

SAINT PETER DAMIAN

SERMONS

Sermones

VOLUME III · III

SABBATISMUS

Saint Peter Damian (1007–1072)
Sermones · Sermons

Latin text: public domain.
Translation, alignment and edition © 2026 Inversiones San Juan Diego (Sabbatismus). Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Facing-page bilingual edition: Latin on the left-hand pages, English on the right.
Sabbatismus is the imprint of the Inversiones San Juan Diego foundation, San Pedro Sula, Honduras.
Set in EB Garamond and Cinzel.
sabbatismus.com

CONTENTS

Sermon LXXIII..... 5

Sermon LXXIV..... 19

Sermon LXXV..... 29

SERMO LXXIII.

DE VITIO LINGUAE.

Cum pius exactor quaecunque merces sub chirographo cautionis offeruntur amplectitur, securus est debitor qui tenetur. Sic ergo, fratres charissimi, sic nimirum, cum vos ad libenter audienda quae de meae rusticitatis inopia proferuntur intentos aspicio, ad reddendum vobis deinceps promissi sermonis debitum promptior convalesco. Et quia per totius hebdomadae circulum in cellulis singulariter constituti, affluentibus Scripturae sacrae dapibus estis saginati, nunc de manibus servitutis nostrae vester animus tanquam vilia ad vescendum poma suscipiat, ut postmodum ad priores epulas quanto esurientius tanto avidius recurat.

Curate igitur, fratres mei, cum invicem convenitis, ut honeste, graviter et morose incedere studeatis, quatenus debitae mortificationis insignia praeferentes, et inter vosmetipsos quiete ac pacifice fraterna valeatis charitate congruere, et extrinsecus adventantibus sanctae conversationis exempla praebere. praecipue tamen loquacitatis vitio severe ac vigilanter obsistite, et prurienti linguae frenum sobrii moderaminis adhibete, ne, quod absit, brevis horae spatio perdati otiosa loquendo quod per plures acquisistis orando, et nunc ex lingua leviter affluat quod mentem postea poenitendo graviter premat. Saepe namque inter reliquos cibos, unum fortasse quid a comedente trajicitur, quod per plures postmodum dies occupans stomachum minime digeratur. Sic nimirum inter multa verba, quae indiscrete proferimus, impossibile est ut non quandoque aliquid prodeat, quo deprimi mentis nostrae stomachum sentiamus, ac per hoc nequeat facile digeri, quia non potest oblivioni traditum a cogitatione deleri. Nonnulli enim fratrum postquam se aliquanto diutius siluisse meminerint, quadam quasi ex ipso silentio securitate praesumpta, mox ad proferenda vana quaelibet et levia defluunt, et non ad necessitatis indicia, sed ad voluptatis potius petulantiam indiscreta ora resolvunt. Quibus profecto valde timendum est, ne magis Deum vitio vanifluae verborum offendant quam sibi prius de silentii sui censura placaverant. Deum siquidem, quem et silendo et orationibus insistendo in se suscipere fortassis ante meruerant, nunc vacando fabulis et sermonibus otiosis tanto periculosius quanto vicinius persequi non formidant.

SERMON LXXIII.

ON THE VICE OF THE TONGUE.

When a pious exactor embraces whatever wares are offered under a chirograph of caution, the debtor who is held is secure. So therefore, most dearly beloved brothers, so indeed, when I behold you intent to listen willingly to those things which are brought forth from the poverty of my rusticity, I grow stronger and readier to render to you thereafter the debt of the promised speech. And because through the circle of the whole week uniquely constituted in your cells, you have been fattened by the affluent feasts of sacred Scripture, now let your mind receive from the hands of our servitude as it were vile fruits to eat, so that afterwards it may recur to the prior feasts as much more hungrily as more greedily.

Care therefore, my brothers, when you convene together, that you study to walk honestly, gravely, and morosely, so that bearing the ensigns of due mortification, you may be able to agree both among yourselves quietly and peacefully in fraternal charity, and to provide examples of holy conversation to those arriving from without; especially however resist severely and vigilantly the vice of loquacity, and apply the bridle of sober moderation to the itching tongue, lest, which heaven forbid, in the space of a brief hour you lose by speaking idle things what you acquired through many hours by praying, and now that may flow lightly from the tongue which may afterwards heavily press the mind in repenting. For often among other foods, one thing perhaps is swallowed by the eater, which occupying the stomach for several days afterwards is very little digested. So indeed among many words, which we bring forth indiscreetly, it is impossible that not sometimes something should come forth by which we feel the stomach of our mind to be depressed, and through this it cannot be easily digested, because being delivered to oblivion it cannot be deleted from thought. For some of the brothers after they have remembered themselves to have been silent for a somewhat longer time, a certain security having been presumed as if from that silence itself, soon they flow down to bringing forth any vain and light things, and they resolve their indiscreet mouths not to the indications of necessity, but rather to the petulance of pleasure. For whom indeed it is greatly to be feared, lest they offend God more by the vice of vain-flowing verbosity than they had previously placated him by the censure of their silence. Since indeed God, whom both by being silent and by insisting on prayers they had perhaps previously deserved to receive in themselves, now by being vacant for fables and idle speeches they do not fear to persecute as much more dangerously as more closely.

Audiant itaque quid Paulus Ephesiis dicat: «Omnis, inquit, sermo malus ex ore vestro non procedat, sed si quid bonum est, ad aedificationem opportunitatis fidei, ut det gratiam audientibus (Ephes. IV).» Et quia nonnulli Deum prius bene vivendo laetificant, sed postmodum superflua quaeque et perversa loquendo contristant, illico subjunxit: «Et nolite contristare Spiritum sanctum Dei, in quo signati estis in die redemptionis (Ibid.).» Perpendant miseri, quae illis laetitia in vanis sermonibus potest lenocinantes obrepere, quibus sciunt se non potentem saeculi, non etiam quemlibet sanctum hominem, sed ipsum Spiritum sanctum, qui procul dubio Deus est, constri-
stare.

Quanto autem cautelae studio linguae procacitas frenanda sit, si quis nosse desiderat, inter quae crimina ab eodem magistro gentium numeretur, attendat: «Fornicatio, inquit, et omnis immunditia, aut avaritia, nec nominetur in vobis, sicut decet sanctos, aut turpitudine, aut stultiloquium, aut scurrilitas, quae ad rem non pertinet (Ephes. V).» Ubi enim fornicationem, immunditiam, atque avaritiam texuit, ibi etiam indifferenter scurrilitatem, et stultiloquium nominavit, ut manifeste detur intelligi, linguae malum gravissimis criminibus in offensione conjunctum, a quibus in ipsa non est prohibitione discretum. Quid autem vaniloquio potest esse deterius, quod non modo per semetipsum infelicem animam lethaliter gravat, sed et ipsam honestae vitae religionem, quae hominem Deo junxit, evacuat, Jacobo testante, qui ait: «Si quis putat se religiosum esse, non refrenans linguam suam, sed seducens cor suum, hujus vana est religio (Jac. I).» Quibus nimirum verbis luce clarius constat quia in nihilum omnis nostra religio redigitur, nisi solerter immoderatae linguae lascivia compescatur. Qui rursus ait: «Qui in verbo non offendit, hic perfectus est vir (Jac. III).» Si viri perfectio in verbi custodia ponitur, profecto patet quia per effrenatae loquacitatis incuriam, omnis etiam perfectae vitae compositio dissipatur. Et si rem velimus diligenter inspicere, deterius peccat plerisque lingua quam vita; nam et si vigilantia cura animam nostram custodire proponimus, tamen quia propagati de carne cum peccato sumus, impediens saepius ipsa carnis infirmitas, peccamus. Sed quidquid in humana conversatione delinquitur fructuosae poenitentiae remedio et crebris orationibus expiatur.

Consideremus ergo, fratres charissimi, quam grave sit in lingua delinquere, quae compuncti et amari cordis interpres pro nostris delictis efficaciter consuevit orare, et eam vanissimae loquacitatis vitio ream atque obnoxiam divino conspectui reddere, quae nimirum in suae munditiae puritate persistens nostris reatibus poterat veniam obtinere. Unde non immerito per virum Sapientem dicitur: «Flagelli plaga livorem facit; plaga autem linguae comminuet ossa (Eccli. XXVIII).»

Let them hear therefore what Paul says to the Ephesians: "Let no evil speech," he says, "proceed from your mouth, but if any is good, to the edification of the opportunity of faith, that it may give grace to the hearers (Ephes. 4)." And because some previously gladden God by living well, but afterwards sadden him by speaking anything superfluous and perverse, he immediately subjoined: "And do not sadden the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you are sealed in the day of redemption (Ibid.)." Let the miserable ones weigh what joy can creep upon them enticingly in vain speeches, by which they know themselves to sadden not a powerful one of the world, not even any holy man, but the Holy Spirit himself, who without doubt is God.

