schools gone stiff, the treasures of all philosophy been drained, that the pagan night had fled, the clouds of opinions fallen, the very shadows of the demons hidden themselves, that the star did not, like a comet, hide with the hair spread about it what it announces, darken what it lights up, he speaks thus: "It is right that I should see you, with a new ray, with a signal light, with a sure splendour, shine upon Judaea, and show there a king born beyond the law of the world, beyond the order of the flesh, beyond human nature." So, his error laid aside, he follows, runs, arrives, finds, rejoices, falls down, worships; because not through the star, not through art, but through God, he marvels that he has found God in human flesh. Therefore, brothers,

by the present reading the error of magic has not been confirmed, but dissolved. But let this suffice for today, so that through God what follows may shine out clearly.

Sermon CLVII.

On the same

The Lord's feasts declare their causes by their names: for as Christ by being born gave the birthday, and by rising gave the day of resurrection, so by the light of signs he showed the day of his illumination. For he who by being born first veiled himself in a human body, afterwards, by working, revealed himself by a heavenly secret: afterwards God himself appeared in a threefold manner, who in his birth was shown to be a single man. Rightly, then, the present solemnity is named by the word Epiphany, in which the Godhead shone forth, which for us was darkened in our flesh.

This, brothers, this is the feast which, conceived at different times, has brought forth three insignia of the Godhead. At the Epiphany the Magi confess Christ the Lord with mystic gifts, and worshippers of the stars, dwellers of the night, find the author of light in thick darkness: so that this may be the author's grace, not the diligence of one seeking in this way; not of the star, but of God; may be the gift of the Creator, not the kindness of a creature; not of human art, but of divine gift.

Behold, Magi, he says, came from the East, saying: Where is he who has been born king of

the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him (Matt 2:1–2). We have seen his star. And what is not his? The star is his, not he the star's. His star. One which received being, but did not give it; a star whose rising the author held, not one which held the rising of the author. His star. Coming not from a horoscope, but from the Begetter; by command, not by fate; not from a reckoner, but from the author; not one to give a rising, but one to undergo a setting. A star not law-bearing, but sign-bearing; bearing not the order of days, but the light of nights. This star is a minister of the way, not of life; the companion of the Magi, not the kinswoman of Christ; not the lady of the Ruler, but the little handmaid of servants.

But someone says: "Why Magi? Why through a star, if with the stars, with birth, there is no cause, no reason with nature?" Why Magi? Why a star? So that through Christ the very matter of error might thus become the occasion of salvation: just as through Christ the cause of death has been made the cause of life. To rout the enemy with his own sword is a singular mark of valour. With the Magi the fault lay in ignorance, not in will; and in the crime there was not intent, but error. To seek God and not to know how to seek is necessity rather than guilt. It was therefore an act of loving-kindness that God should both let himself be found by those who sought him and impute the fault to error. Indeed Paul, by such a judgement, from persecutor was made preacher, because through zeal for the Law he attacked the

Law, and sinned against God out of love of God. Hence it is that faith runs to Paul, unbelief runs back to ignorance.

But the hearer still says: "Granted that the star, not at its own nod, but at God's command, showed the way to the Magi who sought: whence so great a knowledge of mystic gifts, whence such great mysteries of the presents?" Not by Chaldean art, but from the ancient tradition of holy forefathers: these were of the race of Noah, of the sons of Abraham, who had learned through God, not through art, that Christ would be born; and by a deep mystery they had come to know him to be man, God, king, and one who was to die. Hence it is that they brought gifts fitting the faith of the fathers, so as knowingly to offer gold to the king, incense to God, myrrh to one who was to die, and by such a gift to satisfy both piety and honour. But let this suffice about the Magi.

At the Epiphany Christ at a wedding gave the water the savour of wine (John 2:1–11), so that Christ's presence at the wedding might be a matter of power, not of pleasure; not of humanity, but of authority; might be for the sake of a sign, not of the belly; might not be a provision for drunkenness, but a showing of the Godhead. Indeed, when the water changed its nature, it at once laid open its author, and the Creator of the elements was revealed to the creature by its change. Happy the wedding, happy those nuptials at which Christ is present, which are consecrated not by luxury, but by mighty works. What did not pass into grace there, where water passed into wine?

At the Epiphany Christ, consecrating our baptism, entered the bed of the Jordan (Matt 3:13–17), so that those whom by being born he had taken up on earth, by being reborn he might lift up into heaven; might have as free in himself those whom he had seen captive apart from himself; might himself make living those whom fault had made mortal; might render perpetual those whom death had made temporal; and those whom the devil had made exiles from earthly things, he himself might make his sharers in heavenly things. Hence it is, brothers, that the Holy Spirit then poured himself out in full descent, when the Father cries from heaven: This is my beloved Son (Matt 3:17); so that they whose working in creating us had been one with the Son might have one condescension for our restoration; and so Christ, at different times, on one and the same day, by the gift of the Magi, by the change of the water and by the voice of the Father, might be known to be God by a threefold testimony, and from the threefold showing of Christ there might come one sacred solemnity of the Epiphany.

Sermon CLVIII.

On the same

We often ask why Christ enters the world in such a way as to experience the narrowness of the womb, suffer the injury of childbirth, endure the fetters of swaddling-clothes, bear a feeble cradle, seek with tears the nourishment of the breasts, feel the steps of the ages and their necessities. And how ought he to have come, who willed to bring grace, to drive out fear, to seek charity? Nature teaches all what infancy can do, what it deserves. Infancy: what barbarism does it not conquer, what fierceness does it not tame, what cruelty does it not check, what fury does it not restrain, what power does it not make lay itself down, what harshness does it not soften, what hardness does it not dissolve, what love does it not demand, what affection does it not wring out, what favour does it not impose, what charity does it not obtain? That this is so, fathers know, mothers feel, all prove, the human heart bears witness. So, then, he willed to be born who willed to be loved, not feared: and yet hear what infancy, so winning, so gentle, so dear, gains with human malice.

On hearing, he says, King Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and gathering all

the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born (Matt 2:3–4). If Jerusalem, if the king, if the scribes, if the chief priests are so troubled at the infancy of Christ, what would these have done, had Christ come at once as a full-grown man, if propped up by riches and a multitude, if with suspected men, if with foreigners? They give nothing to time, nothing to age, nothing to the poor, nothing to a parent; but as soon as they hear that he is born, they prepare death for the one being born, snares for the innocent, wickedness for the pious, swords for the naked, soldiers for one alone, slaughter for one wailing, punishment for a parent: and so that force may be mingled with blood, bitter cruelty declares war on cradles, presses breasts with darts, dashes shields against laps, so as to make a human and divine offspring enter the sepulchre before the world.

Granted that King Herod, from love of the kingdom, from fear of a successor, was driven to plot such things: why Jerusalem, why the chiefs, why the scribes? Because the profane does not want God to be born, the servant his lord, the accused his judge, the rebel his prince, the unbeliever his examining judge. Jerusalem had drenched herself with manifold defilement, the priests had profaned the holy things, and, selling sins, had turned pardon and piety into gain. The scribes had changed heavenly doctrine, saving knowledge, life-giving teaching, into a savage sense, into the fall of unbelief, into deadly empty talk. Hence it is that they do not want Christ to

be born, they fear that he should live, because they knew that they would soon be given over to ignominy, dragged to reproaches, cast out of the temple, deprived of the priesthood, emptied of the profit of the offerings. For once inflamed with greed, captured by pomp, wounded by vices, drunk with vanity, soaked in luxury, since they could think nothing of amendment, they hoped nothing of pardon.

A good steward, when by constant labour he gathers abundant fruit, longs for his master to come to his gain, longs for him to come to his joy: a diligent workman, when he has completed the work of the labour he undertook, desires the householder to come, so that he may receive his wage: a devoted soldier, after the combat, after the victory, wishes for the presence of the king, so that he may have his sweat and his wounds made good with rewards; so he longs for Christ to come to his palm who lays low the wars of the world with unwearied valour; so he does not want Christ to come who, overcome by the allurements of the world, trembles at punishment, presumes nothing of pardon. Brothers, let us do good, let us turn aside from evil: let us flee vices, follow virtues, pay no heed to things present, think on things to come; let us make for our kingdom, come to our palm, long for glory, strain with all our prayers towards the crown.

But let the sermon now return to what follows. Then Herod, he says, having called the Magi secretly, learned diligently from them the time of the star which had appeared to them, and send-

ing them to Bethlehem, he said: Go and inquire diligently about the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, so that I too may come and worship him (Matt 2:7–8). He calls the Magi in secret, because a feigning mind, a guileful conscience, dares nothing openly. He calls the Magi in secret, because the thief loves the night, the robber lays his ambush in hiding. Diligently he inquires the time of the star: but while he fears for his kingdom, he does not fear the sign of heaven, he does not dread the author of time. Why are you troubled, Herod? Why are you so concerned about a successor? He for whom the stars do soldiers' service is not held by an earthly empire.

Go and inquire diligently about the child, and when you have found him, bring me word. Herod, you are wrong: the magus was bidden to worship, not to inform; he came to bear witness, not to betray; to see was given to him, to find was not given to you. Go and inquire. As if it were not enough to have asked the Magi once. To those who asked piously an answer was given without piety; the messenger of salvation, for those who heard amiss, was turned into ruin. The stubborn servant hears that the Lord is born, but for the Lord at his birth he prepares snares, not honour; he prepares death, so as to be free of servitude. But because neither could God be ended, nor salvation perish, nor life die, the Lord remains in honour, the servant remained in crime; and he is dragged to punishment who disdained to come to homage; he is seized for sentence who would not come to grace.

Go and inquire diligently about the child, and when you have found him, bring me word. He said fittingly, bring me word (renuntiate mihi), because he who hastens to come to Christ always renounces (renuntiat) the devil; when the Christian who is to be hears from the priest, "Do you renounce the devil?", he answered, "I renounce." Fittingly, then, Herod says that the Magi ought to bring him word (renuntiare), he who knew that he held the place of the devil, knew that he played the part of Satan. So that I too may come and worship him. He wishes to lie, but cannot: he will come, to be bowed down to torments, thrown to tortures, laid low for punishment, he who had feigned to worship so as to rage.

But the Magi, once they passed beyond the clouds of Jewish unbelief, and in the clear sky of Christian faith see again the star they had seen, with it going before, with it leading, came to the most sacred place of the Lord's birth. And opening their treasures they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matt 2:11). Gold to the king, frankincense to God, myrrh to one who would die, they offer to the devotion due to the Lord, the greatest treasures of knowledge for those who would believe hereafter; so they return home by the way of innocence, who trampled underfoot the road of Herod's fraud to its ruin.

Sermon CLIX.

On the same

Some days ago, that is, on the eighth day before the Kalends of this month, from which the day began to grow because the true day had shone forth, those who have read, or have lent their ear to readers, easily recall that the Lord Christ Jesus was born in the flesh, as is written in the Gospel (Luke 2). The shepherds of Israel, keeping watch over their flock, came to know him at the angels' announcement: today the Gentile Magi, followers of curious arts, have found him manifested in the same flesh, as signs pointed him out. To those, the voice of spiritual ministers spoke, announcing the dawn of the Lord's nativity; to these, a star, as the tongue of the heavens. Those to whom the prophets had often been sent say: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and see this word that has come to us (Luke 2:15); these, to whom none of the prophets had ever spoken, say, and inquiring ask: Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him (Matt 2:2).

Those, then, approach from near at hand, these come from afar; yet both meet with pious devotion at one and the same place of faith: and there they gaze at, wonder at, recognise Christ

the king, laid before those two prophetic beasts which bear the type and figure of the two peoples. For the ox has recognised its owner, and the ass its lord's manger (Isa 1:3). For the Jewish ox has recognised him, the yoke of the Law shaken off; and the pagan ass has recognised him too, the wildness of folly laid aside; the one forsaking the superfluous labour of observance, the other leaving the wandering error of superstition. Each recognised him, because each came up to the one manger of the Lord to feed, to feed not on the hay of death, but on the food of salvation. Eat, eat, pious animals, the food of eternal life: and with jaws as eager as you can, take hold of the meat of perpetual reward, not dividing it into pieces, but taking it whole and entire. For Christ cannot be eaten and divided; whole he is taken by believers, whole he is received in the mouth of the heart. For the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us (John 1:14): he dwelt, from the time when he deigned to fill the womb of the Virgin.

They offered, as it is written, gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matt 2:11). We, the frankincense of faith from a distant region; we, the myrrh of good odour of a near confession; we, the fragrant gifts of charity: for these three we offer when we confess Christ king, and Lord, and man. But let us worship Christ in spirit and truth, if we have offered him the gifts of faith and confession: and let us too, like those Magi, who are the leaders of our faith and the first of our belief, warned in sleep, that is, in this life, which is like sleep, having mocked King Herod, that is, the devil,

the prince of this world, by another way, that is, by another life, return to that homeland of ours from which we were unhappily cast out through Adam, but now through Christ have been mercifully led back.

Sermon CLX.

On the same

Although in the very mystery of the Lord's incarnation the insignia of divinity were always clearly present, yet today's solemnity lays open and reveals in many ways that God came into a human body, lest mortality, always wrapped in obscurities, should lose through ignorance so great a thing as it has merited to hold and possess by grace. For he who willed to be born for us did not will to be unknown by us: and therefore he so lays it open, lest the great mystery of godliness should become the occasion of a great error.

Today the magus finds wailing in a cradle him whom he sought shining in the stars. Today the magus marvels to see clear in swaddling-clothes him whom he long endured as obscure in the stars. Today the magus turns over in deep amazement what he sees, and where: heaven on earth, earth in heaven, man in God, God in man, and him whom the whole world cannot hold, enclosed in a very little body. Hence the magus, who is not able to search it out, cannot grasp it, at once worships; for he sees that the stars, the moon, the sun do not so shine in heaven as he beholds the flesh to have shone out on earth; he sees that in one and the same body the commerce

of divinity and manhood has come together. He, while he believes him God, perceives him king, understands that he will die for love of the human race, and with fearful thought turns over how God can die, how the restorer of life can be slain. And so the magus ceases to seek by art what by art he cannot find: and because he sees that he has long wandered in heaven with the wandering stars, he rejoices that on earth he has come to God under the guidance of a single star, and the magus discovers that all things that are seen in heaven, clear to human eyes, are darkened by deep mysteries.

And now, seeing himself believe and not dispute, he confesses with mystic gifts: with frankincense that he is God, with gold king, with myrrh that he will die. With frankincense God, with gold king, so as to placate with a rich homage him whom he had approached and offended with a curious and importunate practice; and he fulfils that word which many suppose to be said of the eunuch from Ethiopia: Ethiopia shall come first with her hands to God (Ps 68:32). The magus, coming before the Jew with his hands, sees Christ, because when the Jew was betraying Christ to Herod with wickedness, then the magus was acknowledging with gifts that Christ was God. Hence it is that the Gentile, who was last, has been made first: because then, from the faith of the Magi, the belief of the Gentiles was inaugurated, and the cruelty of the Jews was marked.

Today Christ entered the bed of the Jordan to wash away the sin of the world: John himself bears witness that he came for this. Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Today the servant holds the Lord, man holds God, John holds Christ; he holds him to receive pardon, not to give it. Today, as the Prophet says: The voice of the Lord upon the waters (Ps 29:3). What voice? This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt 3:17). Today the voice of God is upon the waters, because God the Father, to prove the trustworthiness of the generation, himself the witness of his Son, himself the one who declares him, stands by. This is my beloved Son, because he had no other to bear witness: the secret of the Father had no arbiter; the divine generation knows no witness; divinity admits no knowledge from outside, as the Son himself says. No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son (Matt 11:27).

Today the Holy Spirit hovers over the waters in the form of a dove, so that, as that dove of Noah had announced that the flood had gone away from the world (Gen 8:11), so by this one as sign the perpetual shipwreck of the world might be known to have ceased; and not, like that one, should it bring a shoot of the old olive, but it pours the whole richness of the chrism upon the head of the new parent, so as to fulfil what the Prophet foretold: Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows (Ps 45:8). Today the Lord is upon the

waters. Rightly upon the waters, and not beneath the waters, because Christ does not serve his baptism, but commands the sacraments.

Today the God of majesty has thundered; and if the Father thunders from heaven, if the Son stands in the streams of the Jordan, if the Holy Spirit appears bodily from above, why is it that the Jordan, which fled at the presence of the ark of the Law (Josh 3), does not flee back at the presence of the whole Trinity? Why is it? Because he who submits to loving-kindness begins not to be subject to fear. Here the Trinity exercises its whole grace, speaks with itself its whole charity: there it rebukes the elements, to train its little servants to fear. Amid all these things, however, so many and so great, John stands unafraid, because he cannot fear who, born wholly for the love of God, is approved by the testimony of an angel.

Today Christ gives the beginning of the heavenly signs, in that he turns water into wine (John 2:11), so that he whom the Father had already proved by his voice to be the Son might himself approve himself God by mighty works, since he is the author of the elements who changes the elements; and he himself made nature, who finds no labour in acting against nature: he turns water into wine, so that in the vigour of divinity the dullness of our nature may advance. For he who with flowing fragments and secret increase stretched and widened five loaves into a feast for five thousand men (Matt 14:13–21) could, with ever-growing increases, have enlarged and made perpetual the measures of wine for the festival of

the wedding. But the water was to be changed into the mystery of the blood, so that Christ might pledge cups of unmixed wine from the vessel of his body to those who drink, so as to fulfil that word of the Prophet: And your cup that inebriates, how excellent it is! (Ps 23:5) In three ways, then, today Christ's Godhead has been proved: by the gift of the Magi, by the testimony of the Father, by the change of water into wine; because the authority of Scripture has established that every word stands on three, saying: In the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word stand (Matt 18:16). But since the feast itself now bids us come to the table of the Lord and to the gladness of this cup, it is enough to have concluded great matters in a short sermon, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns now and always, and for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon CLXI.

On the parable of the servant come back from the field, and on man's gratitude towards God

You have heard, brothers, how the Lord exacts divine service by the example of human servitude, saying: Which of you, having a servant ploughing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come back from the field: Come at once, take your place at table; and does not say to him: Prepare what I may sup on, and gird yourself, and serve me until I eat and drink, and after this you shall eat and drink? (Luke 17:7–8) Does he thank that servant, because he did what he had commanded him? I think not (Luke 17:9). So you also, when you have done all that has been commanded you, say: We are useless servants; we have done what we ought to have done (Luke 17:10).

So you also. What is alike? Rather, it is far unlike. Does man owe God as much as man owes man? Far from it. For the order is other, the cause different, the faith unlike. God made man to be, bade him be born, gave him to live, granted him to know, bestowed times on him too, distributed his ages, admitted him to glory, opened to him the way to honour, set him over the living creatures, and appointed him lord of the whole earth

by a fixed law and age: and when such and so great first benefits of God to man had perished, he restored second ones, as much greater as they are divine, as much more excellent as they are heavenly. For he afterwards gave as an inhabitant of heaven him whom he had given before as a dweller among earthly things, so that nothing adverse to him, no assault, and no serpent hiding among earthly goods, could any more creep in upon man; and a condition now sure might keep him whom an uncertain freedom had lost; and man might be free of all, by the servitude of the Lord alone, to whom he owes the condition in which he was made, owes his origin: because he has been redeemed, because he has been bought, he surely owes servitude, as the Apostle says: You were bought with a price; do not become the servants of men (1 Cor 7:23). And the Prophet, to acknowledge his condition, his origin: I am your servant, he says, and the son of your handmaid (Ps 116:16). These things to God; what such thing does man owe to man? And yet God asks for even so much; because man wishes to give nothing back to God, to whom he owes everything.

But let us repeat the reading, and set the likeness itself before our eyes, and then what we have said will shine out: that we pay no servitude to God, the whole of it to man. Which of you, having a servant ploughing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come back from the field: Come at once, take your place at table; and does not say to him: Prepare what I may sup on, and gird yourself, and serve me until I eat and drink, and

after this you shall eat and drink? How familiar, how homely, how drawn from daily use, how common is this teaching! If he who hears is a master, he recognises that he exacts such things from his servant; if a servant, he knows that he renders these things to his master.

For the servant, after watches before dawn, after the varied and hard labours of the whole day, after anxious and trembling runnings to and fro, both prepares supper for his master and, girded, serves what he had prepared: he is not puffed up because he has done it, but trembles as he does each thing with devotion, and sets before his master many dishes seasoned with all art to every taste; while he himself will taste a half-cooked and perhaps unsalted little supper; offering frequent cups, he varies the goblets, changes the wines; at the stories, longer still, of a very long banquet he stands fixed, stands not knowing how to move, stands, he whose servitude is not allowed to grow weary. And when the master is now spending part of the night in sleep, passing it in rest, the servant gathers, cares for, attends, puts, composes, puts back, and so lingers over necessary things that he keeps nothing, or little, of the night for himself for food and sleep. After all this, unless he keeps watch through to the next day and is up before his master while he sleeps, weary, unwearied, he will be up at dawn for the lash; for the present punishment nothing of yesterday's labour helps him, because whatever the master has done to the servant undeservedly, angrily, willingly, unwillingly, forgetting, think-

ing, knowing, not knowing, is judgement, justice, law; the anger of the one who commands is right for the subject, and at the master's pleasure the condition of servitude has no voice.

If, then, the servant too perceives what he owes to man by serving in such a way, the master too, by being master, is taught and understands, with himself as teacher, what servitude he owes to the Lord of lords. This Paul fulfilled, who thus wrote out the labels of his servitude: Up to this hour we hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted with blows (1 Cor 4:11). And elsewhere: I make my body livid, and subject it to servitude (1 Cor 9:27). The good servant inflicted the punishment, so acting that he beat himself continually even to the bruise: nor did he slacken the reins of the body, lest the flesh, slackened by indulgence, should incur another's servitude.

But, man, what you exact from your servant, pay out to him who made you a master. You who always sleep, and exact unwearied watches from your servant, keep watch at some time for your Lord, who watches for you without ceasing; stand by your Lord, who fasts, for even one moment, you whom your servant always stands by when you eat; let off the innocent servant, you whom your Lord coaxes when you sin; give pardon meanwhile, you whom your Lord always forgives. Surely, if you have done anything good, believe that you have paid a debt to the Lord, not bestowed a kindness.

When you have done, he says, all that has been commanded you, say: We are useless servants;

we have done what we ought to have done. When is man useful of himself for divine things, who is so useless to himself for human things? Let man consider the evils of the heart, the vices of the flesh, the waves of pleasures, the storms of desires, the rocks of anger, the shipwrecks of crimes, and then whatever is useful in him he will give to God, whatever is useless he will put down to himself.

But let us return to what we set out, so that it may now be plain why the Lord admonished his disciples. To send his apostles to peoples languishing in pain of various kinds, Christ gave them the power of the spirit, gave them authority from on high, gave them the grace of healings; whence, going about, they gave sight to the blind, a running step to the lame, hearing to the deaf, and, not to detain you with each thing, they gave health to all who were ill; whence, returning, they gloried, saying: Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name (Luke 10:17). Whom the Lord restrains, saying: Do not rejoice that the demons are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

So, lest through pride they should lose what they had won by labour, and put down to themselves what they had obtained from God, he calls them back to humility, which is the mother of teaching, by such an example: Which of you, having a servant ploughing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come back from the field: Come at once, and take your place at table; and does not say to him: Prepare what I may sup

on, and gird yourself, and serve me until I eat and drink, and after this you shall eat and drink? After their labours were accomplished, and so many great proofs of mighty works, the apostles seemed to themselves very useful; but that they were living in the mud of the flesh and the slime of this body, and that they were useless, they did not know; but they are found out when Judas betrays, Peter denies, John flees (Matt 26; Mark 14), all forsake him, so that he alone might appear in whom was, and from whom was, all usefulness.

And as for his saying, And afterwards you shall eat, he warns the disciples that after his ascension they should long to be joined at once to the Lord in that blessedness on high. For indeed here he approves those who are to leave all things, and girds them for the endurance of the passion, and completes them for the labour of his ministry. For then the apostles served him at table for as long a time as, among the kitchens of sinners and the hearths of the Gentiles, they prepared the Lord's supper upon the tables of the Church in perpetual memory. This supper he who is faithful knows; he who does not know it, and desires to know it, let him be faithful.

Sermon CLXII.

On him who wished to divide the inheritance

You have heard today, brothers, what an heir of worldly goods asked of the Lord. Teacher, he says, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me (Luke 12:13). Headlong and heedless greed believed the very examining judge of the world to be the arbiter of a worldly lawsuit; and wished him to become the author of division who had come to restore the unity of the human race. Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. He is not a teacher of gain, but love.

Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. When he says, tell my brother, he has put first what may call charity to mind, what may appeal to nature, what may knock at affection. Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. He cannot say to a brother, "Divide", who taught through the Prophet: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity (Ps 133:1). Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. What greater inheritance, what better inheritance than the tie of divine charity? For an inheritance at times perishes, charity never, as the Apostle says: Charity never fails (1 Cor 13:8).

But someone says: "Then charity never perishes, is never violated?" Plainly never, because

charity, if it is, remains; if it does not remain, it is not. As a barren tree which in springtime grows all white with blossom gives no fruit, but deceives, so is the charity that is thought to be, and is not: shaken by the waves of occasions, it vanishes, and so it hurts the careful and deceives the heedless.

But let us return to what we began. Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. A worldly inheritance brings quarrels to descendants before it brings them wealth; before it divides the means, it splits the heirs; before it hands to each his due portion, it cuts up the successors themselves and sends them into factions. So this is not an inheritance, but a battle; and it is the stepmother of sons, not their means. He enriches his sons who leaves to his sons the fullest charity.

But you, whoever you are, who press the Lord with such a petition, you provoke the Lord, you draw the Lord into a lawsuit, with whom the Apostle teaches and shows you that your inheritance is common: Heirs, he says, of God we are, and co-heirs of Christ (Rom 8:17). He is thus an heir with you, he is your brother, who in the lot of being born, the condition of growing, the order of living, the end of dying, willed to be found like you in all things. For though he was both the sole heir of God and the only Son by nature, he willed and made you a partaker with himself, a co-heir with himself, by grace, you who were wretched and subject to the uttermost servitude. You will have, therefore, and will be able happily to pos-

sess what has been bestowed, if you remain in the Father's hall, if you hold the divine inheritance in common.