But with how much study of caution the procacity of the tongue is to be bridled, if anyone desires to know, let him attend among which crimes it is numbered by the same teacher of the Gentiles: "Fornication," he says, "and all uncleanness, or avarice, let it not even be named among you, as becomes saints, or filthiness, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose (Ephes. 5)." For where he wove together fornication, uncleanness, and avarice, there also he named scurrility and foolish talking indifferently, so that it may be clearly given to be understood that the evil of the tongue is joined to the gravest crimes in offense, from which it is not distinguished in the prohibition itself. But what can be worse than vain-talking, which not only by itself lethally burdens the unhappy soul, but also evacuates the religion itself of an honest life, which joined man to God, as James testifies, who says: "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain (James 1)." By which words indeed it is more clearly than light established that all our religion is reduced to nothing, unless the lasciviousness of an immoderate tongue is skillfully restrained. Who again says: "He that offendeth not in word, the same is a perfect man (James 3)." If the perfection of a man is placed in the custody of the word, it is certainly plain that through the incuria of unbridled loquacity, every composition also of a perfect life is dissipated. And if we wish to inspect the matter diligently, the tongue for the most part sins worse than life; for even if we propose to guard our soul with vigilant care, yet because we are propagated from the flesh with sin, with the infirmity of the flesh itself more often impeding, we sin. But whatever is delinquent in human conversation is expiated by the remedy of fruitful penitence and frequent prayers.

Let us consider therefore, most dearly beloved brothers, how grave it is to be delinquent in the tongue, which as the interpreter of a contrite and bitter heart has effectively accustomed to pray for our delicts, and to render it guilty and obnoxious to the divine sight by the vice of most vain loquacity, which indeed persisting in the purity of its cleanness was able to obtain pardon for our guilts. Whence not undeservedly it is said through the Wise man: "The stroke of a whip makes a bruise; but the stroke of the tongue will break the bones (Eccli. 28)."

Ecce lingua ossa non habet, et ossa comminuit, quia cum ipsa per ventosa verba leviter effluit fortia atque robusta virtutis nostrae facta corrumpit. Nam cum mors et vita sit in manu linguae (Prov. XVIII), valde cavendum est vitium quod et manu ad feriendum uti dicitur, unde inaniter loquentis anima trucidetur. Unde non immerito idem, qui supra, Sapiens dicit: «Multi ceciderunt in ore gladii, sed non sic, quasi qui interierunt per linguam suam (Eccli. XXVIII).»

Duo autem unicuique necessaria sunt qui se ab hujus nequitiae peste custodire desiderat, ut videlicet, et proprium os a supervacuis sermonibus comprimat, et, aures etiam ab ineptis alienae loquacitatis confabulationibus claudat, quoniam hoc virus non solum eos a quibus oritur lethaliter inficit, sed eos etiam in quos effunditur perniciosa tabe corrumpit. Unde scriptum est: «Sepi aures tuas spinis, et noli audire linguam nequam; et ori tuo facito ostia, et seras auribus tuis; aurum tuum, et argentum tuum confla, et verbis tuis facito stateram, et frenos ori tuo rectos, et attende, ne forte labaris in lingua, et cadas in conspectu inimicorum insidiantium tibi, et sit casus tuus insanabilis in mortem (Ibid.).» Salomon autem dicit: «Qui custodit os suum, custodit animam suam; qui autem inconsideratus est ad loquendum, sentiet malum (Prov. XIII).» Nec enim credendum est, fratres mei, sanctos doctores Novi scilicet ac Veteris Testamenti tot sine causa sententias adversus linguae vitium protulisse. Nisi enim huic morbo immane periculum inesse cognoscerent, nequaquam adversus hunc tam austere, tam acute, tam multipliciter, tam uniformiter disputarent.

Ut enim caetera testimonia sacrae Scripturae praeteream, quem apostolica tuba illa non terreat, quae de hac pernicie terribiliter intonat, dicens. «Ecce, inquit, quantus ignis quam magnam silvam incendit, et lingua ignis est, universitas iniquitatis; lingua constituitur in membris nostris, quae maculat totum corpus, et inflammat rotam nativitatis nostrae, inflammata a gehenna (Jac. III).» Non autem immerito lingua ignis dicitur, quia sicut de insipiente Salomon dicit: «Aperitio oris illius inflammatio (Eccli. XX).» Si ergo lingua ignis est, quae omnem virtutum nostrarum silvam incendit, si universitas est iniquitatis, si totum corpus sua foeditate contaminat, si rotam nostrae nativitatis inflammat, id est si omne meritum instabilis hujus vitae nostrae suae damnationis incendio devorat, nisi linguam suam quis discreta moderatione custodiat, quis de sobrietate, quis de castitate praesumere, quis de jejuniis, sive vigiliis, aut aliqua se poterit bona operatione jactare?

Behold, the tongue has no bones, and it breaks the bones, because when it flows lightly through windy words, it corrupts the strong and robust deeds of our virtue. For since death and life are in the hand of the tongue (Prov. 18), the vice which is also said to use the hand for striking is greatly to be avoided, whence the soul of one speaking inanely may be slaughtered. Whence not undeservedly the same Wise man, as above, says: "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as they that have perished by their own tongue (Eccli. 28)."

But two things are necessary to everyone who desires to guard himself from the plague of this iniquity: that namely he both suppress his own mouth from superfluous speeches, and also close his ears from the inept confabulations of another's loquacity, since this virus not only lethally infects those from whom it arises, but also corrupts those into whom it is poured by a pernicious rot. Whence it is written: "Hedge thy ears with thorns, and do not hear a wicked tongue; and make doors for thy mouth, and bars for thy ears; melt down thy gold and thy silver, and make a balance for thy words, and right bridles for thy mouth, and take heed lest thou slip in thy tongue, and fall in the sight of thy enemies that lie in wait for thee, and thy fall be incurable unto death (Ibid.)." But Solomon says: "He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his soul; but he that is inconsiderate to speak, shall feel evil (Prov. 13)." For it is not to be believed, my brothers, that the holy doctors of the New as well as of the Old Testament brought forth so many sentences against the vice of the tongue without cause. For unless they knew an immense danger to be in this disease, they would by no means dispute against this so austere, so acutely, so multiply, so uniformly.

For to pass over other testimonies of sacred Scripture, whom would that apostolic trumpet not terrify, which thunders terribly concerning this perdition, saying. "Behold," he says, "how small a fire kindles how great a forest, and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; the tongue is placed in our members, which defiles the whole body, and inflames the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell (James 3)." But not undeservedly is the tongue called a fire, because as Solomon says of the foolish one: "The opening of his mouth is an inflammation (Eccli. 20)." If therefore the tongue is a fire, which kindles all the forest of our virtues, if it is a world of iniquity, if it contaminates the whole body with its foulness, if it inflames the wheel of our nativity, that is if it devours all the merit of this unstable life of ours by the fire of its damnation, unless one guards his tongue with discrete moderation, who shall be able to presume concerning sobriety, who concerning chastity, who concerning fasts, or vigils, or to boast of any good operation?

Ponamus ergo, fratres charissimi, frenum ori nostro; non ex eo verba scurrilia prodeant, non fluxae laetitiae fomenta prorumpant; non lingua nostra fratris infirmi vitam detractorie mordeat; non bene currentis opera sub vitae hujus incerto praecipitanter extollat; non praeterita facta, vel dicta inaniter recitet; non quid a saecularibus agatur inter fratres pestilenter enarret; servemus et nos quod Paulus Colossensibus praecipit, dicens: «Sermo vester semper in gratia sale sit conditus, ut sciatis quomodo oporteat vos unicuique respondere (Col. IV).» Sit igitur lingua nostra modesta, sobria, discreta, pudica; sit oris nostri saliva virgo die crescente, et nisi utilitatis occasio praebeatur, usque in crastinum, sive perendie incorrupta servetur.

Portatis, fratres mei, vobiscum, portatis clavem cellulae, portate et clavem linguae; opponitis pessulum ostio, adhibete retinacula salubriter ori vestro. Auceps non emittit accipitrem, nisi anserem videat, et monachus dimittet linguam suam, si loquendi necessitas non assistat? Dedignatur venator catulum solvere, nisi lepus appareat; viliozem habeat monachus linguam suam, quam ad nullius salutem, vel commodum inutiliter solvat? Sudat lapis in manu oppugnantium moenia, et incassum volet verbum de ore stantis in sanctae militiae disciplina? Arcus frustra flexis cornibus non intenditur, et rationale os ad effundenda passim superflua reseratur? Parcitur pharetrae, ut ex ea sagitta leviter non exeat; non parcitur linguae, ut mordax in quemlibet verbum velut ictum vulneris non infligat?