The divine lot can be given, it cannot be divided, because in heavenly things he who gives does not lose, and he who receives does not hoard for himself alone. Why then, man, do you call him to a division, why, wretched man, do you invite him to a dispute, why do you ask a part from him who sought out and bestowed on you the whole? Taught by experience, at least cease, and now repent of having asked such things. For you received the portion of the principal substance, and having received it, a wanderer, a vagabond, a dissolute man with the dissolute, a glutton, you squandered it (Luke 15:13). Hence an exile from paradise, hence without share in the inheritance, hence banished from life.

Man, Christ says to you: "What you obtained from me and through me you will not be able to possess without me, for you have already seen what you were without me; knowing this, I thus asked the Father for you, most ungrateful of all: Father, those whom you gave me, I will that where I am, they also may be with me (John 17:24). And since not even this could suffice for your protection — for when you were with me in paradise, you perished outside me — I added, saying: Father, as you are in me, and I in you, so may these too be one in us (John 17:21). I, so as to have the Father's goods, proceeded from the Father, did not withdraw at all from the Father: and therefore I will to have you in us as much as

we ourselves are, and remain, in us. Cease, then, either to divide the things above or to wrangle over earthly things in my hearing, lest him whom today you hold and have as a loving giver you should afterwards find a most severe examining judge."

But let us now hear what the Lord answered: Man, he says, who appointed me judge or divider over you? (Luke 12:14) Who appointed me judge? And where is that which you said, Lord: The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son (John 5:22)? Or divider over you? And who will divide the just from the unjust, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matt 25:32)? If the judgement of man is owed to you, and through you the division of the whole world is to be carried out, how do you say: Who appointed me judge or divider over you?

All judgement indeed is with Christ, and was, and will be; but then he had come not to judge, but to be judged, not to condemn the guilty, but, innocent, to be condemned by the guilty. In man he acted as God, in the servant as lord, so as to be a home-born slave of time, he who was both the Maker and the examining judge of the ages. Rightly, then, he answered: Who appointed me judge or divider over you? And who would appoint him judge, who appointed and restored all things? Christ could not be arbiter at the choice of a litigant, he who is the sum and the power of all judgement. But why did the wrangler not object to him: "How have you, uninvited by your brother, made such a request? Do you not know

that he is not a just mediator who is chosen by one party only?" But he did not say these things; but stood by unseen, so that it should be lawful for the one, and not for the brother, to withdraw from the sentence of the one adjudging.

And since Christ had come to correct, not to condemn the accused, by a precept he removes the tinder of quarrels, saying: See, beware of avarice (Luke 12:15). That is to say: Let avarice be cast away, and there will be no contention over an inheritance. Avarice, brothers, denies parents, divides brothers, separates companions, dissolves friendship, shuts out affection: he who has it within himself will be no one's, will not be his own. Avarice, brothers, as the Apostle said, is the root of all evils (1 Tim 6:10): and when it has begun to take root in the heart, it so scatters the adornments of morals as a noxious tree, bound to them with deadly roots, loosens and scatters the tombs of the ancestors.

Sermon CLXIII.

On despising the care of earthly things

Blessed are those whose hearts today's hearing of the Lord's word has pierced. Blessed are those whose minds so great and such a promise of the Saviour has moved forward to faith. Blessed are those who by belief in the heavenly commands have been freed from the hard cares of the present. For with such a voice today the Lord addresses his disciples, or rather all his hearers: Do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat, nor for your body, what you will put on (Luke 12:22).

Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing (Luke 12:23). Who is so very envious of his own goods, who so hostile to his own delights, as to despise what is offered freely and prepared from heaven, and to covet what is gained by worldly labours and pains? Very degenerate is the heart, wholly servile the mind, which seeks out the steam of cooks, the squalor of the kitchen, dishes stinking with yesterday's horror, the mind on which a royal provision constantly waits and lies ready. Do not, then, man, groan in providing empty things, do not labour in preparing perishable things, because God always

and everywhere stands by as the preparer of your meal.

What king does not provide the due ration for his devoted soldiers? What master does not furnish this food to his faithful servants? What father does not give bread to his sons? If, then, God is to us both king and Lord and Father, what will he refuse? The soldier who serves at his own charges disparages the king; the servant who lives at his own expense accuses his master; the son who is solicitous for himself blames his father who is still alive. Do not, then, man, expose God by thinking in such a way for yourself, God who, with the justice of one who reigns, the zeal of one who is master and the affection of one who begets, has received into himself the whole of your solicitude and has taken back upon himself your care, saying: Do not be anxious for your life, what you will eat.

But perhaps the honeyed rain and the single food deter you by the example of the Jews' disgust, and you do not believe that flesh, compounded of a variety of humours, is filled by manna alone, according to its will: you say: "As God willed the body to consist of different members, so he willed and commanded it to be nourished with varied dishes." Superfluous, O man, is this fear that harries you: for to the meal of the Creator the whole creation runs together and flies. Hence, if the singleness and sparseness of the food of the Law frightens you, let the outpouring of the heavenly banquet of the Gospel invite and entice you, which in one dish sets

before Peter, about to eat, the kinds of the whole creation (Acts 10:11–16). For whatever Noah, the carrier of a new age, kept for the seed of the age, whatever flies and is borne in the air, whatever is begotten and lives on the earth, whatever is in the waters and moves, all this is slain from heaven in Peter's one dish and set out for supper. If, then, man, you will to receive and eat all things, scorn to provide cheap storerooms for yourself.

And we indeed strive to prove to you by great examples that, if you think on the things above, the things of the flesh will not fail you: but God, instead of the insignia of his majesty, sends one who doubts his promises back to mean and lowest examples, so as to convict you by such an examination, you whom so great a model to imitate did not draw. Consider, he says, the ravens, that they neither sow nor reap, they have no storeroom nor barn, and God feeds them; how much more are you of more value than they? (Luke 12:24) Rightly he sends the doubting, faithless man to the bird, the friend of war, the ally of fury, insatiate of blood, raging more cruelly than the steel against the very dead. For when the sword has ceased, that most wicked executioner falls upon the lifeless body, tears, scatters, strews it, so that merciful burial may not commit to rest anything found of the corpse.

So the Lord, by such an example, sets in relief the madness of the doubter, who thinks that God will deny to pious sons what he supplies to impious birds; and they think that he will not give the means of life to those who for his sake

leave homeland, house, parents, sons, wives, he who granted to the newborn to grow, and set a limit to the increase of the body. O wretched man, O most worthy of all unhappiness, who, when a kingdom is given him, sighs for bread; when he is presented with perpetuity, weeps for drink; when he is clothed with the glory of immortality, laments the clothing of the body! Conscious of his inborn unhappiness, he does not believe that he can become happy; and, nourished in the earthly dust, he doubts that he will be a dweller of heaven.

Fittingly, then, the Lord added what follows: But which of you by thinking can add one cubit to his stature? (Luke 12:25) The inmost searcher sets forth the thoughts of human minds; for every man, in coveting beauty of body, longs to be tall: but this man can think, this man cannot obtain by himself; to that he comes by believing, to this he cannot come by thinking. Hence it is that the Lord, aware of human desire, stretched man out to the form of Christ, so that he might be comely with all the beauty of the measure of Christ, he who in his shortness was misshapen, himself blushing at it; whence he rightly added: If then you cannot do even what is least, why are you anxious about the rest? (Luke 12:26) That is: Why, man, do you presume greater things by thinking, you who through faith despair of lesser ones? What is less than clothing, what greater than the growth of the body? Believe, then, that clothing for the body can be granted you by God, from whom faith promises you the growth of the body.

But, since God so loves the human race that those whom he chastises by the right of a master he at once consoles and soothes with a father's caress, those whom he seemed to have exasperated by the comparison with a most foul bird he leads back to the example of a fragrant and exceedingly beautiful flower. Consider, he says, the lilies, how they grow: they neither labour nor spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these (Luke 12:27). O how far the heavenly loving-kindness lowers itself for love of man! For he who could make his precepts firm by authority alone instils and establishes them with all the labour of a teacher, and he who was able to rest the end of his promise on faith alone leads his hearers to faith in the promise by the example of one who persuades; he strengthens the doubtful by the comparison of the lily, he exalts the lily by the example of Solomon: because, as the Lord himself bears witness, among all the kings of the world Solomon shone out, beautiful with singular glory, with unique adornment, and the lily surpasses and excels all the flowers of the earth in grace; and the lily stands as far apart from every growing thing as the king is agreed to excel all in beauty, in glory.

Nor need the beauty of the lily be described more widely by us, whose pre-eminence the Lord's testimony renders singular: but those things must certainly be repeated which the Lord commended for the strengthening of our faith by a twofold example; because the Christian, sure of life, of the kingdom, of immortality, ought not to

be driven by the necessity of food and clothing, when he sees that God has bestowed so great a glory of garments on a growth born today and to perish tomorrow. But as these things, through their dryness, are assigned to burning as in the oven (Luke 12:28), so to the fires of death, to the fires of Gehenna, are those destined who doubt that present things are granted them by God, though they already feel that things to come are bestowed on them.

And you, do not seek what you will eat or what you will drink, and do not be lifted up on high; for all these things the nations of the world seek. But your Father knows that you need these things. Yet seek the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you (Luke 12:29–31). When he calls himself our father, he shows that a loving care for us is not wanting to him: when he bids us seek the heavenly kingdom, he shows that all things are to be added besides; he points out that whatever the heavenly provision requires will be at hand for us.

Sermon CLXIV.

On the heavenly fire, on the separation made by Christ, and on the division of the Church and the Synagogue. On the passage of Luke: "I came to cast fire on the earth", etc.

As wholesome food is always bitter to the feverish, so too the Lord's word is often contrary to the unskilled; to each, however, this happens otherwise, from a weakness either of the body or of the mind. Today the Lord seems to have exasperated the hearing of some, by saying: I came to cast fire on the earth, and what do I will but that it be kindled? (Luke 12:49) And further on: Do you think that I came to send peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but separation (Luke 12:51).

And where is that word: Behold the Lamb of God (John 1:29)? Where is that: He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before its shearer, so he did not open his mouth (Isa 53:7)? And that too: Say to the daughter of Zion: Behold, your king comes to you, meek (Matt 21:5)? And why is it that this Lamb strikes so harshly in his preaching? Why does he butt like a ram with his word, he who in the Passion keeps silent with such patience, and in death submits with all lowliness? And truly, brothers, Christ entered his world gentle and meek in all things: in being born, sweet, in our seed; in being fondly

cherished in the cradle, himself more winning still; in pouring himself out as a little one and lying relaxed on a human lap; in being clasped to his parent's neck, and clasping it with the whole embrace of charity. And to nourish with his whole affection while he is nourished, he runs little by little through all the ages and grows up: he lives always poor, he always goes about alone, because a poor man is always common to all; a solitary man is always open to all.

And why is it that he scatters so much fire with his words, that he kindles and spreads fires so great and of such a kind, saying: I came to cast fire on the earth? What is it? Whenever a field runs wild through long neglect, and grows foul with all the horror of rustic overgrowth, it is always opened and cleansed by the fire of a most skilful cultivator: the cultivator applies fire with kindly care, so that, the briars burnt off, the first face of the field may be laid bare and handed back free to the farmer, an easy way may be made for the ploughshare, the land long barren may become fertile in seed, and, most glad, may now repay its long and mournful idleness with glad fruit. So when the Jewish sod, worn out to poverty by the continual plough of the Law and by unremitting tillage, did not answer to the seed nor to the labour, but gave back darnel for wheat and brought forth thorns with all its strength, Christ turned the industry of divine tillage to the sown fields of the Gentiles; and, desiring to cleanse the fallows of the nations, long choked with brambles, the supreme master first casts fire

on the earth, and whatever natural overgrowth had made rough, whatever the frost of winter had dried up, he purges and consumes with a craftsman's fire; so that soils exhausted by a long fast might grow rich, fattened by their own ash, and after long hardness might be made tender and soft; and thus, fitted for the Gospel's tillage, might be made ready for the seed; and with a happy furrow might now yield fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

But this very tillage is not new to the ancient and heavenly farmer, for to plant the Law, to sow grace, he has always been accustomed to use the work of fire. When he was about to give the Law, he sent fire before him in the bush (Exod 3:2); but the bush carried the divine fire, it did not conceive it, prefiguring even then a people full of the thorns of malice and ungrateful for the tillage of the Law. And now, when he was sending the apostles out into the fields of the Gentiles, he so drenched them with a fiery shower, and fire settled upon them (Acts 2:3), that they could dry what was wet, soak what was dry, cook what was raw, warm what was cold, kindle what was quenched, burn what was harmful, and, in diverse work, with one and the same fire, till all the wastes of the earth to heavenly plenty, as the Prophet says: Their sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Ps 19:5).

But let us now pass on to what follows. I came to cast fire on the earth, and what do I will but that it be kindled? But I have a baptism to be

baptised with, and how am I constrained until it is accomplished? (Luke 12:50) Water presses on fire: such a union, so divided, must be pondered. Wave presses on flame, flame multiplies wave. What is this discord, so great, so concordant? Here, as we said, the figure of the divine farmer is acted out: for all things germinate when full of warmth, and are nourished by moisture. Hence God, the parent of all things, makes us germinate and nourishes us by the commerce of fire and water, he who burns, glows, seethes and pants for us with so great an affection. I have a baptism to be baptised with. Christ is baptised in his own blood, so that whatever he took up from our flesh may be washed, renewed, and brought into the whole form of his divine majesty. Christ is baptised with the baptism of his Passion, he who washed away the sin of the whole world, which could not be abolished except by him who had made the world.

Do you think, he says, that I came to send peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but separation. Why? Because the heavenly union lies in this earthly separation. No one can be bound to the earth and joined to heaven. Let this earthly separation, then, be welcome and dear, which so separates us from earthly things that it engrafts us into divine ones.

There will be, he says, from now on five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three: father will be divided against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law

against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law (Luke 12:52–53). Though he said that five out of one house were to be divided in number, six names will be divided, father, son, mother, daughter, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law: but since the mother-in-law is the very one who is the mother, it is certain that only five persons are found in these names. Three are divided against two in that, the bride being joined to the bridegroom, the mother-in-law, who is the third, will remain divided in the house. So this Synagogue, in which the Church is joined to Christ, and which is mother and mother-in-law, remains now wholly divided from her husband. And two are divided against three in this way: in that from this fellowship of Christ and the Church the Synagogue, the other heir, is cut off and divided, so that Christ and the Church, divided from the heretics, may remain and be joined in one Spirit.

Father, too, is divided against son, and son against father, in that the Jewish people, which through Christ's generation according to the flesh received the name of father, is separated by envy from Christ the Son: the father, full of spite, turns his affection into hatred, he to whom the son's glory is a perpetual punishment, is a continual torment, as the Apostle says: Whose are the fathers, of whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is over all things God blessed for ever (Rom 9:5). Mother, too, is divided against daughter: for the Synagogue is the mother, of whom through Peter and the other apostles the Church is born

as daughter, who, when she merited to have the fellowship of Christ the divine King, endured her mother as rival and as stepmother. And what mother is to her daughter what a mother-in-law is to her daughter-in-law? For this Synagogue, the mother, when she saw that the Church, the daughter-in-law, had come from the Gentiles, wickedly killed her son, so as not to see the daughter-in-law's fellowship: she killed Christ, in case even so, in her fury, she might be able to quench the daughter-in-law's love. But from death Christ rose into a whole wedlock with the Church, to prove that charity is not separated by death, but grows.

Now the Lord rebukes those who are eager to search out with excessive curiosity the face of the sky, the risings of the clouds, the courses of the stars, the regions of the world, and who strive by no study, by no signs, to recognise the time of their own salvation. Hypocrites, he says, you know how to test the face of the sky and of the earth; and how is it that you do not test this time? (Luke 12:56) An eye that pours itself out loses its light, because the whole of a man's sight is contained within the pupil. Do not, then, be eager to see many things, so that you may see yourself; do not presume to gaze at lofty things, nor seek to behold distant ones, because the narrow eye does not take in many things, does not penetrate lofty ones, does not see through to distant ones, and so he sees nothing who thinks he sees everything. Recognise, then, the day of salvation, the

acceptable time (2 Cor 6:2), through Christ Jesus our Lord, if you will, from yourself.

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Sermon CLXV.

On the consecration of Saint Projectus, bishop of Forum Cornelii

I declare that I owe veneration to all the churches, and most faithful service: but I am compelled to serve the church of Forum Cornelii more particularly by love of its very name. For Cornelius, of most blessed memory, renowned in his life, shining everywhere with every title of the virtues, known to all for the greatness of his works, was a father to me: he begot me through the Gospel (1 Cor 4:15), he, loving, most lovingly nourished me, he, holy, trained me in holy service, he as bishop offered me and consecrated me to the sacred altars: and therefore the name of Cornelius is to me illustrious, to be revered, wonderful. Love for the namesake, then, compels me to meet with desire the desires of the church of Forum Cornelii, and to consecrate Projectus, a venerable man, as bishop, the more lovingly.

Projectus I have said, but not abject, according to that word: Upon you I was cast from the womb; from my mother's womb you are my God (Ps 22:11). And truly this Projectus, from the womb of a human mother, remained continually in the womb of the divine mother, he who, knowing

nothing of his own house, persevered in being a dweller in the house of God.

But how, brothers, from the very cradle he climbed the grades and offices of the Church's service, since it would take me long to tell, as the Lord says: He is of age, let him speak for himself (John 9:21), through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon CLXVI.

On the Lenten fast

Simplicity, indeed, has the grace of its innocence, has the fruit of its faith; the reward of knowledge it cannot have, the palm of the virtues it cannot have. It is one thing to live for one's own leisure and safety, another to bear vigils and labours for all. Simplicity makes a good citizen, it does not make a brave soldier: hence it is that the one pays tribute, the other receives pay and honours. The citizen either yields or succumbs to adversity; the soldier withstands adversity and drives it back; the one has not learnt to fight, the other has learnt not to fear; the one is always on his guard, the other conquers. We have said this to show what distance there is between him who simply receives and follows the sacrament of the Christian faith, and him who is eager both to grasp knowingly and to know the mystery of that faith.

See, the Lenten fast, which the universal Church undertakes tomorrow with solemn devotion: many think that it was either handed down to us, or carried out by the Lord for us, only out of zeal for abstinence, and that it holds no mystery of a higher understanding, but was provided only for chastising bodies, cutting back vices, temper-

ing minds. But this number forty is found to have been so sacred from the ages, so mystical, that it is recorded by an inviolable law as always employed for accomplishing divine things and carrying out the greatest works of God. That this may shine out clearly, let us run through the most abundant examples.

When the world, in the most lamentable beginnings of the human race, grew foul with the unspeakable squalor of vices, and stank all over with the horror of crimes, and almost strove to darken the so great brightness of heaven with the very smoke of its iniquity, a heavenly rain is poured out for forty days and nights to purify the earth (Gen 7:12): so that, since the world was now bound by its own doing to perish as to what it had been made, it might rejoice to be reborn by such a baptism, and might know that what it is it owes now not to nature but to the grace of its author; and that the earth, the origin of our body, might foreshadow the very form of our baptism; so that she who before brought forth men born to death might now bring them forth reborn to life. Consider, brothers, how great this number forty is, which then opened heaven for the washing of the earth, and now with the font of baptism opens the whole world for the renewing of the nations. Rightly do we run for forty days through fasting, so that we may come to the font of baptism and of salvation.

For forty years a bread-giving rain fed the people of the Jews in the desert (Exod 16:35): it did not bring forth the increase of the seed from

the earth by the usual ministration, but rather itself poured grain down on the earth; and it took away the whole labour of human servitude, the rain that with gentle dew provided and brought down a heavenly ration for the hungry. For forty days the reconnaissance sent by God went round the land of promise (Num 13:25): so that this sacred number might call the Israelite people forth to the promised lands, the number that calls us forth by the forty-day courses of the fasts, and leads us through to heaven. For now too a heavenly inspection explores and goes round the land of our body for forty days, so that, the nations of the vices being overcome and driven out, the host of the virtues may possess the region of our heart.

And since nothing must be left out, Moses himself, by a fast of forty days (Exod 24:18), was so purged and emptied of the human body that he was wholly changed into the glory of divinity; and while still in the darkness of our body he shone with the whole light of the Godhead; and the sight of mortals could not look upon him, who, fed for a long time on the substance of God, had forgotten all the supports of mortal food: whence he learned that those who dwell before God and with God do not lack the means of life. And truly, brothers, he knows no weariness, he cannot die, whose bread, whose life is God. Rightly did such a man merit to sanction the Law, who had let go all that in man the Law could press upon. A perpetual fast might perhaps have achieved this for Moses; but it would not yet have

made him such, had this sacred number forty been lacking.

Fasting raised Elijah to heaven (2 Kgs 2:11), and assigned to the body thus purified the service of a fiery chariot, to show how Gehenna, which burns up the guilty, serves the innocent: but that Elijah too might come to this, he first ran the mystical way of the number forty (1 Kgs 19:8). Ezekiel, eminent among the prophets, lying forty days on one side (Ezek 4:6) — I speak to those who know the Law — in prefiguring the captivity to come, releases it: because this sacred number takes up iniquities to blot them out; enters into captivities to release them; suffers chains to loose them. Hence it is, then, that the Lord, the author of the mystery hidden from the ages in this number, kept within that very number of forty days of fasting (Matt 4:2), so that the Truth himself, now by himself, might bring to perfection what he had foreshadowed in his household servants, things done and begun, might strengthen what was tender, complete what was unfinished, and confirm by example what he had established by precepts; for it had not been enough to have commanded with words this great mystery of so great a number, unless he had commended it by deed as well.

And yet, brothers, we have striven to open the mystery of this sacrament from the time of the flood, not daring to touch earlier things, to search out higher things, to speak of things kept silent, to bring forth things laid up, surely, for so long: especially since I see that it would be rash

for me, and not necessary for you, to search out such great origins of causes. It belongs to true devotion, it belongs to most faithful service, to inquire what the master wishes to be done, not why he wishes it.

If, then, a simple, pure, even fast of forty days is shown by so many testimonies to have been handed down to us by the Lord under the mystery of so great a number, whence this variety, whence this novelty, whence weeks now relaxed, now rigid, now exceedingly indulgent, now severe? Whence this custom of an intemperate fast, which either afflicts without pardon or lets go into gluttony? That is, to assign to their own uses, separately hot things, separately cold, separately the remedies of salt, separately those of food, and wholly to neglect the seasoner (conditor) of life? Surely those who season the body's food should learn to temper wisely the soul's nourishment, lest, either too salty or wholly unsalted, it breed a deadly loathing of wholesome food. Let the fast be even: and, as it was handed down to us, let it be kept for the discipline of body and soul. Surely he who cannot fast should not presume to bring in novelty: but let him acknowledge that what he relaxes belongs to his own frailty, and redeem with alms what he cannot fill up with fasts; for the Lord does not require the groans of him who has thus redeemed for himself the groans of the poor.

Sermon CLXVII.

On Saint John the Baptist preaching, and on doing penance

Fittingly, in the time of the fast, the most blessed John comes to us as teacher of penance; a teacher in word and deed, a true master, he shows by example what he asserts by word. Mastery rests on knowledge, but the authority of mastery consists in life; doing what is to be taught, he makes the hearer obedient. To teach by deeds is the only rule of teaching; teaching in words is knowledge, in deeds virtue. That knowledge, then, is true which is mingled with virtue; that, that is divine, not human, as the Evangelist proves when he says: What Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1). A teacher, when he does what is to be taught, both instructs through hearing and forms by example.

In those days, he says, John the Baptist came preaching in the desert of Judaea, and saying: Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near (Matt 3:1–2). Do penance: why not rather "Rejoice"? Rejoice rather, because divine things succeed human ones, heavenly things earthly ones, everlasting things temporal ones, good things evil ones, secure things anxious ones, blessed things miseries, things that will remain things that will perish. Do penance. Let him

repent indeed, let him repent who has preferred human things to divine, who has wished to serve the world, and not to have dominion over the world with the Lord of the world. Let him repent who chose to perish with the devil rather than to reign with Christ. Let him repent who, fleeing the freedom of the virtues, has wished to be the captive of the vices. Let him repent, and repent greatly, who, so as not to keep hold of life, gave up his hands to death.

For the kingdom of heaven has drawn near. The kingdom of heaven is the reward of the just, the judgement of sinners, punishment for the wicked. Blessed, then, is John, who wished judgement to be forestalled by penance; he wished sinners to have not judgement, but reward; he wished the wicked to enter the kingdom, not punishment. And John sang then of the kingdom of heaven as near, when the world, still a boy, was gaining the growth of its ages. Now we know how very near the kingdom of heaven is, when the world, weary with extreme old age, is emptied of its strength, lays down its limbs, loses its senses, is pressed by pains, refuses care, dies to life, lives to diseases, cries out its failing, testifies to its end. So we are harder than the Jews, we who follow a fleeing world, who forget the times to come, gape after the present, who, placed already in the very judgement, do not fear, who do not go out to meet the Lord already coming, who wish death to remain, do not wish the resurrection of the dead, who wish to serve, do not wish to reign, so that we put off so great a kingdom for our

Lord. Where is that word: When you pray, say: Your kingdom come (Luke 11:2)? We have need, then, of a greater penance, and the measure of the medicine must be applied according to the measure of the wound.

Let us repent, brothers, let us repent quickly, because the space of time is now denied us, now the very hour is closing on us, now the presence of the judgement shuts us out from the room for satisfaction. Let penance run, lest the sentence run ahead: for in that the Lord has not yet come, in that he still waits, in that he delays, he desires us to return to him, not to perish, us whom he has always addressed with such loving-kindness: I do not will the death of the sinner, but that the wicked turn from his way and live (Ezek 33:11). Let us then return as penitents, brothers, and not be terrified by the shortness of time, because the author of time knows no constraint: the thief of the Gospel proves this, who on the cross and in the hour of death seized pardon, invaded life, broke into paradise, made his way into the kingdom (Luke 23:43). And we, brothers, who did not seek merit from our will, let us acquire at least virtue from necessity; lest we be judged, let us be our own judges: we owe penance to ourselves, so that we may take the sentence away from ourselves.