Quid ad haec, fratres, dicimus; qua nos argumentatione defendere, qua possumus artificiosa nos excusatione purgare? Nunquid non facilius est atque tranquillius facere quam loqui? Nunquid non laboriosius est linguam per tot proluxae loquacitatis verba discurrere quam in suo quietam silentio permanere? Unde non immerito de quibusdam per Jeremiam dicitur: «Docuerunt linguam suam loqui mendacium; ut inique agerent laboraverunt (Jer. IX).» Laborasse namque dicuntur, ut nequiter agerent qui tacendo utique sine peccato melius quievissent. Et si forte quemlibet fratrem in lingua se jugiter fatigare delectat, Paulum audiat quod Corinthiis dicat: «Quid ergo, fratres? cum convenitis, unusquisque vestrum psalmum habet, doctrinam habet, Apocalypsin habet, linguam habet, interpretationem habet: omnia ad aedificationem fiant (I Cor. XIV).»

Let us place therefore, most dearly beloved brothers, a bridle on our mouth; let not scurrilous words proceed from it, let not the fuels of fluxive joy break forth; let not our tongue detractingly bite the life of a weak brother; let it not precipitately extol the works of one running well under the uncertainty of this life; let it not inanely recite past deeds or words; let it not pestilently narrate among the brothers what is done by seculars; let us also observe what Paul commands the Colossians, saying: "Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man (Col. 4)." Let therefore our tongue be modest, sober, discrete, chaste; let the saliva of our mouth be a virgin as the day increases, and unless an occasion of utility be provided, let it be kept incorrupt until the morrow or the day after.

You carry, my brothers, with you, you carry the key of the cell, carry also the key of the tongue; you oppose a bolt to the door, apply restraints wholesomely to your mouth. A fowler does not send forth a hawk, unless he sees a goose, and shall a monk let loose his tongue, if a necessity of speaking does not assist? A hunter disdains to loose a whelp, unless a hare appears; shall a monk hold his tongue more vile, which he looses uselessly to no one's salvation or commodity? A stone sweats in the hand of those attacking walls, and shall a word fly in vain from the mouth of one standing in the discipline of the holy warfare? A bow is not intended in vain with bent horns, and shall the rational mouth be unlocked to pour out superfluous things everywhere? The quiver is spared, so that an arrow may not lightly go out from it; is the tongue not spared, so that it may not inflict a biting word like a stroke of a wound upon anyone?

What do we say to these things, brothers; by what argumentation can we defend ourselves, by what artificial excuse can we purge ourselves? Is it not easier and more tranquil to do than to speak? Is it not more laborious for the tongue to run through so many words of prolix loquacity than to remain quiet in its own silence? Whence not undeservedly it is said of some through Jeremiah: "They have taught their tongue to speak lies; they have labored to act iniquitously (Jer. 9)." For they are said to have labored to act wickedly who by being silent certainly would have rested better without sin. And if by chance it delights any brother to fatigue himself continually in the tongue, let him hear what Paul says to the Corinthians: "What is it then, brothers? when you come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation: let all things be done to edification (1 Cor. 14)."

Si quem ergo taedet linguam suam rigida silentii censura compescere, orando, psallendo, legendo, sive etiam aedificationis verba proferendo, studeat eam salubriter exercere, ne cui nunc ardet lingua in loquendi concupiscentia, damnationis suae postmodum comburatur in poena. Neque enim negligenter audiendum est quod dives ille petebat refrigerari linguam suam, quia cruciabatur in flamma (Luc. XVI). Quia enim, juxta apostolicam sententiam, humana lingua a gehenna, hoc est a gehennalibus incolis, nunc dicitur inflammari (Jac. III); non immerito postmodum flammis ultricibus tradita, cum eisdem simul meretur aduri. Unde non incongrue de perversa lingua per virum Sapientem dicitur: «In flamma, inquit, sua non comburent justos. Qui relinquunt Deum, incident in illam, exardebit in illis, et non exstinguetur, et immittetur in illos, quasi leo et quasi pardus laedet illos (Eccli. XXVIII).» Illud etiam quantae formidini, quanto nobis debet esse terrori quod Veritas ait: «Omne verbum otiosum, quod locuti fuerint homines, reddent de eo rationem in die iudicii (Matth. XII).»

Audiat lingua vaniloqua, audiat lingua otiosa, audiat lingua scabiosa. Scabiosa, inquam, lingua, quae velut scabiem quamdam atque prurimum patitur, nisi semper acuto quodammodo supervacuae locutionis ungue scalpatur. Audiat et pavecat, intelligat et tam terribilem sententiam perhorrescat. Audiat terrorem iudicii de ore ipsius iudicaturi. An non habet aures ut possit audire, quae et manum habet ut possit occidere? «Mors enim et vita in manu linguae (Prov. XVIII).» Audiat ergo quod ex ore Veritatis dicitur; et subtili meditatione discutiat quod minatur: «Omne, inquit, verbum otiosum, quod locuti fuerint homines, reddent rationem de eo in die iudicii (Matth. XII).» Ponamus itaque ut otiosum verbum, si contra sacrae Scripturae sententias fas est dicere, leve sit et exiguum omnino peccatum, sed quid milio brevius? quid penna levius invenitur? Verumtamen si pennarum, vel miliorum innumerabilis multitudo congeritur, necesse est ut portantis cervix, velut sub gravi lapide immoderantius pressa, frangatur. Ex humentibus quoque saxis tenuis quidem et rara gutta distillat, sed si vas subesse spatio longiore permittitur, ita plenum ac si profluens unda decurreret invenitur. Parvae quidem sed innumerae cinifes superbi Pharaonis et totius Aegypti superavere virtutem (Exod. II). Breve tempus est hora, sed dum hora horae continua successione conjungitur, totius vitae nostrae cursus impletur.

Nemo itaque semetipsum decipiat, fratres mei; sed peccatum, quod leve arbitratur esse, dum pensat, grave videatur in ejus aestimatione, cum numerat. Quid enim durius saxo? Quid aqua liquidius? et tamen a quodam sapiente (Ovidio) dicitur: Gutta cavat lapidem, consumitur annulus usu.

If therefore it tires anyone to restrain his tongue with the rigid censure of silence, let him study to exercise it wholesomely by praying, by singing psalms, by reading, or also by bringing forth words of edification, lest for whom the tongue now burns in the concupiscence of speaking, he be afterwards burnt in the punishment of his damnation. For neither is it to be heard negligently that that rich man sought for his tongue to be cooled, because he was tormented in the flame (Luke 16). For because, according to the apostolic sentence, the human tongue is now said to be inflamed by hell, that is by the hellish inhabitants (James 3); not undeservedly is it afterwards delivered to the avenging flames, deserving to be burnt together with the same. Whence not incongruously is it said of a perverse tongue through the Wise man: "In its flame," he says, "it shall not burn the just. They that leave God shall fall into it, it shall burn in them, and shall not be quenched, and it shall be sent in upon them as a lion and as a leopard it shall hurt them (Eccli. 28)." That also of how great dread, of how great terror ought it to be to us, what the Truth says: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment (Matt. 12)."

Let the vain-talking tongue hear, let the idle tongue hear, let the scabby tongue hear. The scabby tongue, I say, which suffers as it were a certain scab and itching, unless it be always scratched in a certain way by the sharp nail of superfluous speech. Let it hear and tremble, let it understand and dread such a terrible sentence. Let it hear the terror of judgment from the mouth of him who is to judge. Or has it not ears that it can hear, which also has a hand that it can kill? "For death and life are in the hand of the tongue (Prov. 18)." Let it hear therefore what is said from the mouth of the Truth; and let it discuss with subtle meditation what he threatens: "Every idle word," he says, "that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment (Matt. 12)." Let us pose therefore that an idle word, if it is lawful to say against the sentences of sacred Scripture, be a light and altogether minute sin, but what is found shorter than a millet? what lighter than a feather? Nevertheless if an innumerable multitude of feathers or millets is gathered together, it is necessary that the neck of the bearer, pressed immoderately as if under a heavy stone, be broken. From moist stones also a thin indeed and rare drop distills, but if a vessel is permitted to be under it for a longer space, it is found so full as if a flowing wave were running down. Small indeed but innumerable gnats overcame the power of proud Pharaoh and of all Egypt (Exod. 8). A brief time is an hour, but while hour is joined to hour in continuous succession, the course of our whole life is filled.

Let no one therefore deceive himself, my brothers; but let the sin, which he thinks to be light while he weighs it, appear grave in his estimation when he numbers it. For what is harder than stone? What more liquid than water? and yet it is said by a certain wise man (Ovid): A drop hollows the stone, a ring is consumed by use.

Nimirum et omnis animae nostrae soliditas ac fortitudo destruitur, si assiduus inundantium et quodammodo pluvialium verborum fluxibus atteratur, quamvis et leviter se peccasse quis asserat, cum Apostolus dicat: «Qui legem praeterit, Deum inhonorat (Rom. II).» Porro otiosis verbis assuetus, duplici procul dubio culpa videtur obnoxius, qui et divinas laudes, ad quas humana conditio assidue provocatur, abjicit, et superfluae loquacitati, a qua prohibetur, insistit, sicut de quibusdam Jeremias dicit: «Duo mala fecit populus meus. Me dereliquerunt fontem aquae vivae, et foderunt sibi cisternas dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquas (Jer. XII).» Quae nimirum prophetae verba, etiam de otiosa loquentibus possunt non inconvenienter intelligi, qui nimirum derelicto fonte aquae vivae, hoc est, postposito verbo vitae, ora sua cisternas faciunt, ex quibus non novi, sed veteris hominis verba proferunt, quemadmodum non recentem de fonte, sed sentinosam potius aquam de cisterna proferant; et quia labia sua moderata nesciunt discretionem reprimere, cisternae dissipatae aquam nequeunt continere.

Notandum sane quia sicut avis advolans exponit se ramo cujuslibet arboris, sic plerumque malignus spiritus veniens insidet linguae inconsiderate loquentis, et inordinatum quid in decursu sermonis per subreptionem suadet effluere; unde postmodum veniens quasi congesta dimicandi materia, cor hominis valeat impugnare. Intra conscientiam suam, fratres charissimi, unusquisque vestrum redeat, et se, quod dicimus, recognoscat. Saepe namque negligenter quid loquimur; unde postmodum ad silentii nostri custodiam redeunt, tantam ingruentium cogitationum molestiam patimur, ut vix tolerare possimus. Et poenitet quidem omnino tam incaute noxia protulisse, sed remedium non occurrit, quia quod semel emissum est, non possumus revocare. Juxta quod Flaccus ait: Et semel emissum volat irrevocabile verbum.

Oramus, psallimus, sed evellere de corde nostro infixum spinæ illius aculeum non valemus. Tunc veteris hostis cum mentem nostram in tanto versari turbine conspicit, victor et insultans gaudet se, quasi fructus de suo labore colligere, quos in male feraci terra linguae nostrae meminit seminasse; in quo videlicet facto quid aliud quam turdelam imitantur, quae ex eo quod digerit moritur? Ex ejus quippe stercore planta nascitur, de cujus humore viscus conficitur, quo postmodum et ipsa capiatur, atque ex eo agitur quod prius fuerat cibus suus, ut et ipsa postmodum sit cibus alienus.

Indeed every solidity and fortitude of our soul is destroyed, if it be worn away by the assiduous fluxes of inundating and in a certain way rainy words, although anyone may assert himself to have sinned lightly, when the Apostle says: "He that transgresses the law, dishonors God (Rom. 2)." Furthermore one accustomed to idle words is seen to be obnoxious to a double fault without doubt, who both casts away the divine praises, to which the human condition is assidue provoked, and insists on superfluous loquacity, from which he is prohibited, as Jeremiah says of some: "My people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer. 2)." Which words of the prophet indeed can be understood not inconveniently also of those speaking idle things, who indeed having forsaken the fountain of living water, that is, having postponed the word of life, make their mouths cisterns, from which they bring forth words not of the new, but of the old man, just as they would bring forth not fresh water from the fountain, but rather stagnant water from the cistern; and because they know not how to repress their lips with moderate discretion, the broken cisterns cannot contain the water.

It is certainly to be noted that as a bird flying to exposes itself on the branch of any tree, so for the most part the malignant spirit coming sits upon the tongue of one speaking inconsiderately, and suggests something inordinate to flow out by subreption in the course of speech; whence afterwards coming as it were congested material for fighting, he may be able to impugn the heart of man. Let each one of you return within his conscience, most dearly beloved brothers, and recognize himself in what we say. For often we speak something negligently; whence afterwards returning to the custody of our silence, we suffer so great a molestation of ingressing thoughts that we can scarcely tolerate it. And it repents indeed altogether to have brought forth noxious things so incautiously, but a remedy does not occur, because what has once been sent forth, we cannot revoke. According to what Flaccus says: And the irrevocable word once sent forth flies.

We pray, we sing psalms, but we are not able to pluck out from our heart the sting of that thorn fixed within. Then the ancient enemy, when he beholds our mind to be turned in so great a whirlwind, rejoices as victor and insulting that he collects as it were fruits from his labor, which he remembers to have sown in the ill-bearing earth of our tongue; in which fact indeed what else do they imitate than the thrush, which dies from that which it digests? For from its dung a plant is born, from whose moisture bird-lime is made, by which afterwards it is itself caught, and it is acted from that which had previously been its food, so that it itself afterwards is another's food.

Ita ergo cum immunda quaeque ac vana proferimus, quid aliud quam laqueos nobismetipsis loquendo compingimus, quibus ab astutis aucupibus, hoc est, malignis spiritibus, postmodum capiamur? Saepe autem sermo noster non loquenti sed audienti pugnam generat, ita ut cor ejus in odium illius, qui contraria verba protulerat, vehementer accendat, et, si facultas adsit, non tam verba verbis reddere quam malae retributionis parat actibus respondere. Haec autem in ipsa verborum confabulatione parvipendenda nobis videntur et levia, sed cum ad orationum secreta recurrimus, reducta protinus ad memoriam, dura prorsus et intolerabilia judicamus.

Quapropter, dilectissimi fratres mei, studeamus nosmetipsos intra silentii claustra reprimere, et linguas nostras a vanis et inutilibus eloquiis cohibere. Anima namque nostra superni regis est sponsa, quae accepto pignore sancti Spiritus, signaculo fidei est dotata. Maneat ergo in suis penetralibus virgo, non indecenter in publicum prodeat, non per oris limen egressa, in supervacua se verba, ac saecularia inaniter fundat, ne si deviare eam sponsus a modesta pudicitiae suae gravitate conspexerit, quandoque objurgans, dicat: «Si ignoras te, inquires, o pulchra inter mulieres, egredere, et abi post vestigia gregum (Cant. II).» In cubiculo igitur suo virginali more resideat, oris ostium clausum teneat, et nunquam, nisi quae ad expectandum pertinent sponsi coelestis adventum, locutura procedat; sub umbra se silentii reprimat, ne decolor videatur; ab omni se aestu negotii saecularis abscondat, ut non immerito possit alacri voce cantare: «Sub umbra illius quem desiderabam, sedi, et fructus ejus dulcis gutturi meo: introduxit me rex in cellam vinariam, ordinavit in me charitatem (Ibid.).»

Solent autem sponsae nobilium diversas pigmentorum species mandendo per ora revolvere, ut advenientibus procis fragrantius valeant, ac suavius redolere. Anima etiam nostra caepas, allia, et quidquid terrenae prudentiae acritudinem fervet, prorsus abhorreat; cassiam vero assiduae orationis, stacten sacrae lectionis, psalmodiarum cinnama et cuncta odoramenti spiritualis aromata jugiter fragrare contendat. Christus sit omne quod loquitur; omne quod delectatur, omne quod sapit, omne quod vivit; Christum spiret, Christum flagitet, Christum aestuet, Christum ore pronuntiet, Christum assidua cordis meditatione pertractet. Amare alium nesciat, ad hunc solum totis visceribus inardescat.

So therefore when we bring forth anything unclean and vain, what else do we do than frame snares for ourselves by speaking, by which we may be afterwards caught by the astute fowlers, that is, the malignant spirits? But often our speech generates a fight not to the one speaking but to the one hearing, so that it vehemently kindles his heart into hatred of him who had brought forth contrary words, and, if the faculty is present, he prepares to respond not so much words to words as to acts of evil retribution. But these things seem to us to be small and light in the confabulation itself of words, but when we recur to the secrets of prayers, having been brought back immediately to memory, we judge them altogether hard and intolerable.

Wherefore, my most dearly beloved brothers, let us study to repress ourselves within the cloisters of silence, and to cohibit our tongues from vain and useless speeches. For our soul is the spouse of the supernal king, which having received the pledge of the Holy Spirit, is endowed with the seal of faith. Let it remain therefore a virgin in its penetralia, let it not proceed indecently into public, not having gone out through the threshold of the mouth, let it not inanely pour itself into superfluous and secular words, lest if the spouse sees it to deviate from the modest gravity of its pudicity, sometimes chiding, he say: "If thou know not thyself, O thou fairest among women, go forth, and follow after the steps of the flocks (Cant. 2)." Let it reside therefore in its chamber in a virginal manner, let it hold the door of the mouth closed, and never proceed to speak except those things which pertain to expecting the advent of the heavenly spouse; let it repress itself under the shadow of silence, lest it appear discolored; let it hide itself from all heat of secular business, so that not undeservedly it may be able to sing with an alacri voice: "I sat down under his shadow whom I desired, and his fruit was sweet to my throat: the king brought me into the wine-cellar, he ordained charity in me (Cant. 2)."