The first happiness is to rejoice in the perpetual security of innocence, to keep unviolated the holiness of mind and body, to feel none of the unclean defilements of the world, not to have a conscience of guilt, to know nothing of the wounds of

sin, to possess always the grace of the virtues, to live always in the hope of heavenly rewards. But if by chance our mind has been pierced by some dart of sin, if the flesh swells from crime, if human frailty is corrupted by the pus of the vices, then let that medicine of penance, which is not for the healthy, come to the help of the sick; let the knife of compunction come, then let the cautery of pain be applied, then let the poultices of sighs be laid on, let the heat of the swelling conscience evaporate; then let the ulcers of guilt be washed with tears, then let hair shirts wipe away the uncleanness of the body. Let him bear, let him bear the bitter cure of penance, who would not keep the health he owed. To one whose life is dear to him no cure is hard: let not the physician be unwelcome who calls him back to health through pain. He who keeps the credit of innocence does not pay the interest of penance. The Lord makes this plain by saying: It is not the healthy who need a physician, but those who are ill (Matt 9:12). And he made plain who were ill, saying again: I did not come to call the just, but sinners (Matt 9:13).

John calls back through penance, Christ calls through grace: hence it is that John goes about wholly formed by penance, in dress, in food, in place. John the Baptist came, he says, preaching in the desert of Judaea and saying: Do penance. Through the deserts of Judaea, which by its barrenness was losing the worship of the Law, the labour of the prophets, the fruitfulness of the fathers, the harvest of God, John cries penance: hence it is rightly the deserts of disciplines, not of

men, not of places, that are called to penance: the cry calls where no hearer stands by.

Now John himself had a garment of camels' hair (Matt 3:4). He could have had it of goats' hair, but there was no need of a hair shirt: instead he took the hair of a most crooked animal, which has nothing straight, nothing graceful, nothing comely, which nature has given to hard labour, assigned to great burdens, handed over to the utmost servitude. The master of penance had to be clothed in such a garment, so that those who had twisted away from the discipline of what is right, and had made themselves wholly deformed with the forms of sins, might be put under the great burdens of penance, be bound to the hard anguish of satisfaction, carry the laborious sighs of compunction; so that, made straight and thinned to the fashion of a needle, they might enter through the narrow eye of penance into the broad spaces of remission, and the Lord's saying might be fulfilled: A camel can pass through the eye of a needle (Matt 19:24).

And his food was locusts and wild honey. The locust, assigned to chastise sinners (Exod 10), is rightly figured as the food of penance, so that, leaping out of the place of sin into the place of penance, it may fly through to heaven on the wings of pardon. The Prophet had perceived this, who said: Like a shadow when it declines I am taken away, and I am shaken off like locusts; my knees are weakened through fasting, and my flesh is changed on account of mercy (Ps 109:23–24). You hear how he was shaken off like a locust

from sin into penance, and bent his knees so as to carry the weights of penance: and the food of honey is added, so that sweet mercy might temper the bitterness of penance.

Sermon CLXVIII.

On the parable of the hundred sheep

As a skilled traveller has found how to enter the depths of the sea and to cross the pathless tracks of a liquid road, so the divine Law has granted and taught us to hear something of God's words and to penetrate to the secret of the divine sense. Hence it is that, loosing the raft of our mind from the shore of the flesh, we enter the open sea of the Gospel word, trusting that, with the Holy Spirit blowing, we shall reach the harbour of heavenly understanding. Today our Lord advanced the hope of sinners to pardon, and checked the murmuring of the proud with a most loving example.

There were, he says, publicans and sinners drawing near to the Lord to hear him: and the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying: This man receives sinners back, and eats with them (Luke 15:1–2). No less envious than proud, they took malice from the Lord's goodness: from God's loving-kindness they were made wicked, from Christ's tender mercy they became cruel, from the heavenly cure they took sickness, and turned the pardon of penitents into the guilt of the judge. He receives sinners back, and eats with them. So the envious man sees, so the

proud man feels: so the greedy man understands, so the malicious man comprehends. He receives sinners back. They do not say "takes up". What had he lost, who receives back? Whoever finds what he had lost forgives faults, turns anger into joy, changes pain into favour. He receives sinners back. God receives sinners back, but God does not allow those whom he receives back to be sinners; the sinner in drawing near does not violate God, God sanctifies the sinner when he draws near. Pharisee, Christ does not receive back sins when he receives back the sinner, because God is the receiver not of the crime, but of the man. Hence the Pharisee ought to have looked at sinners not as they were when they came, but as they were when they went back. Certainly they saw Paul, whom they had sent as a persecutor, soon come back a preacher.

But now let us hear by what comparison, by what likeness God conveys his joy at the return of the sinner. And he told them a parable: Which man of you who has a hundred sheep, and if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after the one that was lost, until he finds it? (Luke 15:3–4) And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing; and coming home he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost (Luke 15:5–6). So, I tell you, there will be joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance, more than over ninety-nine just who have no need of penance (Luke 15:7).

Always, indeed, when we recover lost things, we gain a new heap of joys, and it is more pleasant to us to have found what was lost than not to have lost what was kept. But this parable speaks, and expresses the truth, of divine loving-kindness more than of human custom. To leave great things, to love lesser ones, belongs to God's power, it does not belong to human craving: because God makes even the things that are not to be; and he so follows what is lost that he keeps what he left; and so finds what was lost that he does not lose what was kept.

So this shepherd is not earthly but heavenly, and this whole parable is not shaped from human labours, but overshadowed by divine mysteries; as at once shines out from the very number when he says: Which man of you who has a hundred sheep, and if he has lost one of them? Why not fifty, why not two hundred, but a hundred? Why not four, why not five, but one? To show that the greater pain had come not from the loss, but from the number. For the loss of one had broken up the whole number of a hundred; and had brought the whole down from the right hand to the left, so that by the loss of one the left hand too should close upon them all, and the right hand have nothing. The number ninety-nine lies shut up in the left hand, is held fast, constrained, kept down: yet as soon as it receives and feels the addition of one, it passes at once to the palm of the right hand, at once reaches the crown of the number a hundred; and if not to have had the number a hundred is a matter of pain, of what

pain is it to have lost it? You see that through the loss of one sheep this shepherd had grieved that the whole flock had fallen from the right hand, and that the whole had sunk back into the left; and therefore, leaving the ninety-nine, he follows the one, he seeks the one, so as to find all in the one, to make all whole again in the one.

But now let us unfold the secret of the heavenly parable. The man who has a hundred sheep is Christ. The good shepherd, the loving shepherd, who in one sheep, that is, in Adam, had placed the whole flock of the human race, had set it among the delights of paradise, set it in the region of life-giving pasture: but it forgot the shepherd's voice in believing the howls of wolves, and lost the folds of salvation, and was wholly wounded with deadly wounds. So Christ, coming into the world to seek it, found it in the womb of a virgin region. He came in the flesh of his nativity, and lifting it on to the cross he laid it on the shoulders of his Passion, and rejoicing with the whole joy of the resurrection, by his ascension he bore it and brought it through to the heavenly dwelling.

And he called his friends and neighbours. That is, the angels. Saying to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. The angels rejoice with Christ and are glad together over the return of the Lord's sheep, nor are they indignant that it presides over them on the whole throne of majesty, because envy had already been put to flight from heaven with the devil: nor could the sin of envy penetrate any longer to the heights,

through the Lamb who had taken away the sin of the world.

Brothers, he sought us on earth, let us seek him in heaven; he carried us to the glory of his divinity, let us carry him in our body with all holiness: Glorify, says the Apostle, and carry God in your body (1 Cor 6:20). He carries God in his body who carries no sin in the working of his flesh.

Sermon CLXIX.

On the parable of the lost drachma

That mystical senses lie hidden through all the Gospel readings, and that the secrets of heavenly understanding remain in them, only those know who have received the grace of the divine Spirit. See, after the Shepherd on high had sought out the lost sheep of the flock of a hundred, found it, and now brought back to the heavenly fold the whole joy of the angels, the woman of the Gospel is brought forward as a figure: who, lighting a lamp, so seeks one lost drachma out of ten drachmas that, when it is found, from her gain, from her joy, she brings forth the cause of heavenly joys. For he says thus: Or what woman having ten drachmas, if she loses one drachma, does not light a lamp and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she finds it? (Luke 15:8) And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying: Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma that I had lost (Luke 15:9). So, I tell you, there will be joy before the angels of God over one sinner doing penance (Luke 15:10).

Do you think this woman is an ordinary one, or is she supposed in a human sense to have had ten drachmas, or believed to have lost one

by a worldly chance, or does it simply happen that she searches for it at night-time, or that she lights a lamp after the manner of our use, or is it customary that she lost it and found it within the house, or familiar that she calls together her friends and neighbours to rejoice, when she is not read to have called them together to mourn when she lost it? A new kind of loss, and one to show the drachma not stolen, but slipped away; and to speak of it as hidden in the darkness of the house, and not buried by the wiles of strangers. You see how singular the whole is, how it passes and goes beyond human custom, how it breathes and is fragrant with a divine sense, how it lifts the understanding of the mind to heaven, how it places it among things above, how it compels it to light the lamp of a heart on high, and, like the woman of the Gospel, to seek through the dark places of the Lord's reading the drachma of saving knowledge.

Before Christ came to the wandering sheep, and lifted it, worn out by pitiable wanderings, to heaven on merciful shoulders, and, laden with the tender beast, reached the folds that wolves cannot approach, the woman who had ten drachmas endured a long darkness, and not only wept for the one lost drachma, but did not see the very nine drachmas that remained to her. Night was continual for her, deep and lasting gloom was hers; for her a lamp without divine fire did not shine to comfort the night. But after the fire on high, the fire of the Holy Spirit, poured itself out over the apostles in a flaming shower, and

kindled with all the heat of its fire the hearts of mortals, no less cold than dark, the woman, that is, the Church, lit her lamp, that is, that inner gaze of her heart, that is, as the Apostle says, the eyes of your heart enlightened (Eph 1:18). So she lit her lamp, and after the labour of the apostles turned upside down that Jewish house, blind with the darkness of ignorance, until out of the ten drachmas, that is, the Decalogue of the Law, she should find the lost drachma in Christ. Christ is the full coin of the Godhead, Christ is the drachma of our redemption and our price, Christ is he who both was in the Decalogue of the Law and lay hidden there, Christ is he whom even the Synagogue had, and did not see, with the darkness fighting against her.

The ten drachmas, we have said, are the ten words of the Law, of which the Synagogue too had lost one, the Word. Which one? That one which John found first in the Church, because he was a burning lamp, as the Lord says: He was a burning lamp (John 5:35), and as the Evangelist says: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

That this was in the Decalogue, let it now be made plain. Hear, he says, Israel: the Lord your God is one God (Deut 6:4). In not seeing this in the Son, the Synagogue loses it in the Father; in not believing in Christ, it crucifies Christ to the death; to whom, rightly, it is said next through the Decalogue: You shall not kill (Exod 20:13). For in cutting off at the head the very series of the

commandments, the Jew became a murderer of Christ before he was one of the Law; hence he also turned the whole body of the Decalogue back against Christ. You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery (Exod 20:14): the Synagogue is condemned, which, joined to the gods of the Gentiles, repelled Christ, who, laying aside the power of a ruler, came down to her with a spouse's affection. You shall not steal (Exod 20:15). She stole the Lord's resurrection, she who gave money to the soldiers to bury and hide the truth of the resurrection (Matt 28:12–13). No false witness. She it is who sought out false witnesses (Matt 26:59–60), to fulfil that word: Unjust witnesses rising up asked me of things I did not know (Ps 35:11). And truly she could not hand over the author of truth otherwise, because falsehood alone always fights against truth. Thus he falls, thus he tumbles step by step, who slips and crashes down from the ladder of the commandments. For had he believed the Lord God to be one, he would not have come to this pit of ruins.

But let us now follow the lamp of our mother the Church, and, walking in the light of the Lord's countenance, come to Christ's drachma; and let us call together the friends and neighbours, that is, the churches of the Gentiles, lest they should not know that our mother has found her drachma; and let us say with the Prophet: I have prepared a lamp for my Christ (Ps 132:17). And let us hear what the lamp has profited: Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it in the fields of the wood (Ps 132:6). We will go into his taber-

nacle, we will worship in the place where his feet stood (Ps 132:7). See, what we were seeking through wide fields and spreading woods, this let us find in the Lord, this by our mother's lamp. Over this let heaven too rejoice, because in one sinner doing penance the fullness of the whole Christian people has shone out, and the whole form of the Godhead of Christ has shone forth in our drachma.

Sermon CLXX.

On Christ taking on various forms for us, calling the apostles, sending them to cure diseases, and enjoining poverty

Blessed Mark, when he related today that the Lord went round the villages of Galilee, disclosed his ineffable loving-kindness towards us. And Jesus went round, he says, the villages round about, teaching (Mark 6:6). You have heard how he goes round, how a tireless loving-kindness seeks you everywhere, and for your sake. And he who himself contains all things, and is himself contained by no creature, enters; and is straitened in your body, confines himself in your dwellings. And he whose majesty the daily voice of the faithful attests, crying: Heaven and earth are full of your glory (Isa 6:3), goes round in your places for your sake, appears, is seen, and is held. Where does the immovable fullness move itself to; where does he draw near, or whence does he withdraw, he by whom all things are full? And yet he goes, returns, descends, ascends, and the whole of you, and for your sake, man, God suffers, because he cherishes you beyond measure, loves you beyond measure.