The spouses of nobles are accustomed to revolve various species of pigments in their mouths by chewing, so that they may be able to smell more fragantly and sweetly to their suitors arriving. Let our soul also altogether abhor onions, garlic, and whatever seethes with the acidity of earthly prudence; but let it contend to be continually fragrant with the cassia of assiduous prayer, the stacte of sacred reading, the cinnamon of psalmody, and all the aromas of spiritual perfume. Let Christ be everything it speaks; everything in which it delights, everything it tastes, everything it lives; let it breathe Christ, let it demand Christ, let it seethe for Christ, let it pronounce Christ with the mouth, let it treat of Christ with assiduous meditation of the heart. Let it not know how to love another, for him alone let it be kindled with all its bowels.

Illum summis desiderii vocibus clamet, illum ad se venire suspiriis et crebris gemitibus provocet; illum diversis adornata virtutibus, ipsa sui pulchritudine, ut ad se ingrediat, invitet; quatenus dum ad se eum, cui aestuat, cui anxiatur, cui inhiat, venire persenserit, protinus gratulabunda alacriter exclamet, dicens: «Vox dilecti mei pulsantis: aperi soror mea, amica mea, immaculata mea;» ac deinde subjungit: «Surrexi aperire dilecto meo.» Felix anima, cujus thalamum coelestis ille sponsus ingreditur, ac indissolubili sibi perpetui amoris vinculo copulatur: quae nimirum sine intermissione celebrat nuptiale convivium, et indeficienti copia coelestium fruitur epularum. Felix, inquam, anima, quae dum divinae gratiae rore perfunditur, coelesti mox sobole fecundatur. Sic nimirum arefacta carni, germinat sibi, mortua mundo, vivit Deo viventi, atque regnanti in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

SERMO LXXIV.

DE SPIRITUALI CERTAMINE.

Si diligenter considerare volumus, fratres charissimi, unde venimus, et quo vocamur, nullae in nobis vires sunt, quibus ad reddendas Deo gratias sufficere valeamus. Nos enim filii Israel sumus, qui Pharaoni in Aegypto servivimus (Exod. III), qui gravissimo superbi regis imperio premebamur. Gaudebat siquidem princeps mundi hujus sub ferreo suae servitutis jugo nos indesinenter atterere, et servilium operum semper officiis occupare. Cogebat nos lateres coquere, quia non ex pretiosis virtutum lapidibus templum Deo construere, sed terrenum potius sibi dictabat aedificium fabricare. Sed ecce jam Deus Patrum nostrorum, Deus benedictus in saecula, ex Aegypto nos, id est de tenebris vitae veteris eruit, de vinculo tyrannicae dominationis absolvit, atque in terram nos repromissionis fideliter introduxit. Terram namque repromissionis ex eo jam ingressi sumus, ex quo spreto mundi desiderio, firmae spei fiduciam in aeternitate posuimus; et jam in spe possidemus, quam in re habituri postmodum per Dei gratiam sumus. In hac videlicet terra jam illi per spei gratiam introducti fuerant, quibus Petrus aiebat: «Vos autem genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis, ut virtutes annuntietis ejus, qui de tenebris vos vocavit in admirabile lumen suum (I Petr. II).»

Let it cry to him with the highest voices of desire, let it provoke him to come to itself with sighs and frequent groans; adorned with various virtues, let it invite him to enter into itself by its own beauty; so that when it perceives him to come to it, for whom it seethes, for whom it is anxious, for whom it yearns, it may immediately, being full of gratitude, alacritously exclaim, saying: "The voice of my beloved knocking: open to me my sister, my love, my undefiled (Cant. 5);" and then it subjoins: "I rose up to open to my beloved." Happy the soul, into whose chamber that heavenly spouse enters, and is coupled to himself by the indissoluble bond of perpetual love: which indeed celebrates the nuptial banquet without intermission, and enjoys an unfailing abundance of heavenly feasts. Happy, I say, the soul, which while it is poured over by the dew of divine grace, is soon fecundated by heavenly offspring. So indeed dried up to the flesh, it germinates to itself, dead to the world, it lives to the living God, and the one reigning forever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXIV.

ON THE SPIRITUAL CONTEST.

If we wish to consider diligently, most dearly beloved brothers, whence we come, and whither we are called, there are no powers in us by which we are able to suffice for rendering thanks to God. For we are the children of Israel, who served Pharaoh in Egypt (Exod. 3), who were pressed by the most grave empire of the proud king. Since indeed the prince of this world rejoiced to wear us away incessantly under the iron yoke of his servitude, and to occupy us always with the offices of servile works. He compelled us to cook bricks, because he dictated for himself to fabricate an earthly building rather than to construct a temple for God from the precious stones of virtues. But behold now the God of our fathers, God blessed forever, has rescued us from Egypt, that is from the darkness of the old life, has absolved us from the bond of tyrannical domination, and has faithfully introduced us into the land of promise. For we have already entered into the land of promise from that moment in which, having spurned the desire of the world, we have placed the confidence of firm hope in eternity; and already we possess in hope what we are to have in reality thereafter through the grace of God. In this land indeed they had already been introduced through the grace of hope, to whom Peter said: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, that you may declare his virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2)."

Sed quia in hanc terram, duce divina gratia, sumus ingressi, jam non nobis vacandum est otio, non torpori, vel desidiaē cedere; non somno, vel incautae securitati sanum est indulgere. Expedit itaque ut virtutum armis semper accincti, ad custodiam nostri jugiter excubemus, et adversus immanissimos hostes nostros acriter dimicemus. Per bellum namque pervenitur ad pacem, per laborem transitur ad requiem. Non est enim sine pugna victoria, non absque victoria pertingitur ad coronam. Intestinos autem hostes habemus, cum quibus si perire nolumus, infatigabiliter, et sine ulla prorsus intermissione pugnare compellimur. Hostes nempe nostros, adversum quos in acie semper assistimus, non a nobis interjecti aggeres dividunt, non moenia turrita secernunt, non profundi amnes interfluunt, non praerupti montes, ne cominus congrediantur, obsistunt. Nobiscum semper sunt, quia in nostrae mentis penetralibus degunt. Septem namque principalia vitia sunt, ex quorum vipereo semine caeterae vitiorum pestes, quasi venenatae nihilominus soboles oriuntur, quae nimirum sunt, superbia, avaritia, inanis gloria, ira, invidia, luxuria, tristitia. De quibus nos idcirco diligenter disputare omittimus, quia plerosque sacri tractatores eloquii multiplices super his reliquisse sententias invenimus.

Hoc tantum nunc affirmare sufficiat, quia quisquis adversus ista configere, quisquis haec cum Dei adiutorio neglexerit superare, nunquam in militia spiritali victor existere, nunquam ad coronam victoriae poterit pervenire: «Non enim coronabitur, nisi qui legitime certaverit (II Tim. II).» Hae sunt denique gentes quas Israelitico populo Moyses praecipiebat exstinguere, et a facie terrae absque ulla foederis interpositione delere: «Cum introduxerit te, inquit, Dominus Deus tuus in terram, quam possessurus ingredieris, et deleverit gentes multas coram te, Hethaeum, et Gergezaeum, et Amorrhaeum, Chananaeum, et Pherezaeum, et Hevaeum, et Jebusaeum, septem gentes multo majoris numeri, quam tu es, et robustiores te, tradideritque eas Dominus Deus tuus tibi, percuties eas usque ad internecionem: non inibis cum eis foedus, nec misereberis earum (Deut. VII).»

Ecce audistis, fratres charissimi, quia gentes nobis infestas nostris manibus Deus omnipotens tradidit, easque jam a facie nostra in sua providentiae dispositione delevit. Cur ergo degeneri languore torpescimus? Cur collatam nobis coelitus victoriam non arripimus? cur ex eo, quod in superno jam examine constitutum est, id solum quod ad nos pertinet, non implemus? Nam si ipsam verborum seriem caute perpendimus, jam ipsas gentes apud divinam sententiam prostratas aspicimus, quas ipsi percutere et delere jubemur.

But because we have entered into this land, with divine grace as our leader, we must no longer have leisure for idleness, nor yield to sloth or listlessness; it is not healthy to indulge in sleep or incautious security. It is therefore expedient that, always girded with the arms of virtues, we keep watch continually for our own protection, and fight sharply against our most cruel enemies. For through war one arrives at peace, through labor one passes to rest. For there is no victory without a fight, and one does not reach the crown without victory. Moreover, we have internal enemies, with whom, if we do not wish to perish, we are compelled to fight indefatigably and without any intermission at all. Indeed, our enemies, against whom we always stand in the battle line, are not divided from us by intervening ramparts, nor do turreted walls separate them, nor do deep rivers flow between, nor do rugged mountains stand in the way to prevent them from engaging at close quarters. They are always with us, because they dwell in the inner chambers of our mind. For there are seven principal vices, from whose viperous seed the other plagues of vices, like poisonous offspring, nonetheless arise; which indeed are pride, avarice, vain glory, anger, envy, lust, and sadness. Concerning these, we therefore omit to dispute diligently, because we find that most treatises of sacred eloquence have left multiple opinions on these matters.

Let it suffice now only to affirm this: that whoever neglects to conflict against these, whoever neglects to overcome these with the help of God, will never be able to exist as a victor in spiritual warfare, and will never be able to arrive at the crown of victory: "For he shall not be crowned, except he strive lawfully (2 Tim. 2)." These are, finally, the nations which Moses commanded the Israelite people to extinguish, and to blot out from the face of the earth without any interposition of a treaty: "When the Lord thy God," he says, "shall have introduced thee into the land, which thou shalt enter to possess, and shall have destroyed many nations before thee, the Hittite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations of much greater number than thou art, and stronger than thou, and the Lord thy God shall have delivered them to thee: thou shalt strike them even unto utter destruction: thou shalt make no league with them, nor shalt thou have mercy upon them (Deut. 7)."

Behold, you have heard, most dearly beloved brothers, that almighty God has delivered the nations hostile to us into our hands, and has already blotted them out from before our face in the disposition of his providence. Why then do we grow sluggish with degenerate faintness? Why do we not seize the victory brought to us from heaven? Why do we not fulfill that alone which pertains to us from that which has already been established in the supernal examination? For if we cautiously weigh the very series of words, we already behold those nations prostrate before the divine sentence, which we ourselves are commanded to strike and destroy.

Cum enim dicitur: «Cum introduxerit te Dominus Deus in terram quam possessurus ingredieris, et deleverit gentes,» atque paulo post adjungit: «Percuties eas,» luce clarius constat, quia adversarios nostros in sua praescientia jam omnipotens Deus, extinxit, quos nos, ut exstingeremus, instituit. Ipse pugnat, et ut nos vincamus invitat; ipse hostium vires destruit, et nobis victoryae nomen ascribit. Vult nos fieri sua virtute victores, ut merito coronare valeat triumphantes.

Nulla nos ergo desperatio frangat, quos ad fortiter agendum supernae virtutis adhortatio provocat. Nulla infirmitas humanae conditionis obsistat, ubi ad confligendum divinae jussionis auctoritas roborat. Audiamus et nos quod illis dictum est: «Si dixeris in corde tuo: Plures sunt gentes istae quam ego, quomodo potero delere eas? Noli metuere, sed recordare quae fecerit Dominus Deus tuus Pharaoni, et cunctis Aegyptiis, plagas maximas quas viderunt oculi tui, et signa atque portenta, manumque robustam, et extentum brachium, ut educeret te Dominus Deus tuus; sic faciet cunctis populis quos metuis (Deut. VII).» Ut quid ergo ex nostra infirmitate diffidimus, qui ipsum virtutis auctorem praevium ac ducem nostrae congressionis habemus, et ille tenetur ex promissione victoriae, qui dux et auctor est pugnae?

Accendatur igitur mens in amorem certaminis, et in campum pugnaturus procedat, ad debellandos hostium cuneos resides animi incalescant. Nullum inter nos atque adversarios foedus interveniat; nulla nos sequestrae pacis jura componant. Non ire namque ad praelium, inglorium est; ire autem, et segniter agere, mortis est omnino periculum. Melius est enim non agnoscere viam veritatis, quam post agnitionem retrorsum reverti. Nonnulli enim post arrepta sacrae rudimenta militiae, in tantam se mollitiem animo tepescente resolvunt, ut et si videantur mala non agere, nullis tamen studeant animae suae profectibus insudare. Hi nimirum non famem inedia vincere, non oblatis epularum suavitatibus repugnare, non frigoris asperitatem ferre, non communes satagunt vigiliis praevenire, qui videlicet, et si usurpare illicita respuunt, his tamen quae licita sunt suaviter perfruuntur. Hi profecto intra sacram militiam constituti sunt, sed quid spirituale certamen sit, nesciunt. Intra militum numerum censentur ascripti, sed militaris officii probantur ignari. Siquidem inter armatos non verentur inermes incedere, inter loricas bellatorum acies non erubescunt discincti segniter ambulare; atque idcirco ad primum vibrati cujuslibet jaculi ictum corruunt, quia nullo causa circumspectionis clypeo muniuntur, meliusque fuerat intra septa domus ignobiler vivere, quam imbelles intra bella sine ullis praeconiorum titulis interire.

For when it is said: "When the Lord thy God shall have introduced thee into the land, which thou shalt enter to possess, and shall have destroyed the nations," and a little after he adds: "Thou shalt strike them," it is clearer than light that almighty God has already extinguished our adversaries in his prescience, whom he has instituted that we might extinguish. He himself fights, and invites us to conquer; he himself destroys the strength of the enemies, and ascribes the name of victory to us. He wishes us to become victors by his power, so that he may be able to crown the triumphant ones by merit.

Therefore let no despair break us, whom the exhortation of supernal power provokes to act bravely. Let no infirmity of the human condition stand in the way, where the authority of divine command strengthens us for the conflict. Let us also hear what was said to them: "If thou shalt say in thy heart: These nations are more than I, how shall I be able to destroy them? Fear not, but remember what the Lord thy God did to Pharaoh, and to all the Egyptians, the very great plagues which thy eyes saw, and the signs and wonders, and the strong hand, and the stretched-out arm, that the Lord thy God might bring thee out; so shall he do to all the peoples whom thou fearest (Deut. 7)." To what end, therefore, do we distrust from our infirmity, we who have the very author of power as the scout and leader of our engagement, and he is held by the promise of victory, who is the leader and author of the fight?

Therefore let the mind be kindled with the love of the contest, and let it proceed to the field to fight; let the residing spirits grow warm for the purpose of vanquishing the wedges of the enemies. Let no treaty intervene between us and the adversaries; let no laws of a separate peace compose us. For not to go to the battle is inglorious; but to go and to act sluggishly is altogether the danger of death. For it is better not to know the way of truth, than after knowing it to turn back. For some, after the rudiments of sacred warfare have been seized, resolve themselves into such softness with a lukewarm mind, that even if they seem not to do evil, they nonetheless do not study to labor for any progress of their soul. These indeed do not busy themselves to conquer hunger with fasting, nor to resist the offered sweetnesses of feasts, nor to bear the harshness of cold, nor to anticipate the common vigils; who, indeed, even if they refuse to usurp what is illicit, nonetheless sweetly enjoy those things which are licit. These are surely established within the sacred warfare, but they do not know what the spiritual contest is. They are reckoned as enrolled among the number of soldiers, but they are proven ignorant of military duty. Since indeed among the armed they do not fear to walk unarmed, among the armored battle lines of warriors they are not ashamed, being ungirt, to walk sluggishly; and therefore at the first blow of any brandished javelin they fall, because they are fortified with no shield for the sake of circumspection; and it had been better to live ignobly within the enclosure of a house, than to perish as unwarlike within wars without any titles of praises.

Enimvero qui monachicho habitu carnis delectationem quaerunt, ex arido ligno succum exprimere gestiunt, ex qua nimirum mollitie, ac remissione vivendi plerisque contingit, ut cum multa sciant, se nesciant, et quid distractionis ipsi pati possint, pleniter non agnoscant: sicque fit, ut quibus datum est exteriora multa cognoscere, adhuc ad cognoscendum semetipsos videantur probationis indigere. Plerosque enim vidimus jamdudum in sacro ordine constitutos, qui necdum nossent quid in jejuniis, quid in vigiliis, quid in reliquis coelestis disciplinae studiis ferre potuissent; et cum Scriptura dicat: «Qui ignorat, ignorabitur (I Cor. XIV);» quo pacto vel a Deo cognosci, vel Deum mereatur ipsum cognoscere, qui semetipsum in ejus obsequio convincitur ignorare? Porro autem fervidus bellator, qui moenia obsidione circumdat, appropinquare aggeribus nititur, occupare vallos attentat, atque inter ipsas crebrescentium missilium grandines, quousque violentus irrumpere possit explorat.

Qui semetipsum ergo vult vincere, in mensura suarum virium turpe est notitiam non habere. Hinc est enim quod Dominus dicit: «Contendite intrare per angustam portam.» Necdum autem experimentum sui ille Dei miles acceperat, de quo Scriptura dicit: «Quia imposita galea aerea super caput ejus, et vestitus lorica, accinctus etiam gladio super vestem suam, coepit tentare si armatus posset incedere; non enim habebat consuetudinem, et dixit: Non possum sic incedere, quia nec usum habeo, et deposuit ea (I Reg. XVII).» Jam autem idem se docte probaverat, cum gladium Goliath Philisthaei involutum pallio post Ephod abstulit, et secum a facie persequentis Saul fugiendo portavit, dicens: «Quia non est gladius alter similis illi (I Reg. XXI).» In hoc autem probatio est, quia qui in militiae spiritualis agone profecerit, si jam debiliorem contra se vitiorum contumaciam sentit; si surgentes in se motus carnis facile reprimat; si tumultuantium cogitationum strepitum minori jam labore compescit; si nascentes carnalis illecebrae spinas, mox ut oriri coeperint, resecat; si tumentia superbiae, luxuriae, caeterorumque vitiorum colla gladio protinus divini timoris obtruncat.