He takes on guises, varies his forms, changes his offices: and now, fiery, he shines out to you in the bush (Exod 3:2), so that he may kindle you, cold with unbelief, with the warmth of faith; now

he gleams, flaming, in the heavenly pillar (Exod 13:21), so that, the darkness of your ignorance removed, you may run through the wastes of this world the way of saving knowledge; now the same turns for you into a pillar of cloud, to temper the burning heats of your minds; now like an eagle he shelters you with the wings of wisdom, and calls you to a heavenly flight, as Moses says: As an eagle shelters its nest, and trusts over its young, spreading its wings it received them, and took them up upon its shoulders: the Lord alone gave them light, and there was no strange god with them (Deut 32:11–12). Now, like a hen, he leads out, leads, calls, receives, protects, carries, warms, encircles, embraces (Matt 23:37), and, forgetful of his flight, for a time unmindful of his freedom, he busies himself in your inner rooms, in your dust, to feed, to train, to form you with home-bred, familiar, household nourishment; now, as the good shepherd, he alone seeks the wanderer on the highest mountains, alone finds it, alone lays it on his shoulders, and, so that you may no longer be overrun by the bites of wolves in earthly pastures, he lifts you up and brings you through to the heavenly folds (Luke 15:4–5). Thus, as we have said, he takes on guises, varies his forms, and, to change you for the better, he himself so often changes and exchanges his offices. And since the enemy had long gone round to tear and devour, now Christ of necessity goes round to claim you back, to snatch you away, as Scripture says: Your adversary goes round like a

roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8).

And he called together, he says, the twelve (Mark 6:7). After the long ages of a gloomy night, Christ our eternal day shone back into light with the longed-for splendour of his dawn, so as to fit his twelve hours, as a sign, to his twelve apostles. This day the blessed Psalmist saw with prophetic spirit, when he sang: This is the day which the Lord has made, let us exult and rejoice in it (Ps 118:24). Hence the Apostle too calls believers sons of light and of the day: You are sons of light and of the day (1 Thess 5:5). And he called together the twelve. This number twelve, through the four, shows and forms for us a four-horse chariot in three parts: on which the whole Trinity is drawn and borne through the whole world on the apostolic journeys, so that the gentle warrior may overcome the devil, the meek victor may bow down the pride of the world, the peaceable fighter may take away the discords of the nations, so that, hell being destroyed, that is, the pit of sin, the long prison of souls, he may lead the captivity of the human race, set free, to the glory of his triumph. This chariot of the Trinity the blessed Psalmist saw with prophetic spirit, when he said: You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive, you have received gifts among men (Ps 68:19). This chariot the Lord was preparing for himself, for his Father and for the Holy Spirit, when he said: Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is sweet, and my burden is light

(Matt 11:29–30). The porter of mercy, the carrier of loving-kindness, knows no weariness.

That the twelve patriarchs, the twelve divided into tribes (Gen 49), the twelve springs of the desert (Exod 15:27), the twelve stones of the Jordan raised from its bed (Josh 4), were drawn as a figure and form of the apostolic number, we leave to the searcher of the Law to prove more deeply, since the course of the reading set before us tries to disclose to us why he sent the disciples two by two to preach. And he began to send them two by two. He sent them two by two, lest singleness, left without support, should either deny, like Peter, or flee, like John. Human frailty falls quickly, which, proudly trusting in itself, despises companions, does not wish to have a colleague, as Scripture says: And woe to the one alone, when he falls, and there is no second to lift him up (Eccl 4:10). And how much one is strengthened by the help of another the same Scripture testifies, when it says: A brother who is helped by his brother is like a fortified city (Prov 18:19).

And he began to send them two by two. Nor is it a wonder, brothers, if the Trinity, which from the number twelve mounted the four-horse chariot in three parts, now mounts a chariot of two as well; so that by two messengers the calling of two peoples may be shown and made clear, as the Apostle says: Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not of the Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too (Rom 3:29); and so that the prophecy of Isaiah may be fulfilled, who testifies that he saw the rider of a chariot of two, where he hears it

said to him: What do you see? and he answered: I see one seated on a chariot of two; whence he at once cries out that Babylon has fallen, and all its graven images (Isa 21:7–9). Who doubts, brothers, that Christ rode out on saving courses through these chariots of two, when he sees that by the apostolic preaching the temples have fallen, the idols perished, the lowing of the cattle and the victims ceased, and the very altars with the smoke of frankincense have now vanished for all the ages? These chariots of two Habakkuk had seen when he cried: You who mount upon your horses, and your riding is health (Hab 3:8).

And he gave them, he says, power over unclean spirits. This is the emblem of divine power; this the trophy of a singular triumph, that the plunderer himself is now handed over as plunder to his own plunder, himself a captive to his own captives, the devil himself in chains to those he once held in chains, so as to be subjected to the command of those whose servitude once made him magnificent. Rightly he feels pain, rightly he groans, rightly he gnashes his teeth, who sees himself struck down by the sentence of men, by the power of men, he who for so long, by long persuading them, had lied to men that he was God.

And he commanded them to take nothing for the way, except a staff only: no bag, no bread, no copper in their belts (Mark 6:8). When a man invites labourers to work, he not only supplies what is needed for food, but also pours out banquets with lavish preparation, so that the feast of an

overflowing humanity may outweigh the weight of the work and the toil. How inhuman does he believe God to be, who, invited to his works, goes along laden with bag, bread and money, and anxious, so that, a faithless labourer, he comes to the work either weary or rather slow, or perhaps cannot come at all! He promises copious rewards, with so many bonds, with so many witnesses he pledges an ample wage, and you, with an impious spirit, think he will not supply you with bread nor clothing? When you did not exist, he gave you being; and whatever you have, man, he himself gave; and when you lived for yourself and your pleasures, he did not deny you what is needed for food: and do you think that to one who serves his powers, his works, he will not grant bread, nor clothing? This very thing that you carry in your bag, in your belt, who gave it to you? Why do you run to meet him, to insult him with what is his own? He knows that you are rich.

Part with your riches, man: divine poverty is enough for you; lay down the bundles of your wealth; the laden man cannot reach the work of the Lord's harvest by the narrow way; come unburdened, come free to the works, before, naked and stripped, a labourer faithless in all things, you are snatched away to punishment; for, as it is written: Riches do not follow the dying man. Let your conscience be your bag, let your life be your bread; so that Christ may be the true bread in your life, who said: I am the bread (John 6:35). Let your wage be your money, for he claims his reward from Christ without fear who, to follow

Christ, went naked and despised what he had, faithfully spurning it.

Sermon CLXXI.

On the disciples eating with unwashed hands

As lightning, when it shatters rocks, mountains, trees, the very roofs of houses with a terrible crash, seizes the senses and minds of men: so the Lord, whenever he thunders against the Pharisees, corrects and amends his own with a salutary fear, as the Gospel word taught today, that the Pharisees and scribes blamed some of the Lord's disciples because they ate with unwashed hands (Mark 7:2). Let no one, when he hears this, think that the Lord's disciples ate with untended and muddy hands as a show of contempt, and did not keep and honour the decency either of the Lord's table or of a common meal: since neither does nature allow this, nor does the affection of hospitality admit it. Who would not at once offer water for the hands in homage to one arriving, who would at once refuse it, to the sorrow of the one offering? especially since the Lord himself, invited to table, reproaches Simon? For my feet, he says, you gave no water (Luke 7:44). So he wishes to be done what he is shown to require in this way.

But the Pharisees were looking in the Lord's disciples not for care of the body, but for the baptisms of their own superstition; not knowing the

one baptism, which the Lord had devised not for washing only, but for renewing souls and bodies; which should wash not the body for the refinement of life, but the conscience for salvation. The Prophet prayed for this when he said: Wash me yet more from my injustice (Ps 51:4). That is: How long will you wash me by the Law, and not wash me? Wash me once by grace, me whom the countless washings of the Law have not washed.

But let the Gospel word that follows disclose this to us itself: The Pharisees, he says, and all the Jews do not eat unless they have often washed their hands, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market, they do not eat unless they have been baptised, keeping the baptism of cups and pitchers and bronze vessels and couches (Mark 7:3–4). Pharisee, you who think yourself clean, when all your things are polluted by your own feasting? In the market you disputed about innocent blood, you inquired into seizing the substance of the poor, you searched out how you might deliver freedom into servitude; and when your inner parts are steeped in so great a crime, how should water from outside suffice to wash and cleanse you? This water will be able to cleanse our hearts and bodies when it has itself been purified by the commerce of the Holy Spirit, so that by a visible ministry it may accomplish the invisible sacrament of our purification. But you, Jew, baptise cups, pitchers, bronze vessels, which, lacking motion and sense by nature, as they know no guilt, so they feel nothing; these you honour, and yourself, through

whom all things are defiled, you do not cleanse; these things made over to your uses, to your service, you purify, and yourself, made over to divine offices, to divine ministries, you do not purify.

But let us, brothers, hear not what the Lord answered the Jews, but what he answered his disciples: He said, then, that the things which come out of a man, these defile the man (Mark 7:20). For from within, out of the heart of men, come evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetous acts, wickednesses, deceit, shamelessness, an evil eye, blasphemies, pride, foolishness: all these evils come from within and defile the man (Mark 7:21–23). What expanses of lands, what greatness of cities, what breadth of regions has the strength to bear so many foes, to hold so many enemies, to sustain such great nations, as there are vices, offences, crimes that seize the senses of man, that the hearts of men endure? You have seen, brothers, how whole kinds, all the savagery of beasts, come at one sheep, raging the more because they cannot fill themselves, plunderers with greedy teeth that cannot be sated by the capture of one; who burn and pine the more because they cannot seize and devour; how upon one dove so many kites, so many eagles, so many greedy vultures, such a heap of unclean birds rushes. This great number, this multitude, the Prophet had perceived when he sang: Evils without number have surrounded me: my iniquities have laid hold of me, and I could not see (Ps 40:13).

From within, out of the heart of men, they come. An enemy is bearable when he batters the walls from outside, when, set outside, he sometimes gives way in the fight; but he who has the enemy within, whose adversary already rages in his very inner chambers, this man understands and feels himself oppressed, this man sees and bewails himself a captive, this man cannot take himself by storm, cannot be his own deliverer; he looks for help from another, seeks another defender. They come out from within, out of the heart. New is this order of battle: out of man, against man, nations go forth to make war; not content to conquer in secret, to lay low in hiding; as though they sought fame from a man's ruin.

Let the Jews, who are outside, wash themselves and their things outwardly; let us, brothers, be cleansed inwardly of these filths of the vices: let us conquer these nations of wickedness in our minds, with Christ fighting for us; let us put to flight these beasts of offences from our hearts by the terror of the Lord's name; let us bravely drive off these rabid crimes and most voracious birds from our senses with the spear of the cross; so that the splendour of our city, the holiness of our temple, the whole and singular adornment of our house, may call and invite our author to dwell in us always. Vices cannot return there where Christ dwells with his virtues.

Sermon CLXXII.

On envy and hypocrisy

You have heard today, brothers, how the envious doorkeeper, in shutting out others, shut himself out. Woe to you, he says, lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering (Luke 11:52). You have heard, then, how the envious doorkeeper, in shutting out others, shut himself out. The Pharisee had received the keys not to close, but to open to those who wished to enter; but so that another might not enter, he chose out of spite to stay outside himself.

All vices, indeed, always tend and leap to the harm of their own; but envy always consumes its own the more: envy has always been the executioner of its own; it stretches the senses, tortures spirits, racks minds, corrupts hearts. And what more? He who has taken her in endures his own torments without end, because he loves always to have a torturer of his own household within himself. What end of evils is there, where the good of one is the punishment of another? where another's happiness is another's torment? a manifold evil: as many as are the prosperities of men, so many are the torments of the envious.

With other vices a Christian mind will be able to contend; envy, whoever has not fled it before he feels it, does not escape. It was envy that persuaded the lawyers not to open the Law, but to close it; and not to lend the teaching of the saving precept, but to deny it; to lock up the spring of knowledge and of the life-giving stream, to block up its riches in the secret place of its source. This disease must be fled swiftly, because it does not allow those whom it has touched to be healed any longer.

Envy assailed heaven; for there it made a devil out of an angel; it burned the lands, envy which indeed shut us out from the delights of paradise with a flaming guard (Gen 3:24). It drives kings, for it so drove Herod to rage against Christ's coevals that blood was shed from tender limbs before milk (Matt 2:16). It violates charity, for it made Cain a fratricide, and drenched the still innocent earth with the gore of new blood (Gen 4:8). It lays waste peoples; for this made the Jews, if it is right to say it, if speech can hold it, deicides: deicides we have said, not for what this misdeed reached, but for what it strained towards. For in Christ the Jews tried to crush not a man only, but God the Son of God, to kill his powers, when they say: This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and his inheritance will be ours (Mark 12:7). But what can the devil do against God? What can envy do against the Lord's charity? The devil begrudged us the earth, but God gave us heaven; the lawyer took away the keys of knowledge, but Christ bestowed the keys of the heavenly

kingdom through Peter (Matt 16:19). And thus envy has been stripped of its gains, and man has been enriched by the very necessity of his losses.