Caeterum, quid prodest diu quemquam sacrae interesse militiae, quem velut sub ipsa primi tirocinii rudimenta remissis manibus, et tenero adhuc poplite videas claudicare? A qua nimirum negligentiae dissolutione praedicator egregius discipulos suos prohibet, dicens: «Remissas, inquit, manus, et dissoluta genua erigite, et gressus rectos facite pedibus vestris, ne claudicans quis erret (Hebr. XII).» Docta manus ad praelium facile pervenit ad triumphum; corpus attritum lorica, promptum fertur in pugnam.

Indeed, they who seek the delight of the flesh in the monastic habit, desire to express juice from dry wood; from which softness indeed and remission of living it happens to many that, though they know many things, they do not know themselves, and they do not fully recognize what rigor they themselves are able to suffer: and so it happens that they to whom it has been given to know many exterior things, still seem to need testing for the purpose of knowing themselves. For we have seen many already long since established in the sacred order, who did not yet know what they could have borne in fasts, what in vigils, what in the other studies of heavenly discipline; and since the Scripture says: "He who is ignorant, shall be ignored (1 Cor. 14);" by what pact does he deserve either to be known by God, or to know God himself, who is convicted of ignoring himself in his service? Furthermore, however, the fervent warrior, who surrounds the walls with a siege, strives to approach the ramparts, attempts to occupy the palisades, and among those very hails of thickening missiles, he explores as far as he can violently break in.

Whoever, therefore, wishes to conquer himself, it is shameful not to have knowledge in the measure of his own powers. For it is hence that the Lord says: "Strive to enter by the narrow gate." But that soldier of God had not yet received the experiment of himself, of whom the Scripture says: "Because the brazen helmet being placed upon his head, and being clothed with a breastplate, being also girded with a sword over his garment, he began to try if he could walk armed; for he was not accustomed to it, and he said: I cannot walk thus, because I have not use, and he laid them off (1 Sam. 17)." But already the same man had learnedly proved himself, when he took away the sword of Goliath the Philistine wrapped in a cloth behind the Ephod, and carried it with him by fleeing from the face of the pursuing Saul, saying: "Because there is no other sword like to that (1 Sam. 21)." But in this is the proof: that he who shall have profited in the agony of spiritual warfare, if already he feels the more weak contumacy of vices against himself; if he easily represses the rising movements of the flesh in himself; if he curbs the noise of tumultuous thoughts with now less labor; if he cuts back the nascent thorns of carnal allurements, as soon as they have begun to arise; if he protinus cuts off the swelling necks of pride, luxury, and the other vices with the sword of divine fear.

But otherwise, what does it profit anyone to be interested in sacred warfare for a long time, whom you may see limping as if under the very rudiments of the first apprenticeship with slackened hands and an as yet tender knee? From which dissolution of negligence, indeed, the egregious preacher prohibits his disciples, saying: "Lift up," he says, "the slackened hands and the dissolved knees, and make straight steps with your feet, lest any one halting should err (Hebr. 12)." A hand learned for battle easily arrives at triumph; a body worn by the breastplate is borne ready into the fight.

Monacho nempe, cui adhuc impossibile est superbiam premere, avaritiam cohibere, invidiae faces exstinguere, mundam mentem a luxuria petulantia custodire; qui virus malitiae adversus offendentem nequit expellere, qui pro servanda censura justitiae succumbit injuriam sustinere; quid aliud dicendum est, nisi quia quantum ad professionem quidem jam in sacra militia nomen dedit, sed quid sit spirituale certamen, adhuc penitus non agnovit? imo ad perfectionem tendentibus hoc totis est viribus adnitendum, ut salubriter rigidi magis discant ista nescire, quam vincere. Pudeat hos, qui se mortuos profitentur esse cum Christo, rebelles motus carnis, et passiones animorum adhuc in se procaciter vivere; adversus quae velut sub ipso congressionis initio, necesse sit repugnare, ne cum sit tempus; ut jam jure quiescere permittantur emeriti, adhuc versentur inter bella tirones.

Discat igitur miles Christi, dum adhuc novus est, manus conserere; discat, emergentibus quibusque vitiis, prout res dictaverit, obviare. Huc illucque circumductis vivacis experientiae oculis providus se vertat; et singulis quibusque jaculis, quae mittuntur, defensionis tegmen opponat, ut superbiam humilitate dejiciat, gulam sobrietate restringat, mansuetudine iracundiam calcet, avaritiam largitate refrenet, ardorem libidinis terrore perpetui ignis exstinguat, odii trabem flamma suavissimae charitatis exurat. Delectatur certe Deus isto certamine, qui subtiliter ac profunde considerat totum quicquid illud est quod versatur in mente. Gratulantur angeli ad tale spectaculum, videntes quod humana natura in eo quod contra semetipsam pugnat, ad eorum se consortium, unde fuerat ejecta, reformat; et secum rixando ad veram procul dubio pacem tendit, quam olim sibimet male consentiendo, quia non repugnavit, amisit.

Nec conqueramur, fratres mei, si ad votum mox cuncta non vincimus, si in hujus conflictatione certaminis, aerumnas, labores, angustias, et gravissimum saepe fluctuantis animae taedium sustinemus. In hoc enim divina nobis dispensatione prospicitur, ne de repentina victoria in arrogantiam noster animus extollatur, et de altitudine sua profundius corruat, si non auctori Deo, sed sibi victoriae suae vires ascribat. Hinc est enim, quod Israelitico populo per Moysen dicitur: «Postquam afflixit te Dominus, et probavit, ad extremum misertus est tui, ne diceres in corde tuo: Fortitudo mea, et robur manus meae, haec omnia mihi praestiterunt, sed recorderis Domini Dei tui, quod ipse tibi vires praeberit (Deut.VIII).» Hinc est etiam, quod saepe mens, quae multa in se, et fortia superat, unum quid fortasse minimum, quamvis solerter invigilet, non expugnat.

Indeed for a monk, for whom it is still impossible to press down pride, to restrain avarice, to extinguish the torches of envy, to guard a clean mind from the petulance of luxury; who is unable to expel the poison of malice against one offending, who for the sake of preserving the censure of justice succumbs to sustaining injury; what else is to be said, except that as much as pertains to profession indeed he has already given his name in the sacred warfare, but what the spiritual contest is, he has not yet thoroughly recognized? nay more, they who tend toward perfection must strive for this with all their strength, that being healthily rigid they may learn rather to be ignorant of these things than to conquer them. Let it shame those who profess themselves to be dead with Christ, that the rebellious movements of the flesh and the passions of minds still live procaciously in themselves; against which things it is necessary to fight as if under the very beginning of an engagement, lest when it be time that as veterans they may now be permitted to rest by right, they be still occupied among wars as recruits.

Therefore let the soldier of Christ learn, while he is still new, to join hands; let him learn to meet each emerging vice as the matter shall dictate. Let him, being providential, turn himself here and there with the eyes of lively experience being led around; and let him oppose a covering of defense to each individual javelin which is sent, so that he may cast down pride by humility, restrain gluttony by sobriety, trample on anger by meekness, curb avarice by largess, extinguish the ardor of lust by the terror of perpetual fire, and burn out the beam of hatred by the flame of most sweet charity. Certainly God is delighted by that contest, who subtly and profoundly considers everything whatsoever it is that is revolved in the mind. The angels congratulate at such a spectacle, seeing that human nature, in that which it fights against itself, reforms itself to their fellowship, from whence it had been ejected; and by quarreling with itself it tends without doubt to true peace, which formerly by consenting badly to itself, because it did not resist, it lost.

And let us not complain, my brothers, if we do not soon conquer all things according to our wish, if in the conflict of this contest we sustain hardships, labors, anguishes, and the often most grave tedium of a fluctuating soul. For in this it is provided for us by divine dispensation, lest our mind be extolled into arrogance from a sudden victory, and fall more deeply from its height, if it ascribes the strength of its victory not to God the author, but to itself. For it is hence that it is said to the Israelite people through Moses: "After the Lord afflicted thee, and proved thee, at the last he had mercy on thee, lest thou shouldst say in thy heart: My fortitude, and the strength of my hand, have provided all these things for me, but that thou shouldst remember the Lord thy God, that he himself has provided the strength for thee (Deut. 8)." It is hence also that often the mind, which overcomes many and strong things in itself, does not expunge perhaps one thing, even the smallest, although it watches skillfully.

Quod divina nimirum dispensatione agitur, ne humana conditio undique virtutibus splendens, in elatione sublevetur, ut in eo quod se superasse fortia quaeque considerat, dum parvum non potest diu conando subigere, non sibi, sed illi victoriam tribuat, cujus munere potuit quae subacta sunt superare. Unde illic dicitur: «Hae sunt gentes, quas Dominus dereliquit, ut erudiret in eis Israel (Judic. III).» Israel namque reservatis gentibus eruditur, dum mens nostra in parvis sibi resistentibus discit, quia nequaquam ex se majora subjecit.