Well, then, did the Lord add in what follows, saying: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1). For in leaven there is no bulk of greatness, but of swelling; and the kneading is puffed up by such an appearance, not enriched: for the more fervently it has fermented, the more the lump of meal swells, and fills its whole form with lightness and with swelling. Fittingly, then, was it said by the Lord: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. What is hypocrisy but an appearance composed by art, which does one thing in fact and promises another in the face? Among the Pharisees it swelled through knowledge, as the Apostle says: Knowledge puffs up (1 Cor 8:1). For knowledge puffed them up to pride, it did not instruct them for life; and it corrupted them to malice, it did not advance them to prudence. Hypocrisy was in their face, the dropsy of envy was in their mind, a thirsty spring was in their breast, a burning water, which was inflamed more and more by its own streams, so as not to quench the thirst of the drinker, but to increase the fire. Thus, thus, with hypocrisy as cupbearer, envy always serves drink to its own.

From this disease the Apostle withdraws us, when he urges us to celebrate the holy Easter of the Lord not in the old leaven, nor in the leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor 5:8). Truth knows no swelling, simplicity is wholly ignorant

of hypocrisy. In the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. These are the unleavened loaves of the heart, these prepared with heavenly sweetness, these savoured with the richness of grace, these baked in the fire of the Holy Spirit; eating these, we solemnly sacrifice for our Easter the Lamb of God, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), we for whom Christ was born to joy entire, and changed to entire glory.

Sermon CLXXIII.

On Saint John the Baptist and Herod

The good shepherd spends wakeful nights and anxious days, lest the cunning thief, lest the crafty savagery of wolves, should plot anything ruinous, anything harmful, against the dear flock. The good shepherd, as the Lord said: lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). But good sheep, too, hear their shepherd's voice with attentive ears, always follow their shepherd's choice, do their shepherd's whole will. They climb hills, seek steep places, often change regions: and so they make their way into places fit for pasture, watered by streams, shady, convenient, secret places of quiet; they find delights, and enjoy pleasures.

And you, little children, abundant portion of the Lord's flock, clothed now in a snowy and divine fleece, a tender brood, most fruitful with heavenly offspring: if through hearing our voice you have often come to saving places, to saving pastures; if through the streams of our preaching you have tempered the heats of your minds, the burning of your thirst; if under the shelter of our teaching you have rested in some comfort, attend to what we ordain, hear what we say, approve what we do; and grasp the plan of our

preaching not according to your will, but according to our disposition: and whether we speak from this step, or preach from the priestly seat as the season requires, like good sheep, like dear flocks, beloved pledges, without disdain, unwearied, and with the whole course of faith, come together, run together. Nor let the change of place, so near, and the room so narrowed, either make you sluggish or make you murmur: for neither does a sheep reach the folds if it wanders at its own pleasure; nor will a disciple be able to obtain knowledge if he strives to be taught according to his own will; a sick man, too, will never be able to recover his health if he is treated according to his own choice.

But since today our sermon is against a raging wolf, let us take up the shepherd's staff and pass to the Gospel reading. King Herod heard, he says (for the name of Jesus had become known), and said: John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works are at work in him (Mark 6:14). The fool believes devoutly concerning the dead man whom he cruelly persecuted while he lived. John has risen, he says; and yet, unknowing, he confesses that, slain for Christ, he rises in Christ. Herod, what has your sword done? what has your cruelty gained? how far has your impiety advanced? if, as you yourself say, he has returned to mighty works, has risen to divine deeds, he who was thought quenched by your fury? John has risen, as you yourself acknowledge: here not the person, but the weakness perishes; here not John, but rather death

has succumbed to such a death: the punishment has been mocked, the executioner is held a laughing-stock, the very sentence of the wretched examining judge has been deceived, which did not destroy the slain man, but promoted him.

John has risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works are at work in him. Though an enemy of the Law, yet through the Law he had learned of the promised resurrection of the dead. And if he knew that John would rise again, why did he kill him in his madness? If he knew that by such a death John would be raised to the summit of all divine power, to every emblem of authority whatever, why did he make himself the author of so great a death? Impiety is always feverish, cruelty is always held by frenzy, fury cannot be without madness; for it rages against itself whenever it aims at another; it punishes itself in striking down the innocent; it is wholly deadly to itself when it is cruel towards the just. See, John, as you yourself say, now lives in Christ: he returns for your punishment who came, by a heavenly gift, for the healing of all.

But others said: It is Elijah; and others said: It is a prophet, or as one of the prophets (Mark 6:15). When he heard this, Herod said: It is John, whom I beheaded; he has risen from the dead (Mark 6:16). With a malevolent but truthful sense, he proves himself the witness of his own crime, the assertor of his own wickedness, the accuser of his own misdeed. John, whom I beheaded, it is he; he has risen from the dead. He speaks the truth: for as his own rise in Christ, so Christ himself

suffers in his own; and as the honour of the head extends to the members, so the punishment of the members overflows to the pain of the head, to the injury of the head. John, whom I beheaded, it is he. This wise king, this distinguished judge, censor of morals, guardian of discipline, avenger of innocence, punishment of crimes, says that he beheaded John, but is silent as to why he beheaded him, lest the shame of so great a deed confound his royal power: but the Evangelist reveals it, so as to bring the disgrace of the slayer to the glory of the slain.

For Herod himself, he says, sent and seized John, and bound him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother, for he had married her (Mark 6:17). For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife (Mark 6:18). Herodias, who out of love of wickedness strove to be the wife of two brothers, so as to violate affection by affection, and so that Herodias might be associated with Herod, lest those should be unlike even in name who were alike in wickedness, in morals and in life, and that those whom the shame of their crimes had joined might be joined by a name: this Herodias, then, lay in wait for John (Mark 6:19). Herod did not overcome the adulteress's mind, yet he put off the adulteress's abomination. She, so that there might be no one to reprove her, was aiming at the reprover's death; he, to please the incestuous woman, himself a captive, only held the just man and kept him bound and shut up, because,

guilty as he was, he could not easily pronounce sentence against the innocent.

When an opportune day had come, he says, Herod made a supper on his birthday for the princes, the tribunes and the first men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself had come in, and danced, and pleased Herod and those reclining with him, the king said to the girl: Ask of me what you will, and I will give it to you (Mark 6:21–22). And he swore to her: Whatever you ask, I will give you, even half of my kingdom (Mark 6:23). An ungrateful, an inhuman king, who to so great a virtue, so glorious a labour, so memorable a deed, gave not his whole kingdom, but half! And why did he keep even a part for himself, who after such glory of his house, after such holiness of his family, after such an example of chastity, ought not to be, to be seen, to live? So that daughter of crime, not of nature, ran at once not so much to her mother as to the very sink of her wickedness; so that she who had gone in all fluid, all dissolved, might fly back savage and truculent, and — to speak of those very arts — might sing a monstrous tragedy, she who had most shamefully played out a comedy.

And she went out and said to her mother: What shall I ask? (Mark 6:24) And she said: The head of John the Baptist. And coming in at once with haste to the king, she asked, saying: I want you to give me at once on a dish the head of John the Baptist (Mark 6:25). And the king was saddened; because of his oath and because of those reclining with him, he would not sadden

her; and at once the king, sending an executioner, commanded his head to be brought (Mark 6:26–27). And he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head on a dish, and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother (Mark 6:27–28). So judges a mind weighed down by surfeit, loosened by wine, and sunk, as it were, in the whole shipwreck of drunkenness. I want you to give me at once on a dish the head of John. The offspring of the serpent seeks the head of a man, knowing that its own head had been condemned by the sovereign sentence, as God says: He will watch for your head, and you will lie in wait for his heel (Gen 3:15).

The length of the reading draws us out long, and the immense depth of the passage itself carries us very far into the deep. Let us put off today what follows, lest, while the sermon hastens to its end, it pass over what must be said at length. This we commit to the close of our discourse: that the serpent ran in vain: for this John of ours, slain, destroyed all the offspring of the ancient serpent and quenched it by the shedding of his blood.

Sermon CLXXIV.

On the beheading of Saint John the Baptist

At the bloody dishes of Herod's supper, at a banquet so deadly, earth then, heaven then, and today your hearing with me, shuddered and took fright. Herod, he says, made a supper on his birthday (Mark 6:21). Rightly a supper, because this birthday is given over not to light but to darkness, the day on which a son of night was born, not of day. On his birthday, he says, he made a supper for the princes, the tribunes and the first men of Galilee. What has impiety done, always heedless and blind? It summons all the powers, so as to take to itself not so much many companions of its banquet as countless witnesses of its crime, and to have as many judges of its misdeed as it had governors of discipline.

And when the daughter of Herodias herself had come in and danced, he says, and pleased Herod (Mark 6:22). She answered to her shameful stock, in pleasing a more shameful father; for from adultery none but a shameful daughter ought to have been begotten: she who, with broken steps, with her body loosened, with the frame of her limbs disjointed, with her inward parts flowing by art, became, by her whole deformity, the more beautiful to her father. And

indeed Herod believed her his own then, when he saw her such; for he would have thought her another's, had he seen her even a little modest. The serpent then lay hidden in the woman, who, creeping with sinuous steps, poured out a deadly venom through her whole body, so that fury wounded the minds, venom the bodies of those reclining, men were turned into beasts; no longer were such made drunk with wine, but with blood; no longer rabid for bread, they fed on human flesh. Such men she made truly such, to whom she then brought in the head of John with the blood still smoking; so that the Psalmist's song might be proved: They have given the flesh of your saints to the beasts of the earth, they have poured out their blood like water (Ps 79:2–3).

See whatever banquets drawn out through whole nights bring forth; see what is begotten by wine, which is bought by measure and drunk without measure. See where the flesh is hurled headlong, when it is inflamed by the fires of pleasure to the misdeed of dissoluteness. Why, I ask, is it hemmed in by such great battle-wedges? Unhappy flesh is enough for itself, by its own falls, for its ruin, as the Prophet testifies when he says: Why do you rush upon a man? Do you all kill, as against a leaning wall and a tottering fence? (Ps 62:4) In Herod the flesh lay weighed down by surfeit, captive to drunkenness, flesh that, with dissoluteness tickling it, and wantonness not so much sporting as making sport of it, would promise that it would give whatever shamelessness asked.

Ask of me what you will, he says, and I will give it to you; and he swore to her. The wretch swears in that he forswears whatever there is of honour and of virtue. Ask of me what you will. What should dissoluteness ask but the destruction of chastity, the slaying of modesty, the death of the holiness always opposed to it? I want you to give me on a dish the head of John. If the head of man, according to the Apostle, is Christ (1 Cor 11:3), already then, with a new mouth, the most ancient serpent was aiming at the death of Christ the Lord. I want you to give me on a dish the head of John. Already then the greedy dragon, thirsting, was tasting the Lord's Passion in the head of the servant. I want you to give me on a dish. Why on a dish, why do you carry him preciously whom you kill vilely, unless because precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints (Ps 116:15)? This very thing that you want, you do not do as you yourself want, because a design from on high drives you otherwise than you want. In that deadly den then, not a king's hall, the savage madness believed it had its food when it saw the martyr's head; it felt it had its drink when, thirsting, it beheld the liquid of the sacred blood; it strains and tries to swallow the dish of its cruelty with its whole mouth, with all its jaws.

But John came, set on high, like a lamp upon a lampstand, to put darkness to flight, as the Lord says: He was a lamp, burning and shining (John 5:35). John came, like a judge shining on the tribunal, so that he who reproved the adultery might expose and condemn the murderer; and he

who, living devoutly, had called the incestuous man to penance, had reserved him for pardon, might, slain, condemn the murder too. What pardon, I ask, does he deserve, who in the death of John so cruelly slew penance itself?

In vain did you run, Herod and Herodias, names associated not by affection but by crime, you who most foolishly believed that a voice could be cut off. I am, he says, the voice of one crying in the desert (John 1:23). A voice cannot be killed, but cries out the more, set free from the confines of the body. So the voice of Abel, already poured out in his blood, sounds more, penetrates more, reaches further to heaven (Gen 4:10). So now John cries out through the whole world, through all the ages tells your misdeed to all, and displays it among the nations.

See, John glories in Christ for his head, he who was thought condemned in his head. See, on the day on which you ended yours, he gained for himself his birthday of heaven: for when your rising sank into its end, then his end rose into a birthday. For the just man begins to live then when he merits to be slain for Christ; by this death the martyr's life is transferred, not taken away; he shone the more by death who died for this, that he might live for ever. See, you lie in death, John lives, slain. You have lost the purple dyed with the murex; John, clothed in his own blood, glories for ever in a shining purple. Your guests are now made sharers in punishments; John feasts at the heavenly table with the choirs of angels. He hears unceasingly the heavenly harmony, you hear al-

ways the groaning and gnashing of hell. He, made over as the price of your harlot, your dancing girl, is now honoured with a kingdom, now with heavenly rewards; you have received the wages of your sentence with your daughter in Tartarus.

Joseph left his garment when he fled the adulteress (Gen 39:12); John, so as not to see the adulteress, cast off even his very body. Joseph, so as not to commit adultery, willingly accepted prison; John, to reprove adultery, exchanged the desert for prison. Joseph, by revealing dreams, escaped from death; John, to reveal the Son of God, accepted death as well. Joseph, by preparing temporal bread, merited a collar of gold, and honour; John, to show believers the heavenly bread, merited from his blood the collar of martyrdom.

Rightly is this John greater than all among those born of women (Matt 11:11), who not only reproved adulteresses, but also trod underfoot, for love of virginity, the lawful fellowship of women. And if John, so great, John, such a man, separated from women by so great a desert, did not escape the dangers of women, who is there who, living among women, trusts that he will escape without the greatest labour, without the greatest caution, unless he who is fed by the Holy Spirit? Who, with the Begetter and the One born, disposes as one all the ages through all the spaces of time.

Sermon CLXXV.

On Marcellinus, bishop of Vicohabentia, and on the childbearing of Saint Mary the Virgin

The beginnings of all things, indeed, are hard, but harder than all are the beginnings of one who begets. The holy church of Ravenna, to give birth for the first time, made a journey, endured anguish, felt pains. And she did this, brothers, so as to keep the order of the divine childbearing along the whole path of truth: for the Virgin mother, in order to bring forth the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15), ran the road across her whole homeland; so the virginal childbearing, so the birth of the firstborn, was hallowed. And of necessity, brothers, the Way is begotten on the way. I am, he says, the Way (John 14:6); so that every approach of error might be shut off, and the traveller might at last make for heaven, who had long borne in vain the sweat and the labours of an earthly journey.

And it came to pass in those days, says the Evangelist, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled (Luke 2:1). And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be

enrolled with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child (Luke 2:4–5). And it came to pass in those days, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth, and she brought forth her firstborn son (Luke 2:6–7).

I would like here to say something of a pain. The Lord of all comes forward to obey the edict of Caesar, and of a pagan, and does some servant still irreverently resist the decree of blessed Peter, the decree of the Christian prince? But since neither are prosperous things to be mingled with adverse ones, nor sad things with joys, let us leave these aside and speak out the gladness of today's offspring. Let him now, the one who was born first, have the reverence of the firstborn, and keep its honour too: Marcellinus today has carried off and won all the affection of a home-born childbirth. The sons stand round, the kinsfolk are present, the whole kindred runs together, the whole household exults, and the very inner rooms of the house dance and rejoice: because they have merited to see with their eyes, to receive in their hands, today for the first time, the offspring and progeny of their holy bearer. The bearer herself too, bride, mother and virgin, in the very chamber of her union, marvels with a new rejoicing that she has borne.

But let it trouble no one, let it move none, that the bride herself is seen to have given birth in the very bridal chamber: such a conception comes not from crime, but from virginity, since in such offspring the childbearing is heavenly, not human: nor is there here any room for ill

suspicion, where the bridegroom himself is held the witness and guardian of his bride. Whoever of you is troubled about the deed, be wholly secure on the strength of the greatest example, and let the trembling of the one who went before profit you for caution and defence. That Joseph, husband in name only, bridegroom in conscience, looks on his pregnant bride wavering and anxious, because he could neither accuse the innocent woman nor accuse the pregnant one; to keep silent was not safe, to speak was danger. He who accuses the guiltless commits crimes, he does not expose them. He himself was the witness of her chastity, he was the guardian of her modesty: one thing he knew, another he beheld; his sight confounded him whom the Virgin's faith did not confound: his conduct and his life at a crossroads; his just mind and holy heart are tortured by a doubtful thought; he perceives, but cannot penetrate so great a mystery, because he could not accuse, and was not able to defend her before men.

Rightly an angel at once comes to meet him, rightly a divine answer at once comes to the help of him in whom, when human counsel failed, justice did not fail. And what does he say? Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid (Matt 1:20). He who had done nothing, what was he afraid of? He was afraid because, even if there was no guilt in the deed, there was the greatest fright in the case. A holy mind takes fright at whatever it does not grasp. Beware, then, man, of disputing in such a way about the childbearing of our mother, since

it is enough that the angel answered: Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife; for what has been born in her is from the Holy Spirit. Happily she gives birth who, by giving birth, gained more and more the crown and the glory of virginity.

But he who has been born to us today has always cast his nets into the sea. Let no one wonder, then, if Peter longed to have a fisherman as colleague. Pray, then, brothers, that he who until now laboured to catch fish for the life of men may merit to fish for men.

Sermon CLXXVI.

On the blind man

Whenever God heals the desperate sufferings of human bodies, so often he displays the might of his Godhead: but in one and the same illness, when he changes the order of his cure, he makes us search more deeply for the causes for which he does this. For to the blind man sitting by the way he restored sight by a command alone (Mark 10:46–52); to another, a man blind from his birth, born not to light but to darkness (John 9:1–7), whom nature had begrudged sight, and whose eyes nature itself, which prepares and opens eyes, had closed and denied, Christ applies clay, and with a material eye-salve fashions, makes, provides eyes, does not restore them, so that with a creating, not a healing, hand he might supply light to the man from that from which he had made the whole man. But this blind man, whose cure the Evangelist Mark has related to us, is healed in so new a way that he compels all to inquire why a stubborn blindness so presumes to keep its author waiting, at whose nod, look and command illnesses perish, healths return, life arises, death ends, all things stand, all things pass away.

Jesus came, he says, to Bethsaida, and they bring to him a blind man, and they asked him to touch him; and taking the blind man by the hand, he led him out outside the village (Mark 8:22–23). As though he could not heal him on the spot, or needed the favour of a place, he who gave sight to all! This is the Bethsaida whose unbelief the Lord reproaches, saying: Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have done penance in a hair shirt and ashes (Matt 11:21). So, taking him by the hand, he leads him out of the house of faithlessness, raises him from the seat of unbelief, so as to give faith before eyes, to restore health to the mind before the body, to offer the service of human guidance before he worked the emblem of divine power. They asked that he would at least touch him: but Christ, who does not know how to shrink from a poor man, knows how to love a poor man, gave his whole hand to the poor man, and God offered a public service to infirmity, so that man may not shrink from man, and the seeing may look upon the unseeing, and with a guiding hand make the blind man not know the bereavement of light: lest a man say: "My hand has nothing to give to the poor"; let him give the hand itself to the poor, and it will be more to have given one's hand to a poor man than a coin, to have offered a poor man the way than to have given a poor man a fragment of bread.

And he led him out outside the village, and spat on his eyes. With the Lord's spittle he fills the

empty hollows of the eyes, from a divine mouth he gives a light-bearing saliva, so that a drop of holy dew might baptise the eyes of the sinner, that pardon might open those which fault had closed. Let no one, then, doubt that mortal limbs, wholly dried up, can revive by the divine rain, when he sees eyes parched with blindness thus suddenly raised to light by a small drop of the Lord's spittle: The dead shall rise, says Isaiah, and those who are in the tombs shall rise again, and those who are in the earth shall rejoice (Isa 26:19). How? For the dew that is from you is health to them; what rain is to seed, that the Lord's shower is to those who will rise again.

And he laid his hands on him. In making, in repairing, in fashioning man, the Lord's healing hands are always at hand for men. Your hands, he says, have made me and fashioned me (Ps 119:73). And he asked him whether he saw anything. He asks as man, he works as God. He who sees the hidden places of the earth, who beholds the secrets of the heart, to whom all things are naked that are covered to all, does he seek to see in his own work, in his own eyes, labour to know, learn by another's report? Far from it. But he asks so that those present might know, and those to come might learn, that the cure of this blindness was not simple, but mystical.

Indeed, the man who was being cured answered, when the Lord asked him, that what had been given him so far was not light, but a kind of dawn and a light breaking forth: I see, he says, men like trees walking (Mark 8:24). To

imperfect eyes forms grow larger, appearances are confused, things themselves deceive, because they do not yet take in the vision, but still bear the shadow of vision. And yet why like trees, not like columns, or something else, and not standing, but walking? Because after Christ's cure he had seen that men pass like trees in this world, that they do not remain; he whom Christ has cured at once sees that the planting of the human offspring in this life is temporal. Christ's cure must therefore be repeated, so that eyes made perfect may see things to come, things certain, things lasting and eternal. Again, he says, he laid his hands on his eyes, and he began to see; and he was restored, so that he saw all things clearly; and he sent him to his house, saying: Go to your house, and if you enter the village, tell no one (Mark 8:25–26).

Let spiritual understanding now be opened, so that we may know who this blind man is, and why he does not come of his own accord, but is brought by others, and is led by the hand of Christ, and is led out outside the village, and receives sight elsewhere, he who had long endured among his own his long bereavement: and he spat on his eyes, and the laying on of the divine hand is repeated, and he to whom it is given to see outside the house is not granted to tell his own what he saw, how he saw, through whom he saw. Brothers, this blind man is the Jew, who in the Synagogue, that is, in the house of unbelief, and in the village, that is, in the assembly of the malignant, was held in the blindness of igno-

rance, and sat oppressed. Hence it is that he did not come to Christ, but Christ came to him, and took his hand, so that he might boast of having been cured by the gift of the one who called, not by the benefit of the Law, not by his own choice. He leads him outside, so that in the Church he may see the light of faith through the freedom of grace, he who under the veil of the Law saw nothing.

He lays his hand on him first, so that he may see the shadow of the Law passing; so that he may see priests, scribes, Pharisees and the whole figure of Jewish observance go by like trees, which, as they are in time, so with time grow old, are born, grow green, flower, bear fruit, perish, vanish. Again he lays his hand on him, so that, rising again, he may see no longer perishable things but eternal ones, and may see whatever there is of divine light, honour and glory: like that great Paul from among them, who outside the village and on the way fell a Jew, to rise a Christian (Acts 9:4); and was blinded in the Law, to see in grace, as is declared by him: Now we see in a mirror and in an enigma; but then we shall see face to face (1 Cor 13:12). Then, when what has been buried in death shall rise in life, and whatever has been sown in dishonour shall rise in glory (1 Cor 15:43).

Appendix

Appendix, sermon VI. On the words of the Gospel, Matthew 17: "This kind is cast out by nothing but prayer and fasting"

The arms which the Lord has shown us against the wickedness of demons we must surely keep. This kind, he says, is cast out by nothing but by prayer and fasting (Matt 17:21). When these are exercised with full faith, it is piety. And piety is useful for all things, having the promise of the present life and of that to come (1 Tim 4:8). Let us, then, consider with profit the fruits of prayer and of fasting, because they themselves are the arms against wicked thoughts. Fasting purifies the mind, lifts up the sense, subjects the flesh to the spirit. Fasting makes the heart contrite and humbled, which God does not despise (Ps 51:19). Fasting scatters the mists of concupiscence, quenches the heats of lusts, kindles the true light of chastity. Fasting does not love wordiness, it judges the superfluity of riches, despises pride, commends humility, grants a man to understand himself, what he is, weak and frail; and in thus understanding himself to be feeble, he seeks and receives help more fitly from the power of God, and he seeks it through frequent prayers and supplications.

Prayer, indeed, is the refreshment of fasts, and calls down the grace of the Holy Spirit. Prayer softens the hardness of the heart, tempers austerity, sweetens fasting. For as without drink there is no full refreshment, so too fasting without prayer cannot nourish the soul perfectly. And what is prayer but the ascent of the soul from earthly things to heavenly, a seeking of the things above, a desire for things invisible? Let the discord of worldly ways depart, by which the human mind is pressed down every day. Prayer is union with the Holy Spirit: if only the mind is intent in prayer, as the Prophet cries: My soul has thirsted for you, how manifoldly my flesh for you (Ps 63:2). And what is to be thirsted for follows: to see your power (Ps 63:3). Believe me: if a soul of human substance thirsts fully to see the full power of God, and does not dissemble, overcome by disgust, it will be filled with spiritual fat and richness (Ps 63:6): and, thirsting for that visitation of God, it will cry out with its own sense, with faith: My soul has clung after you, your right hand has upheld me (Ps 63:9).

Fasting takes away sloth, removes fleshly hindrances from the mind. But persevering prayer joins one to God, and so, rejoicing, it glories that it stands before the Lord. And the soul that clings to the Lord begins to have security and freedom; it endures neither frights nor fears. And when so great a protection of the right hand of God has been received, how can it be harmed by any power, since it is written that no one snatches it

from the hand of the Father (John 10:29)? This fasting provides, this prayer provides.

Appendix, sermon VII. On the words of the Gospel, John 14: "My peace I give to you, my peace I leave to you"

It is the voice of the Lord, dearest brothers: My peace I give to you, peace I leave to you (John 14:27). Being about to speak of peace, let us first see what the benefits of peace are. Peace is serenity of mind, tranquillity of spirit, simplicity of heart, the tie of love, the fellowship of charity. She it is who takes away rivalries, checks wars, represses angers, tramples on the proud, loves the humble, calms the discordant, reconciles enemies, is pleasing to all. She does not seek what is another's, counts nothing her own; she who does not know how to hate teaches how to love. She does not know how to be lifted up, does not know how to be puffed up.

Let him, then, who has received her keep her; let him who has lost her seek her again; let him who has let her slip search her out: since he who has not been found in her is disowned by the Father, disinherited by the Son, and no less made a stranger to the Holy Spirit. For he rejects the gift offered who has despised the good of the law that was given; nor will he be able to reach the Lord's inheritance who has refused to observe the testa-

ment. He cannot have concord with Christ who chooses to be in discord with a Christian. It is therefore the crime of contumacy to despise what one is bidden, to refuse what one is enjoined, to turn away from what one is commanded.

What have you in common with discord, Christian? Why do you love rivalries, a thing that could not please the author of peace? Why do you practise enmities, which not even he could escape who first invented them? For in the beginning, in putting forth enmities against the first-formed man, the serpent is slain; in envying man, he himself is laid low; in desiring to deceive Adam, he himself is the first to be slaughtered. Therefore either embrace the charity of Christ, Christian, or know that by the likeness of your works you are the equal of the author of discord.