Hic totius negotii summa est, fratres charissimi, quare mundum reliquimus; hic tota versari debet intentio, quid ad sacrum ordinem nos venisse gaudemus, videlicet ut mens nostra virtutum armis accincta, in spiritali certamine se semper exerceat, et vitiorum portenta, quae circa nos mitescere nesciunt, fervido spiritu debellare contendat. Quid enim profuisset Israelitico populo Aegyptiaca tantummodo rura relinquere, nisi cervices hostium bellica ferbuissent strage percutere, ut terram optimam quieto postmodum possent otio possidere? Qui denique profectus esset, si Pharaonis jugum, sub quo qualitercunque vivere sinebantur, effugerent, si Chananaeorum enses in proprios jugulos per torporis incuriam provocarent?

Excutiamus ergo, fratres charissimi, degenerem marcidam dissolutionis inertiam, qui per fortitudinem strenue dimicandi pervenire volumus ad coronam. Parati simus semper irruentes vitiorum cuneos, ac frementes bestias de agro nostri cordis ejicere, nullumque eis in ea quae nostri juris sunt, permittamus locum perversae damnationis habere. Non videant nos inimici nostri, quod absit, enerviter cedere, ne mox sibimet applaudentes, de nostris valeant recessibus exsultare. Invictum namque militiae nostrae ducem habemus, cui fiducialiter dicimus: «Judica, Domine, nocentes me, expugna impugnantes me, apprehende arma et scutum, et exurge in adjutorium mihi (Psal. IX).» Felix spiritalis ille bellator, qui talem sequitur in praelio ducem, qui talem meretur habere suae congressionis auctorem, qui et praesumentem praebet audaciam, et pugnanti victoriam, et vincentem provehit ad coronam; quin potius ipse est militantibus donativum, emeritis municipium, triumphantibus praemium sempiternum Jesus Christus heri, et hodie, ipse Deus benedictus in saecula. Amen.

SERMO LXXV.

SERMONIS PRIMI SYNODALIS FRAGMENTA.

Which indeed is done by divine dispensation, lest the human condition, shining on all sides with virtues, be raised up in elation, so that in that which it considers to have overcome all strong things, while it cannot subdue a small thing by long striving, it may attribute the victory not to itself, but to him, by whose gift it was able to overcome those things which have been subdued. Whence it is said there: "These are the nations which the Lord left, that he might instruct Israel in them (Judg. 3)." For Israel is instructed by the reserved nations, while our mind learns in the small things resisting it, that it by no means subdued the greater things by itself.

Here is the sum of the whole matter, most dearly beloved brothers, why we have left the world; here all our intention ought to be revolved: that we rejoice to have come to the sacred order, namely so that our mind, girded with the arms of virtues, may always exercise itself in spiritual warfare, and contend with a fervent spirit to vanquish the portents of vices, which do not know how to grow mild around us. For what would it have profited the Israelite people to leave only the Egyptian fields, unless they had seethed to strike the necks of the enemies with warlike slaughter, so that they might thereafter be able to possess the best land in quiet leisure? What progress would there be, finally, if they escaped the yoke of Pharaoh, under which they were permitted to live in some way, if they provoked the swords of the Canaanites into their own throats through the incuria of sloth?

Therefore, let us shake off, most dearly beloved brothers, the degenerate inertia of withered dissolution, we who wish to arrive at the crown through the strength of striving strenuously. Let us be ready always to eject the invading wedges of vices and the roaring beasts from the field of our heart, and let us permit no place of perverse damnation to them in those things which are of our right. Let our enemies not see us, which far be it, yielding enervatedly, lest soon applauding themselves, they be able to exult over our retreats. For we have an invincible leader of our warfare, to whom we say faithfully: "Judge, O Lord, those who hurt me, fight against those who fight against me, take hold of arms and shield, and rise up in help for me (Psal. 34)." Happy is that spiritual warrior, who follows such a leader in battle, who deserves to have such an author of his engagement, who both provides audacity to the one presuming, and victory to the one fighting, and promotes the one conquering to the crown; rather, he himself is the donative to the ones warring, the citizenship to the veterans, the everlasting reward to the triumphant ones, Jesus Christ yesterday and today, the same God blessed forever. Amen.

SERMON LXXV.

FRAGMENTS OF THE FIRST SYNODAL SERMON.

Sicuti in monte Sinai Dominus Israeliticae plebi per Moysen legis edicta proposuit (Exod. XIX et seqq.), ita et in sancta Ecclesia per ministerium sacerdotum idem legislator et iudex Christiano populo vivendi mandata depromit. Sinai quippe interpretatur rubus, sive tentatio. De rubo siquidem Dominus, ut Scriptura testatur, apparuit, et Moysi ad filios Israel deferre mandata praecepit; et in Ecclesia Deus procul dubio cernitur, sicut eidem Moysi roganti quatenus sibi semetipsum ostenderet, pollicetur, dicens: «Ecce locus apud me est, stabis supra petram; cumque transierit gloria mea, tunc videbis posteriora mea (Exod. XXXIII).» Quod autem Sinai etiam tentatio dicitur, quid per hoc aliud debet intelligi, nisi quia in Ecclesia ubi lex datur, ibi tentatio maligni spiritus aliquando pestilenter oboritur? Ut ad violandam recti iudicii regulam modo spes quaestus obrepat, modo rigorem justitiae laus, vel humanae gratiae favor emolliat, modo ad nocendum irae, vel odii livor impellat, modo metus a libertate recte facicandi cor reprimat, modo crudelitas dignae ultionis mensuram excedat.

Ecce locus apud me est, et stabis super petram, et tunc videbis posteriora mea. Quis autem iste locus, ubi statim super [supra] petram Dominus cernitur, nisi sancta intelligitur Ecclesia, ubi dum petrae fidei constanter innititur, simul cum Apostolo Domini gloriam speculamur? Haec enim est de qua dicitur: «Super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam (Matth. XVI).»

Terra usque ad fenestras, et fenestrae clausae (Ezech. XLI). Ait Apostolus: «Templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos (I Cor. III).» Hujus autem templi fenestrae sacerdotes sunt, qui fidelium populo lumen sanctae praedicationis infundunt. Sed cum terra usque ad fenestras aggeritur, clausis fenestris templum continuo tenebratur. Et cum terrena negotia sacerdotes implicant, quasi fenestrae clausae templum, quod amittit lumen, obscuratur. Nos ergo necesse est, quantum possumus, ab actibus vacare terrenis, ut sacris jugiter invigilemus eloquiis. Sicut sponsa dicit in Canticis: «Oculi tui sicut columbae super rivos aquarum, quae lacte sunt lotae, et resident juxta fluentia plenissima (Cant. V).»

Just as on Mount Sinai the Lord proposed the edicts of the law to the Israelite people through Moses (Exod. 19 et seq.), so also in the holy Church through the ministry of priests the same legislator and judge brings forth the mandates of living for the Christian people. Sinai indeed is interpreted as a bush, or temptation. From the bush indeed the Lord appeared, as the Scripture testifies, and commanded Moses to carry the mandates to the children of Israel; and in the Church God is without doubt discerned, just as he promises to the same Moses asking that he might show himself to him, saying: "Behold there is a place with me, thou shalt stand upon the rock; and when my glory shall have passed by, then thou shalt see my back parts (Exod. 33)." But that Sinai is also called temptation, what else ought to be understood by this, except that in the Church where the law is given, there the temptation of the malignant spirit sometimes pestilentially arises? So that for the purpose of violating the rule of right judgment, sometimes the hope of gain creeps in, sometimes praise or the favor of human grace softens the rigor of justice, sometimes the envy of anger or hatred impels to hurting, sometimes fear represses the heart from the liberty of judging rightly, sometimes cruelty exceeds the measure of worthy vengeance.

Behold there is a place with me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock, and then thou shalt see my back parts. But who is that place, where the Lord is immediately discerned upon [above] the rock, unless the holy Church is understood, where while it is leaned constantly upon the rock of faith, we simultaneously with the Apostle behold the glory of the Lord? For this is she of whom it is said: "Upon this rock I will build my Church (Matth. 16)."

Earth even unto the windows, and the windows closed (Ezek. 41). The Apostle says: "The temple of God is holy, which you are (1 Cor. 3)." But the windows of this temple are the priests, who pour the light of holy preaching into the people of the faithful. But when the earth is heaped up even unto the windows, the temple is immediately darkened by the closed windows. And when earthly businesses entangle the priests, like closed windows the temple, which loses light, is obscured. It is necessary for us, therefore, as much as we are able, to be at leisure from earthly acts, so that we may watch continually for the sacred eloquences. Just as the spouse says in the Canticles: "Thy eyes are as doves upon the brooks of waters, which are washed with milk, and sit near the most full streams (Cant. 5)."